

# THE SPURGEON SERMON COLLECTION, VOL. 2

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# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

## SERMON NO. 172

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

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

for us. What wonder we should travel amongst thorns and briars, and rend our own flesh, or worse than that, fall among dark mountains, and be lost amongst the chasms thereof, if we despise the guidance of an unerring Father. Seek ye in the word of God, and read, Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Jesus Christ.

I feel at this particular crisis of religious affairs, it is imperative upon the Christian minister to urge his people to hold fast the doctrines of the truth—the words of God. This seems likely to become the age of preaching, rather than the age of praying. We now see everywhere large congregations assembling in halls and abbeys to listen to the Word preached; and it is an ominous sign of the times, that these preachings are not only espoused by the orthodox, but even by those whom we have considered to be at least somewhat heretical from the old faith of the Protestant Church. It becomes, therefore, a serious thing; for it is most probable—and may not every wise man see it?—that whosoever may now arise who hath some powers of oratory and some graces of eloquence, will be likely to attract the multitude, preach he what he may, though the word that he should utter be as false as God's Word is true, and as contrary to the gospel as hell is opposed to heaven. Doth it not seem probable that in this age he would attract a multitude of followers? and is it not also very likely that through that spurious charity which is now growing upon us, which would gag the mouths of honest reprovers, we shall find it hard to rebuke the impostor when he arises, and difficult to expose the falsehood, even though it may be apparent unto us. We are now happily so well commingled together, the Dissenter and the Churchman have now become so friendly with each other, that we have less to dread the effects of bigotry, than the effects of latitudinarianism. We have some reason now to be upon the watchtower, lest haply some should arise in our midst, the spurious offspring of these happy times of evangelical alliance, who will claim our charity, whilst they are preaching that which we in our hearts do totally condemn. And what better advice can the minister give in such times as these? To what book shall he commend his hearers? How shall he keep them fast? Where is the anchor which he shall give them to cast into the rocks? or where the rocks into which they should cast their anchor? Our text is a solution to that question. We are here furnished with a great

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

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

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

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

gold; but at the same time, I will not blindly hoard it, for it may be counterfeit coin. I will sit down to the study of the Sacred Book, and I will endeavor, as far as I can, to unprejudice myself. I will read the Bible, just as if I had never heard any preacher, or had never been taught by a parent; and I will there endeavor to find out what God saith, and what God saith, be it what it may, I will believe and espouse, hoping that by his grace I may also feel the power of it in my own soul.

**2.** Remember, also, to bring the preachers of the gospel to this standard. A great many of you know but very little about what gospel is. The general notion of the mass is, that we are everyone of us right; that though to-day I may contradict some one else, and some one else may contradict me, yet we are all right; and though it is treason to common sense to believe such a thing, yet this is a common idea. Some men always believe like the last speaker. Should they hear the most hyper of hyper-Calvinists, they believe with him the fullness of the doctrine of reprobation; should they hear on the morrow the lowest of Arminians, they believe with him the most universal of redemptions and the most powerful of free-wills. Should they then hear the genuine Calvinist, who preaches that man hath destroyed himself, but in God is his help found, perhaps then they think the man contradicts himself, and for once they rebel against their teachers. But it is probable that should they hear such a person again, they will be easily reconciled to seeming contradictions; for to them it is just the man's appearance, just the man's way of saying the thing, that they like, and not the thing that he says. Just as I have heard of holy Mr. Durham, the writer of that sweet book on Solomon's Song. If I had lived in his time, I should never, I think, have wanted to hear any other preacher; I would have sat, both by night and day, to receive the sweet droppings of his honied lips. But in his time there was a young preacher, whose name is totally forgotten, whose church was crowded to the door, and Mr. Durham's meeting-house hard by forsaken. The reason of that is, because the mass of people do not lay hold upon what is said, but upon how it is said: and if it is said smartly, said prettily, and said forcibly, that is enough for them, though it be a lie; but if the truth be spoken, that they will not receive, unless it be attended by some graces of oratory and eloquence. Now, the Christian that has got above his babyhood, does not care about how the man says it; it is the thing that is said that he cares about. All he asks is,

“Did he speak the truth?” He just gets hold of the corn. To him the straw is nothing, and the chaff less. He cares not for the trimming of the feast, nor for the exquisite workmanship of the dish; he only cares for that which is solid food for himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

therein. I say again, read your Bibles, that you may be qualified to detect error.

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

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

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

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

**III.** And now let me endeavor as briefly as I can, to urge upon you yet again the constant and perpetual reading of the Word of God, not only for the reasons that I have now propounded, but for others more important.

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

man, to magnify the flesh, and sometimes to trust in yourself, or else lead you to distress yourself where there is no need for distress, I should marvel indeed, inasmuch as his doctrine is false, and must mislead you. It may be the means of your salvation, and yet it may fail in many points to minister to your edification and comfort. Therefore, if ye would not be thus misled, search ye the Scriptures.

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

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

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

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

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

# PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

## SERMON NO. 181

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1858

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” — Matthew 20:28.*

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit, and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. ‘Twas then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenance of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love; through association we have grown to love and respect each other, and now you have become the sheep of my pasture, and members of my flock; and I have now the privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labor in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person, that as both the congregation and office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the Gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A



text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of faith, or the teaching of believer's baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavor, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavor to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave his life a ransom for many."

The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement, and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person; and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life; consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily

surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in Hell as for Peter who mounted to Heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was a true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when He died, had an object in view, and that object will most assuredly, and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If any one asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" we answer that question by asking him another — "What has Christ done, or what will Christ do by His death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold — we are not afraid to say that we believe — that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number;" and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom He died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin, and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned; we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption, and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavor to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus; and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert; but you will remember that this is nothing to me; I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places, and to preach your own views in your own

assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus “gave his life a ransom for many;” and by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavor to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all from the heinousness of our own guilt, from which He has delivered us; secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of divine justice; thirdly, we shall measure it by the price which He paid, the pangs which He endured; then we shall endeavor to magnify it, by noting the deliverance which He actually wrought out; and we shall close by noticing the vast number for whom this redemption is made, who in our text are described as “many.”

**I.** First, then we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first by OUR OWN SINS. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and the quarry whence you were hewn. Ye, who have been washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment, and look back at the former state of your ignorance; the sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul for ever; it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of Heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it. But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; they have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore, or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents, and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way, and burst through all restraint which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We

became leaders in iniquity; we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth; but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began; and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe, and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives; and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of Heaven! the astronomers may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows; but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts; ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh! if we could each of us look into our hearts today — if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when He saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are justified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye; but in one moment of

faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought, or word, or deed, since worlds were made, or time began, to meet on one poor head — the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away, and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow.

Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Savior's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin, and, then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In Heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers, and thieves, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and blasphemers, and persecutors; but they have been washed — they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come, and where their purity hath been achieved, and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones! O ye that are groaning on account of sin! the great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants; and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all — a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you for ever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement — the greatness of our guilt.

**II.** Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. “God is love,” always loving; but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. God is sternly just, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, Who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of Heaven winks at them, and suffers them to die forgotten. No; Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning Himself, “The Lord thy God is a jealous God.” It is His own declaration, “I will by no means clear the guilty.” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as

if He were not loving, and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice, nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery; for as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible; and though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice, for every good thing meets in God, and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him. He has no bend, no warp in His character; no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full sway, and justice hath no narrower limit than His love. Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment; and God hath prepared a Hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ. Look! look! look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits, and see that house of misery which men call Hell! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits for ever paying their debt to divine justice; but though some of them have been for these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now. And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Savior's mediation when He paid your debt, and paid it all at once; so that there now remaineth not one farthing

of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love. To justice the believer oweth nothing; though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely justified from all guilt, and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great His atonement if He hath done all this.

I must just pause here, and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none; but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart, and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The Negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruel ties of his master and reach another land where he may be free; but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty; but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot escape the gyves from his wrist; he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body; through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps, and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts; he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him; the iron has entered into his spirit, and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep, but this man cannot sleep; by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it; he bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart, and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rubric and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still, and do what he may he cannot quench it. O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you, and happy are you that you

feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died; for you He has satisfied stern justice; and now all you have to do to obtain peace of conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me; my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you: look you there! There stands the cross; there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord; and then shalt thou know the greatness of His atonement.

**III.** In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID. It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Savior; but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe thine agony?

*"Come, all ye springs,  
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!  
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,  
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein  
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,  
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,  
To bear them out, and with my state agree."*

O Jesus! thou wast a sufferer from thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings fell on thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief, thine agonies did dash upon thee. See Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold; but He is all abroad. It is night; He sleeps not, but He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises: He is seized by traitors and is dragged away. Let us step to the place when just now He was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were,



great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.” O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Savior’s blessed frame, and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body? This is the beginning; this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, thou sorrowing church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets; He is dragged first to one bar and then to another; He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin; He is mocked by Herod; He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced — “Let Him be crucified!” And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared; He is tied to the low Roman column; the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on His back, and with one stream of blood His back is red — a crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room; His eyes are bound, and then they buffet Him, and say, “Prophecy who it was that smote thee?” They spit into His face; they plait a crown of thorns, and press His temples with it; they array Him in a purple robe; they bow their knees, and mock Him. All silently He sits; He answers not a word. “When He was reviled, He reviled not again,” but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him, and with many a jeer and jibe they drive Him from the place, and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings, and depressed with agony of spirit He stumbles beneath His cross. Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up; they put His cross upon another’s shoulders, and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him, and hurl Him on His back; the transverse wood is laid beneath Him; His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance; the nails are grasped; four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of His body; and there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place: they fill up the place with earth; and there it stands.

But see the Savior’s limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross in that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! Nay, more hark how at last He shrieks in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” O sun, no wonder thou

didst shut thine eye, and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered, Even death itself relented, and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city. This, however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Savior suffered in His body was nothing compared to what He endured in His soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment — to repeat a sentence I have often used — suppose a man who has passed into Hell — suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour; and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God’s people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words: it seemed as if Hell were put into His cup; He seized it, and, “At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry.” So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of Hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this, and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all His people, and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

**IV.** I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Savior’s agonies is this: we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, believer; stand up in thy place, and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin; I had revolted against God, and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law gat hold upon me; the pangs of conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to Heaven, and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me; I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning Hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience; but all in vain, I endeavored by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt

within; but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful, almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always perplexed me: "I have sinned; God must punish me; how can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?" At last mine eyes turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber; I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown, and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon Him, and my thoughts recalled that word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner; then He died for me. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners; I am a sinner; He died for me; He will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to Him, and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

*"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to this cross I cling;  
Naked look to Him for dress;  
Helpless come to Him for grace!  
Black, I to this fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"*

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder, and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light; for the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of Heaven, and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over; they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in Heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of Gods' elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in Hell, that God's elect can never come there; for Christ hath died for them, and who is he that shall condemn them?

**V.** I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world “to give his life a ransom for many.” The greatness of Christ’s redemption may be measured by the EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT. He gave His life “a ransom for many.” I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists — and we are not very much ashamed of that; we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired), we are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, “No, certainly not.” We ask them the next question — Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer “No.” They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say, “No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if” — and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will go back to the old statement — Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did He? You must say “No;” you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ’s death; we say, “No, my dear sir, it is you that do it.” We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear any one laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch; it does not go across the stream: it only professes to go half way; it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford,

which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it — “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. “The whole world is gone after Him.” Did all the world go after Christ? “Then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan.” Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? “Ye are of God, little children,” and “the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” Does “the whole world” there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were “of God?” The words “world” and “all” are used in seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that “all” means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts — some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me, then, sir, whom did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two, and I will tell you whether He died for you. Do you want a Savior? Do you feel that you need a Savior? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God’s justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, “Lord, save, or I perish”? Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, “I am as good as I ought to be; I can get to Heaven by my own good works,” then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Savior, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything, but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all, and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ, and you may say, “Thou dear, Thou

bleeding Lamb of God! thy griefs were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed, and by thy sufferings I am pardoned.” And then see what peace of mind you will have; for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, He will never punish you. “Payment, God’s justice cannot demand, first, at the bleeding surety’s hand, and then again at mine.” We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, “Art thou guilty?” we can say, “Yes, guilty.” But if the question is put, “What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?” We can answer, “Great God, Thy justice and Thy love are both guarantees that Thou wilt not punish us for sin; for didst Thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst Thou, then, be just — how canst Thou be God at all, if Thou dost punish Christ the substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?” Your only question is, “Did Christ die for me?” And the only answer we can give is — “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Can you write your name down among the sinners — not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner; and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

# HUMAN INABILITY

## SERMON NO. 182

DELIVERED ON MARCH 7, 1858

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

*“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”  
— John 6:44.*

“COMING to Christ” is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God’s gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner’s salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in “the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will

always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavor this morning, first of all, to notice *man's inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father's drawings* — what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a *sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

**I.** First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating



the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature*. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it *cannot do so*. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says

she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

**I.** First, it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. “Oh!” saith the Arminian, “men may be saved if they will.” We reply, “My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if *they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, *we do* not assert it, but *Christ* himself declares it — ‘*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;*’ and as long as that ‘*ye will not come*’ stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will.” It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. “Now,” says one, “I believe men can be saved if they will.” My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer — Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this — “I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been

wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well.” With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

**2.** Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man — that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;” and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. “Well,” says one, “I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point.” True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

**3.** Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves

anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere — there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

**4.** Yet once more — *conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins

deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Savior, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Still,” says one, “as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot.” True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man’s inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulcher, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, “No man will come,” but it says, “No man can come.” Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?” Because, although willing enough to receive God’s testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, “Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God ?” I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing,

without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless — if such be his experience, — does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between *will* and *power*: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something

more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner — there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about

him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public — house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

**II.** Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the *minister draw him*, but except the *Father draw him*. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a



drawing by the Most High God — the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, “Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!” I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself” I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father’s drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use “moral suasion;” he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved “with full consent against his will;” that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God’s power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Savior’s blood while he is striving to run away from the Savior. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled — “draw me and I will run after thee.” We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man’s heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, “I don’t want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven

on my own rights.” The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. “I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh,” saith the man within himself, “I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out.” Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, “Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

*‘Could my tears for ever flow,  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save and thou alone.’”*

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, “I never can be saved. Nothing can save me.” Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, “Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you.” And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds “a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**III.** And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. “Well,” says one, “if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I

mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again.” My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God’s name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. “Well,” cries another, “I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me,’ and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me.” Again, I say, “My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say ‘Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,’ I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished.” But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God’s hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills

to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little,"

Now, the comfortable reflection is this: — Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

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

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart — "Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ — sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the

world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Savior's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

# COMPEL THEM TO COME IN

## SERMON NO. 227

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 5TH, 1858,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Compel them to come in.” — Luke 14:23.*

I FEEL in such a haste to go out and obey this commandment this morning, by compelling those to come in who are now tarrying in the highways and hedges, that I cannot wait for an introduction, but must at once set about my business.

Hear then, O ye that are strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus — hear then the message that I have to bring you. Ye have fallen, fallen in your father Adam; ye have fallen also in yourselves, by your daily sin and your constant iniquity; you have provoked the anger of the Most High; and as assuredly as you have sinned, so certainly must God punish you if you persevere in your iniquity, for the Lord is a God of justice, and will by no means spare the guilty. But have you not heard, hath it not long been spoken in your ears, that God, in his infinite mercy, has devised a way whereby, without any infringement upon his honor, he can have mercy upon you, the guilty and the undeserving? To you I speak; and my voice is unto you, O sons of men; Jesus Christ, very God of very God, hath descended from heaven, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Begotten of the Holy Ghost, he was born of the Virgin Mary; he lived in this world a life of exemplary holiness, and of the deepest suffering, till at last he gave himself up to die for our sins, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” And now the plan of salvation is simply declared unto you — “Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” For you who have violated all the precepts of God, and have disdained his mercy and dared his vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for “whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;” “whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out, for he is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Now all that God asks of you — and this he gives you — is that you will simply look at his bleeding dying son, and trust your souls in the hands of him whose name alone can save from death and hell. Is it not a marvelous thing, that the proclamation of this gospel does not receive the unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, “That whosoever believeth shall have eternal life,” every one of you, “casting away every man his sins and his iniquities,” would lay hold on Jesus Christ, and look alone to his cross. But alas! such is the desperate evil of our nature, such the pernicious depravity of our character, that this message is despised, the invitation to the gospel feast is rejected, and there are many of you who are this day enemies of God by wicked works, enemies to the God who preaches Christ to you to-day, enemies to him who sent his Son to give his life a ransom for many. Strange I say it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact, and hence the necessity for the command of the text, — “Compel them to come in.”

Children of God, ye who have believed, I shall have little or nothing to say to you this morning; I am going straight to my business — I am going after those that will not come — those that are in the byways and hedges, and God going with me, it is my duty now to fulfill this command, “Compel them to come in.”

First, I must, find you out; secondly, I will go to work to compel you to come in.

**I.** First, I must FIND YOU OUT. If you read the verses that precede the text, you will find an amplification of this command: “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;” and then, afterwards, “Go out into the highways,” bring in the vagrants, the highwaymen, “and into the hedges,” bring in those that have no resting-place for their heads, and are lying under the hedges to rest, bring them in also, and “compel them to come in.” Yes, I see you this morning, you that are poor. I am to compel you to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of

heaven, for God hath not exempted from his grace the man that shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there be any distinction made, the distinction is on your side, and for your benefit — “Unto you is the word of salvation sent”; “For the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” But especially I must speak to you who are poor, spiritually. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent you a gracious invitation. Come and welcome to the marriage feast of his love. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.” Come, I must lay hold upon you, though you be defiled with foulest filth, and though you have nought but rags upon your back, though your own righteousness has become as filthy clouts, yet must I lay hold upon you, and invite you first, and even compel you to come in.

And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are maimed. There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God’s help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves; but now you are maimed, the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and now you can work no longer; you say, with bitter sorrow —

*“The best performance of my hands,  
Dares not appear before thy throne.”*

You have lost all power now to obey the law; you feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed; you have given up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself, because you are maimed and your arms are gone. But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to heaven, yet you could walk your way there along the road by faith; but you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands; you feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the stipulations of the gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. In fact, you are crying out —

*“Oh, could I but believe,  
Then all would easy be,  
I would, but cannot, Lord relieve,  
My help must come from thee.”*



To you am I sent also. Before you am I to lift up the blood-stained banner of the cross, to you am I to preach this gospel, “Whoso calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” and unto you am I to cry, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

There is yet another class. You are halt. You are halting between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. What little progress you do make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make but painful progress. Ah, limping brother, to you also is the word of this salvation sent. Though you halt between two opinions, the Master sends me to you with this message: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him.” Consider thy ways; set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Halt no longer, but decide for God and his truth.

And yet I see another class, — the blind. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; to you am I sent. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is, and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God, to you am I sent. To you too that cannot see the Savior, that see no beauty in him that you should desire him; who see no excellence in virtue, no glories in religion, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being his children; to you, also, am I sent. Ay, to whom am I not sent if I take my text? For it goes further than this — it not only gives a particular description, so that each individual case may be met, but afterwards it makes a general sweep, and says, “Go into the highways and hedges.” Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men — my lord upon his horse in the highway, and the woman trudging about her business, the thief waylaying the traveler — all these are in the highway, and they are all to be compelled to come in, and there away in the hedges there lie some poor souls whose refuges of lies are swept away, and who are seeking not to find some little shelter for their weary heads, to you, also, are we sent this morning. This is the universal command — compel them to come in.

Now, I pause after having described the character, I pause to look at the herculean labor that lies before me. Well did Melanchthon say, “Old Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon.” As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the cross of Christ. And yet my Master sends me about the errand. Lo, I see the great mountain before me of human depravity and stolid indifference, but by faith I cry, “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” Does my Master say, compel them to come in? Then, though the sinner be like Samson and I a child, I shall lead him with a thread. If God saith do it, if I attempt it in faith it shall be done; and if with a groaning, struggling, and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word, and some indeed shall be compelled to come in.

**II.** And now to the work — directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women, I am to COMPEL YOU TO COME IN. Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. The King of heaven this morning sends a gracious invitation to you. He says, “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live:” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Dear brother, it makes my heart rejoice to think that I should have such good news to tell you, and yet I confess my soul is heavy because I see you do not think it good news, but turn away from it, and do not give it due regard. Permit me to tell you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt, he foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that his justice would demand your blood, and in order that this difficulty might be escaped, that his justice might have its full due, and that you might yet be saved, Jesus Christ hath died. Will you just for a moment glance at this picture. You see that man there on his knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. You see this next: you see that miserable sufferer tied to a pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood. Again you see this third picture; it is the same man hanging on the cross with hands extended, and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding; methought the picture spoke and

said, "It is finished." Now all this hath Jesus Christ of Nazareth done, in order that God might consistently with his justice pardon sin; and the message to you this morning is this — "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That is trust him, renounce thy works, and thy ways, and set thine heart alone on this man, who gave himself for sinners.

Well brother, I have told you the message, what sayest thou unto it? Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you; you cannot listen to it; that you will hear me by-and-by; but you will go your way this day and attend to your farm and merchandize. Stop brother, I was not told merely to tell you and then go about my business. No; I am told to compel you to come in; and permit me to observe to you before I further go, that there is one thing I can say — and to which God is my witness this morning, that I am in earnest with you in my desire that you should comply with this command of God. You may despise your own salvation, but I do not despise it; you may go away and forget what you shall hear, but you will please to remember that the things I now say cost me many a groan ere I came here to utter them. My inmost soul is speaking out to you, my poor brother, when I beseech you by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, consider my master's message which he bids me now address to you.

But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely tell you the message, and invite you as I do with all earnestness, and sincere affection — I will go further. Sinner, in God's name I command you to repent and believe. Do you ask me whence my authority? I am an ambassador of heaven. My credentials, some of them secret, and in my own heart; and others of them open before you this day in the seals of my ministry, sitting and standing in this hall, where God has given me many souls for my hire. As God the everlasting one hath given me a commission to preach his gospel, I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; not on my own authority, but on the authority of him who said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and then annexed this solemn sanction, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Reject my message, and remember "He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the

Son of God.” An ambassador is not to stand below the man with whom he deals, for we stand higher. If the minister chooses to take his proper rank, girded with the omnipotence of God, and anointed with his holy unction, he is to command men, and speak with all authority compelling them to come in: “command, exhort, rebuke with all long-suffering.”

But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. If that avails not, all other means shall be tried. My brother, I come to you simple of speech, and I exhort you to flee to Christ. O my brother, dost thou know what a loving Christ he is? Let me tell thee from my own soul what I know of him. I, too, once despised him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; he checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by his Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. O I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of him. But what a loving reception did I have when I went to him. I thought he would smite me, but his hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that his eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck and kissed me; he took off my rags and did clothe me with his righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart and in the house of his church there was music and dancing, because his son that he had lost was found, and he that was dead was made alive. I exhort you, then, to look to Jesus Christ and to be lightened. Sinner, you will never regret, — I will be bondsman for my Master that you will never regret it, — you will have no sigh to go back to your state of condemnation; you shall go out of Egypt and shall go into the promised land and shall find it flowing with milk and honey. The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, but you will find grace will make them light. And as for the joys and delights of being a child of God, if I lie this day you shall charge me with it in days to come. If you will taste and see that the Lord is good, I am not afraid but that you shall find that he is not only good, but better than human lips ever can describe.

I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests. Oh my poor friend, would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of heaven, than to be his enemy? What are you

getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being his enemy? Answer, pleasure-seeker; hast thou found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man: hast thou found rest for the sole of thy foot in all thy works? Oh thou that goest about to establish thine own righteousness, I charge thee let conscience speak. Hast thou found it to be a happy path? Ah, my friend, "Wherefore dost thou spend thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labor for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn, everything that is important and eternal, flee for your lives, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, stay not until you have proved, and found an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood which cleanseth us from all sin. Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not my maimed brother put his hand upon my shoulder and permit me to assist him to the banquet? Will not the poor man allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words. Must I use some other compulsion to compel you to come in? Sinners, this one thing I am resolved upon this morning, if you be not saved ye shall be without excuse. Ye, from the grey-headed down to the tender age of childhood, if ye this day lay not hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head. If there be power in man to bring his fellow, (as there is when man is helped by the Holy Spirit) that power shall be exercised this morning, God helping me. Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs; if my exhortation fails, I must come to something else. My brother, I entreat you, I entreat you stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting this morning? You are rejecting Christ, your only Savior. "Other foundation can no man lay;" "there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." My brother, I cannot bear that ye should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting: the day is coming when you will want a Savior. It is not long ere weary months shall have ended, and your strength begin to decline; your pulse shall fail you, your strength shall depart, and you and the grim monster — death, must face each other. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without a Savior? Death-beds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an awful thing to die anyhow; he that hath the best hope, and the most triumphant faith, finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal,

from time to eternity, and you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ. I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide this morning, and I picture myself standing at your bedside and hearing your cries, and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that. I think I am standing by your coffin now, and looking into your clay-cold face, and saying, "This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation." I think what bitter tears I shall weep then, if I think that I have been unfaithful to you, and how those eyes fast closed in death, shall seem to chide me and say, "Minister, I attended the music hall, but you were not in earnest with me; you amused me, you preached to me, but you did not plead with me. You did not know what Paul meant when he said, 'As though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'" "

I entreat you let this message enter your heart for another reason. I picture myself standing at the bar of God. As the Lord liveth, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that? You are not an infidel; your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there must be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng, and the eye of God is fixed on you. It seems to you that he is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you, and he summons you before him; and he reads your sins, and he cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell!" My hearer, I cannot bear to think of you in that position; it seems as if every hair on my head must stand on end to think of any hearer of mine being damned. Will you picture yourselves in that position? The word has gone forth, "Depart, ye cursed." Do you see the pit as it opens to swallow you up? Do you listen to the shrieks and the yells of those who have preceded you to that eternal lake of torment? Instead of picturing the scene, I turn to you with the words of the inspired prophet, and I say, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Oh! my brother, I cannot let you put away religion thus; no, I think of what is to come after death. I should be destitute of all humanity if I should see a person about to poison himself, and did not dash away the cup; or if I saw another about to plunge from London Bridge, if I did not assist in preventing him

from doing so; and I should be worse than a fiend if I did not now, with all love, and kindness, and earnestness, beseech you to “lay hold on eternal life,” “to labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life.”

Some hyper-calvinist would tell me I am wrong in so doing. I cannot help it. I must do it. As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that ye would be saved, that ye would look unto Jesus Christ and receive his glorious salvation. But does not this avail? are all our entreaties lost upon you; do you turn a deaf ear? Then again I change my note. Sinner, I have pleaded with you as a man pleadeth with his friend, and were it for my own life I could not speak more earnestly this morning than I do speak concerning yours. I did feel earnest about my own soul, but not a whit more than I do about the souls of my congregation this morning; and therefore, if ye put away these entreaties I have something else: — I must threaten you. You shall not always have such warnings as these. A day is coming, when hushed shall be the voice of every gospel minister, at least for you; for your ear shall be cold in death. It shall not be any more threatening; it shall be the fulfillment of the threatening. There shall be no promise, no proclamations of pardon and of mercy; no peace-speaking blood, but you shall be in the land where the Sabbath is all swallowed up in everlasting nights of misery, and where the preachings of the gospel are forbidden because they would be unavailing. I charge you then, listen to this voice that now addresses your conscience; for if not, God shall speak to you in his wrath, and say unto you in his hot displeasure, “I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; therefore will I mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh.” Sinner, I threaten you again. Remember, it is but a short time you may have to hear these warnings. You imagine that your life will be long, but do you know how short it is? Have you ever tried to think how frail you are? Did you ever see a body when it has been cut in pieces by the anatomist? Did you ever see such a marvelous thing as the human frame?

*“Strange, a harp of a thousand strings,  
Should keep in tune so long.”*

Let but one of those cords be twisted, let but a mouthful of food go in the wrong direction, and you may die. The slightest chance, as we have it, may

send you swift to death, when God wills it. Strong men have been killed by the smallest and slightest accident, and so may you. In the chapel, in the house of God, men have dropped down dead. How often do we hear of men falling in our streets — rolling out of time into eternity, by some sudden stroke. And are you sure that heart of your's is quite sound? Is the blood circulating with all accuracy? Are you quite sure of that? And if it be so, how long shall it be? O, perhaps there are some of you here that shall never see Christmas-day; it may be the mandate has gone forth already, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Out of this vast congregation, I might with accuracy tell how many will be dead in a year; but certain it is that the whole of us shall never meet together again in any one assembly. Some out of this vast crowd, perhaps some two or three, shall depart ere the new year shall be ushered in. I remind you, then, my brother, that either the gate of salvation may be shut, or else you may be out of the place where the gate of mercy stands. Come, then, let the threatening have power with you. I do not threaten because I would alarm without cause, but in hopes that a brother's threatening may drive you to the place where God hath prepared the feast of the gospel. And now, must I turn hopelessly away? Have I exhausted all that I can say? No, I will come to you again. Tell me what it is, my brother, that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be, my friend, that cannot be. "But, sir, I am the chief of sinners." Friend, you are not. The chief of sinners died and went to heaven many years ago; his name was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the apostle. He was the chief of sinners, I know he spoke the truth. "No," but you say still, "I am too vile." You cannot be viler than the chief of sinners. You must, at least, be second worst. Even supposing you are the worst now alive, you are second worst, for he was chief. But suppose you are the worst, is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ. The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the hospital or physician. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not want any merits of your's. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are. But let me ask you a question: Do you think you will ever get better by stopping away from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation at all. No, sir, the longer you stay, the worse you will grow; your hope will grow weaker, your despair will become stronger; the nail with which Satan has



fastened you down will be more firmly clenched, and you will be less hopeful than ever. Come, I beseech you, recollect there is nothing to be gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost. "But," cries another, "I feel I cannot believe." No, my friend, and you never will believe if you look first at your believing. Remember, I am not come to invite you to faith, but am come to invite you to Christ. But you say, "What is the difference?" Why, just this, if you first of all say, "I want to believe a thing," you never do it. But your first inquiry must be, "What is this thing that I am to believe?" Then will faith come as the consequence of that search. Our first business has not to do with faith, but with Christ. Come, I beseech you, on Calvary's mount, and see the cross. Behold the Son of God, he who made the heavens and the earth, dying for your sins. Look to him, is there not power in him to save? Look at his face so full of pity. Is there not love in his heart to prove him willing to save? Sure sinner, the sight of Christ will help thee to believe. Do not believe first, and then go to Christ, or else thy faith will be a worthless thing; go to Christ without any faith, and cast thyself upon him, sink or swim. But I hear another cry, "Oh sir, you do not know how often I have been invited, how long I have rejected the Lord." I do not know, and I do not want to know; all I know is that my Master has sent me, to compel you to come in; so come along with you now. You may have rejected a thousand invitations; don't make this the thousandth-and-one. You have been up to the house of God, and you have only been gospel hardened. But do I not see a tear in your eye; come, my brother, don't be hardened by this morning's sermon. O, Spirit of the living God, come and melt this heart for it has never been melted, and compel him to come in! I cannot let you go on such idle excuses as that; if you have lived so many years slighting Christ, there are so many reasons why now you should not slight him. But did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then what must I say to you? When will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed, and the death throttle is in your throat — shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow; and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there, shall those be convenient times? When pains are racking you, and you are on the borders of the tomb? No, sir, this morning is the convenient time. May God make it so. Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ to-morrow.

The Master has given you no invitation to come to him next Tuesday. The invitation is, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation," for the Spirit saith "to-day." "Come now and let us reason together;" why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have. Put it off, and you may never weep again in chapel. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may not be pleaded with as I would plead with you now. You may go away, and God may say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." He shall throw the reins upon your neck; and then, mark — your course is sure, but it is sure damnation and swift destruction.

And now again, is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? Then what more can I do? I have but one more resort, and that shall be tried. I can be permitted to weep for you; I can be allowed to pray for you. You shall scorn the address if you like; you shall laugh at the preacher; you shall call him fanatic if you will; he will not chide you, he will bring no accusation against you to the great Judge. Your offense, so far as he is concerned, is forgiven before it is committed; but you will remember that the message that you are rejecting this morning is a message from one who loves you, and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you. You will recollect that you may play your soul away with the devil, that you may listlessly think it a matter of no importance; but there lives at least one who is in earnest about your soul, and one who before he came here wrestled with his God for strength to preach to you, and who when he has gone from this place will not forget his hearers of this morning. I say again, when words fail us we can give tears — for words and tears are the arms with which gospel ministers compel men to come in. You do not know, and I suppose could not believe, how anxious a man whom God has called to the ministry feels about his congregation, and especially about some of them. I heard but the other day of a young man who attended here a long time, and his father's hope was that he would be brought to Christ. He became acquainted, however, with an infidel; and now he neglects his business, and lives in a daily course of sin. I saw his father's poor wan face; I did not ask him to tell me the story himself, for I felt it was raking up a trouble and opening a sore; I fear, sometimes, that good man's grey hairs may be brought with sorrow to the grave. Young men, you do not pray for yourselves, but your mothers wrestle for you. You will not think

of your own souls, but your fathers anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at prayer meetings, when I have heard children of God pray there, and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul's salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move heaven and earth for your salvation, and that still you should have no thought for yourselves, no regard to eternal things?

Now I turn for one moment to some here. There are some of you here members of Christian churches, who make a profession of religion, but unless I be mistaken in you — and I shall be happy if I am — your profession is a lie. You do not live up to it, you dishonor it; you can live in the perpetual practice of absenting yourselves from God's house, if not in sins worse than that. Now I ask such of you who do not adorn the doctrine of God your Savior, do you imagine that you can call me your pastor, and yet that my soul cannot tremble over you and in secret weep for you? Again, I say it may be but little concern to you how you defile the garments of your Christianity, but it is a great concern to God's hidden ones, who sigh and cry, and groan for the iniquities of the professors of Zion.

Now does anything else remain to the minister besides weeping and prayer? Yes, there is one thing else. God has given to his servants not the power of regeneration, but he has given them something akin to it. It is impossible for any man to regenerate his neighbor; and yet how are men born to God? Does not the apostle say of such an one that he was begotten by him in his bonds. Now the minister has a power given him of God, to be considered both the father and the mother of those born to God, for the apostle said he travailed in birth for souls till Christ was formed in them. What can we do then? We can now appeal to the Spirit. I know I have preached the gospel, that I have preached it earnestly; I challenge my Master to honor his own promise. He has said it shall not return unto me void, and it shall not. It is in his hands, not mine. I cannot compel you, but thou O Spirit of God who hast the key of the heart, thou canst compel. Did you ever notice in that chapter of the Revelation, where it says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," a few verses before, the same person is described, as he who hath the key of David. So that if knocking will not avail, he has the key and can and will come in. Now if

the knocking of an earnest minister prevail not with you this morning, there remains still that secret opening of the heart by the Spirit, so that you shall be compelled.

I thought it my duty to labor with you as though I must do it; now I throw it into my Master's hands. It cannot be his will that we should travail in birth, and yet not bring forth spiritual children. It is with him; he is master of the heart, and the day shall declare it, that some of you constrained by sovereign grace have become the willing captives of the all-conquering Jesus, and have bowed your hearts to him through the sermon of this morning.

[Mr. Spurgeon concluded with a very interesting anecdote, but as its insertion would make the sermon too long for a penny number, the publishers have decided to print it as one of the "New Park Street Tracts."]

# LOVE

## SERMON NO. 229

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 19TH, 1858,**

**AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“We love him, because he first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19.*

DURING the last two Sabbath days I have been preaching the gospel to the unconverted. I have earnestly exhorted the very chief of sinners to look to Jesus Christ, and have assured them that as a preparation for coming to Christ, they need no good works, or good dispositions, but that they may come, just as they are, to the foot of the cross, and receive the pardoning blood and all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought has since occurred to me, that some who were ignorant of the gospel might, perhaps, put this query: — Is this likely to promote morality? If the gospel be a proclamation of pardon to the very chief of sinners, will not this be a license to sin? In what respects can the gospel be said to be a gospel according to holiness? How will such preaching operate? Will it make men better? Will they be more attentive to the laws which relate to man and man? Will they be more obedient to the statutes which relate to man and God? I thought, therefore, that we would advance a step further, and endeavor to show, this morning, how the proclamation of the gospel of God, though in the commencement it addresses itself to men who are utterly destitute of any good, is, nevertheless, designed to lead these very men to the noblest heights of virtue, yea, to ultimate perfection in holiness. The text tells us, that the effect of the gospel received in the heart is, that it compels and constrains such a heart to love God. “We love him, because he first loved us.” When the gospel comes to us it does not find us loving God, it does not expect anything of us, but coming with the divine application of the Holy Ghost, it simply assures us that God loves us, be we never so deeply immersed in sin; and then, the after effect of this proclamation of love is, that “we love him because he first loved us.”

Can you imagine a being placed halfway between this world and heaven? Can you conceive of him as having such enlarged capacities that he could easily discern what was done in heaven, and what was done on earth? I can conceive that, before the Fall, if there had been such a being, he would have been struck with the singular harmony which existed between God's great world, called heaven, and the little world, the earth. Whenever the chimes of heaven rang, the great note of those massive bells was love; and when the little bells of earth were sounded, the harmonies of this narrow sphere, rang out their note, it was just the same — love. When the bright spirits gathered around the great throne of God in heaven to magnify the Lord, at the same time, there was to be seen the world, clad in its priestly garments, offering its sacrifice of purest praise. When the cherubim and seraphim did continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies," there was heard a note, feebler, perhaps, but yet as sweetly musical, coming up from paradise, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies." There was no jar, no discord; the thunder peals of heaven's melodies were exactly in accord with the whispers of earth's harmonies. There was "glory to God in the highest," and on earth there was glory too; the heart of man was as the heart of God; God loved man, and man loved God. But imagine that same great Spirit to be still standing between the heavens and the earth, how sad must he be, when he hears the jarring discord, and feels it grate upon the ear! The Lord saith, "I am reconciled to thee, I have put away thy sin;" but what is the answer of this earth? The answer of the world is, "Man is at enmity with God: God may be reconciled, but man is not. The mass of men are still enemies to God by wicked works." When the angels praise God, if they list to the sounds that are to be heard on earth, they hear the trump of cruel war; they hear the bacchanalian shout and the song of the lascivious, and what a discord is this in the great harmony of the spheres? The fact is this, — the world was originally one great string in the harp of the universe, and when the Almighty swept that harp with his gracious fingers there was nothing to be heard but praise; now that string is snapped, and where it has been reset by grace, still it is not wholly restored to its perfect tune, and the note that cometh from it hath but little of sweetness, and very much of discord. But, O bright Spirit, retain thy place, and live on. The day is hastening with glowing wheels, and the axle thereof is hot with speed. The day is coming, when this world shall be a paradise again. Jesus Christ, who came the first time to bleed and

suffer, that he might wash the world from its iniquity, is coming a second time to reign and conquer, that he may clothe the earth with glory; and the day shall arrive, when thou, O Spirit, shall hear again the everlasting harmony. Once more the bells of earth shall be attuned to the melodies of heaven; once more shall the eternal chorus find that no singer is absent, but that the music is complete.

But how is this to be? How is the world to be brought back? How is it to be restored? We answer, the reason why there was this original harmony between earth and heaven was, because there was love between them twain, and our great reason for hoping that there shall be at last re-established an undiscordant harmony between heaven and earth is simply this, that God hath already manifested his love towards us, and that in return, hearts touched by his grace do even now love him; and when they shall be multiplied, and love re-established, then shall the harmony be complete.

Having thus introduced my text, I must now plunge into it. We shall notice the parentage, the nourishment, and the walk of love; and shall exhort all believers here present, to love God, because he hath first loved them.

**1.** In the first place, THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. There is no light in the planet but that which cometh from the sun; there is no light in the moon but that which is borrowed, and there is no true love in the heart but that which cometh from God. Love is the light, the life, and way of the universe. Now, God is both life, and light, and way, and, to crown all, God is love. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth, that we love him, for no other reason than because he first loved us. There are some that think that God might be loved by simple contemplation of his works. We do not believe it. We have heard a great deal about admiring philosophers, and we have felt that admiration was more than possible when studying the works of God. We have heard a great deal about wondering discoverers, and we have acknowledged that the mind must be base indeed which does not wonder when it looks upon the works of God; and we have sometimes heard about a love to God which has been engendered by the beauties of scenery, but we have never believed in its existence. We do believe that where love is already born in the heart of

man, all the wonders of God's providence and creation may excite that love again, it being there already; but we do not and we cannot believe, because we never saw such an instance, that the mere contemplation of God's works could ever raise any man to the height of love. In fact, the great problem has been tried, and it has been solved in the negative. What saith the poet,

*“What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Java's isle;  
Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.”*

Where God is most resplendent in his works, and most lavish in his gifts, there man has been the vilest and God is the most forgotten.

Others have taught, if not exactly in doctrine, yet their doctrine necessarily leads to it, that human nature may of itself attain unto love to God. Our simple reply is, we have never met with such an instance. We have curiously questioned the people of God, and we believe that others have questioned them in every age, but we have never had but one answer to this question, “Why hast thou loved God?” The only answer has been, “Because he first loved me.” I have heard men preach about free-will, but I never yet heard of a Christian who exalted free-will in his own experience. I have heard men say, that men of their own free-will may turn to God, believe, repent, and love, but I have heard the same persons, when talking of their own experience, say, that they did not so turn to God, but that Jesus sought them when they were strangers, wandering from the fold of God. The whole matter may look specious enough, when preached, but when felt it is found to be a phantom. It may seem right enough for a man to tell his fellow that his own free-will may save him; but when he comes to close dealing with his own conscience, he himself, however wild in his doctrine, is compelled to say, “Oh! yes, I do love Jesus, because he first loved me.” I have wondered at a Wesleyan brother, who has sometimes railed against this doctrine in the pulpit, and then has given out this very hymn, and all the members of the church have joined in singing it most heartily, while at the same time they were tolling the death-knell of their own peculiar tenets; for if that hymn be true Arminianism must be false. If it be the certain fact, that the only reason for our loving God is that his love has been shed abroad in our hearts, then it cannot be true anyhow, that man ever did or ever will love God, until first of all God has manifested his love towards him.



But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us? Ah! beloved, cold admiration every man may have; but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God's Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself, we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth, that the reason of our love to God is, the sweet influence of his grace. Sometimes I wonder that such as we should have been brought to love God at all. Is our love so precious that God should court our love, dressed in the crimson robes of a dying Redeemer? If we had loved God, it would have been no more than he deserved. But when we rebelled, and yet he sought our love, it was surprising indeed. It was a wonder when he disrobed himself of all his splendours, and came down and wrapt himself in a mantle of clay; but methinks the wonder is excelled yet, for after he had died for us, still we did not love him; we rebelled against him; we rejected the proclamation of the gospel; we resisted his Spirit; but he said, I will have their hearts; and he followed us day after day, hour after hour. Sometimes he laid us low, and he said, "Surely they will love me if I restore them!" At another time he filled us with corn and with wine, and he said "Surely they will love me now," but we still revolted, still rebelled. At last he said, "I will strive no longer, I am Almighty, and I will not have it that a human heart is stronger than I am. I turn the will of man as the rivers of water are turned," and lo! he put forth his strength, and in an instant the current changed, and we loved him, because we then could see the love of God, in that he sent his Son to be our Redeemer. But we must confess, beloved, going back to the truth with which we started, that never should we have had any love towards God, unless that love had been sown in us by the sweet seed of his love to us. If there be any one here that hath a love to Christ, let him differ from this doctrine here, but let him know that he shall not differ hereafter; for in heaven they all sing, praise to free grace. They all sing, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

**II.** Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. But after it is divinely born in our heart it must be divinely NOURISHED. Love is an exotic; it is not a plant that will nourish naturally in human soil. Love to God is a rich and rare thing; it would die if it were left to be frost-bitten by the chilly blasts of our selfishness, and if it received no nourishment but that which can be drawn from the rock of our

own hard hearts it must perish. As love comes from heaven, so it must feed on heavenly bread. It cannot exist in this wilderness, unless it is nurtured from above, and fed by manna from on high. On what, then, does love feed? Why, it feeds on love. That which brought it forth becomes its food. "We love him because he first loved us." The constant motive and sustaining power of our love to God is his love to us. And here let me remark that there are different kinds of food, in this great granary of love. When we are first of all renewed, the only food on which we can live is milk, because we are but babes, and as yet have not strength to feed on higher truths.

The first thing, then, that our love feeds upon, when it is but an infant, is a sense of favors received. Ask a young Christian why he loves Christ, and he will tell you, I love Christ because he has bought me with his blood! Why do you love God the Father? I love God the Father because he gave his Son for me. And why do you love God the Spirit? I love him because he has renewed my heart. That is to say we love God for what he has given to us. Our first love feeds just on the simple food of a grateful recollection of mercies received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love.

But when the Christian grows older and has more grace, he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. I trust I can say, I have in my heart now a love to God, These men did not merely love Christ because of what he had done for them; but you will find in their sonnets and in their letters — that their motive of love was, that he had communed with them, he had showed them his hands and his side; they had walked with him in the villages; they had lain with him on the beds of spices; they had entered into the mystic circle of communion; and they felt that they loved Christ, because he was all over glorious, and was so divinely fair, that if all nations could behold him, sure they must be constrained to love him too.

This, then, is the food of love; but when love grows rich — and it does sometimes — the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love, is the food on which it fed at first. I have heard say by the physicians, that if a man be sick there is no place so well adapted for him as the place where he was born; and if

love grow sick and cold, there is no place so fit for it to go to as the place where it was born, namely, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where was love born? Was she born in the midst of romantic scenery, and was she nursed with wondrous contemplations upon the lap of beauty? Ah! no. Was she born on the steeps of Sinai, when God came from Sinai and the holy one from mount Paran, and melted the mountains with the touch of his foot, and made the rocks flow down like wax before his terrible presence? Ah! no. Was love born on Tabor, when the Savior was transfigured, and his garment became whiter than wool, whiter than any fuller could make it? Ah! no; darkness rushed o'er the sight of those that looked upon him then, and they fell asleep, for the glory overpowered them. Let me tell you where love was born. Love was born in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood, it was nurtured in Pilate's hall, where Jesus bared his back to the ploughing of the lash, and gave his body to be spit upon and scourged. Love was nurtured at the cross, amid the groans of an expiring God, beneath the droppings of his blood — it was there that love was nurtured. Bear me witness, children of God. Where did your love spring from, but from the foot of the cross? Did you ever see that sweet flower growing anywhere but at the foot of Calvary? No; it was when ye saw "love divine, all loves excelling," outdoing its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again; it was there your love was born; and if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places; make it sit in the shade of the olive trees, and make it stand on the pavement and gaze, while the blood is still gushing down. Take it to the cross, and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding lamb; and surely this shall make thy love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame.

And then, when thy love is thus recruited, let me bid thee give thy love full exercise; for it shall grow thereby. You say, "Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love, to make it grow?" Oh! Sacred Dove of love, stretch thy wings, and play the eagle now. Come! open wide thine eyes, and look full in the Sun's face, and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world's creation, upwards, till thou art lost in eternity. Remember, that God loved thee from before the foundation of the

world. Does not this strengthen thy love? Ah! what a bracing air is that air of eternity? When I fly into it for a moment, and think of the great doctrine of election — of

*“That vast unmeasured love,  
Which from the days of old,  
Did all the chosen seed embrace,  
like sheep within the fold.”*

It makes the tears run down one’s cheeks to think that we should have an interest in that decree and council of the Almighty Three, when every one that should be blood-bought had its name inscribed in God’s eternal book. Come, soul, I bid thee now exercise thy wings a little, and see if this does not make thee love God. He thought of thee before thou hadst a being. When as yet the sun and the moon were not, — when the sun, the moon, and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup, when the old sea was not yet born, long ere this infant world lay in its swaddling bands of mist, then God had inscribed thy name upon the heart and upon the hands of Christ indelibly, to remain for ever. And does not this make thee love God? Is not this sweet exercise for thy love? For here it is my text comes in, giving, as it were, the last charge in this sweet battle of love, a charge that sweeps everything before it. “We love God, because he first loved us,” seeing that he loved us before time began, and when in eternity he dwelt alone.

And when thou hast soared backward into the past eternity, I have yet another flight for thee. Soar back through all thine own experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day — how he hath borne with thine ill manners — how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt — how he has opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles — how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins — how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. And when thou hast flown over this sweet field of love, thou mayest fly further on, and remember that the oath, the covenant, the blood, have something more in them than the past, for though “he first loved us,” yet this doth not mean that he shall ever cease to, love, for he is Alpha and he shall be Omega, he is first, and he

shall be last; and therefore bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for he is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold floods of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death cannot separate thee from his love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, for "I am persuaded that neither principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And now, soul is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love him? Doth not a flight over those illimitable plains of the ether of love, inflame thy heart, and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Here is the food of love. "We love him, because he first loved us," and because in that first love there is the pledge and promise that he will love us even to the end.

**III.** And now comes the third point, the WALK OF LOVE. "We love him." Children of God, if Christ were here on earth, what would you do for him? If it should be rumored to-morrow that the Son of Man had come down from heaven, as he came at first, what would you do for him? If there should be an infallible witness that the feet that trod the holy acres of Palestine were actually treading the roads of Great Britain, what would you do for him? Oh, I can conceive that there would be a tumult of delighted hearts — a superabundance of liberal hands — that there would be a sea of streaming eyes to behold him. "Do for him!" says one; "Do for him! Did he hunger, I would give him meat, though it were my last crust. Did he thirst, I would give him drink, though my own lips were parched with fire. Was he naked, I would strip myself and shiver in the cold to clothe him. Do for him! I should scarcely know what to do. I would hurry away, and I would cast myself at his dear feet, and I would beseech him, if it would but honor him, that he would tread upon me, and crush me in the dust, if he would but be raised one inch the higher thereby. Did he want a soldier, I would enlist in his army; did he need that some one should die, I would give my body to be burned, if he stood by to see the sacrifice and cheer me in the flames." O ye daughters of Jerusalem! would ye not go forth to meet him? would ye not rejoice with the tabret, and in the dance? Dance then ye might, like Miriam, by the side of Egypt's waters, red with blood. We, the sons of men, would dance, like David before the ark,

exulting for joy, if Christ were come. Ah! we think we love him so much that we should do all that; but there is a grave question about the truth of this matter after all. Do you not know that Christ's wife and family are here? And if ye love him, would it not follow as a natural inference, that you would love his bride and his offspring? "Ah!" says one, "Christ has no bride on earth." Has he not? Has he not espoused unto himself his church? Is not his church, the mother of the faithful, his own chosen wife? And did he not give his blood to be her dower? And has he not declared that he never will be divorced from her, for he hates to put away, and that he will consummate the marriage in the last great day, when he shall come to reign with his people upon the earth. And has he no children here? "The daughters of Jerusalem and the sons of Zion who hath begotten me these?" Are not they the offspring of the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the child born, the son given? Surely they are; and if we love Christ, as we think we do, as we pretend we do, we shall love his church and people. And do you love his church? Perhaps you love the part to which you belong. You love the hand. It may be a hand that is garnished with many a brilliant ring of noble ceremonies, and you love that. You may belong to some poor, poverty-stricken denomination — it may be the foot — and you love the foot; but you speak contemptuously of the hand, because it is garnished with greater honors. Whilst perhaps ye of the hand are speaking lightly of those who are of the foot. Brethren, it is a common thing with us all to love only a part of Christ's body, and not to love the whole; but if we love him we should love all his people.

When we are on our knees in prayer, I fear that when we are praying for the church we do not mean all that we say. We are praying for our church, our section of it. Now, he that loves Christ, if he be a Baptist, he loves the doctrine of baptism, because he knows it to be Scriptural; but, at the same time wherever he sees the grace of God to be in any man's heart, he loves him because he is a part of the living church, and he does not withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him, because he happens to differ on some one point. I pray that the church in these days may have a more loving spirit towards herself. We ought to delight in the advance of every denomination. Is the Church of England rousing from its sleep? Is she springing like a phoenix, from her ashes? God be with her, and God bless her! Is another denomination leading the van, and seeking by its ministers

to entice the wanderer into the house of God? God be with it! Is the Primitive Methodist laboring in the hedge and ditch, toiling for his Master? God help Him! Is the Calvinist seeking to uphold Christ crucified in all his splendours? God be with him! And does another man with far less knowledge preach much error, but still hold that “by grace are ye saved through faith,” then God bless him, and may success be with him evermore. If ye loved Christ better ye would love all Christ’s church, and all Christ’s people.

Do you not know that Christ hath now a mouth on earth, and hath left a hand on earth and a foot on earth still, and that if ye would prove your love to him, ye would not think that ye cannot feed him — ye need not imagine that ye cannot fill his hand, or that ye cannot wash his feet? Ye can do all this to-day. He has left his poor and afflicted people, and their mouths are hungry, for they need bread, and their tongue is parched for they need water. You meet them; they come to you; they are destitute and afflicted. Do ye refuse them? Do you know who it was ye denied at your door? “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me.” In rejecting the petition of the poor when you might have helped them, you rejected Christ. Christ was virtually the man to whom you parsimoniously refused the needed alms, and your Savior was thus rejected at the door of one for whom he himself had died. Do you want to feed Christ? Open your eyes, then, and you shall see him everywhere; in our back streets, in our lanes, in our alleys, in all our churches, connected with every branch of Christ’s people, ye shall find the poor and the afflicted. If ye want feed Christ, feed them. But ye say that ye are willing to wash Christ’s feet Ah! well, and ye may do it. Has he no fallen children? Are there no brethren who have sinned, and who are thus defiled? If Christ’s feet were foul, ye say ye would wash them; then if a Christian man has stepped aside, seek to restore him, and lead him once more in the way of righteousness. And do you want to fill Christ’s hands with your liberality? His Church is the treasure-house of his alms, and the hand of his church is outstretched for help, for she always needs it. She has a work to do which must be accomplished. She is straitened because your help is withheld from her; pour your gifts into her treasury, for all that ye can give unto her is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to stimulate your love, let me remind you that Christ Jesus had two trials of his love, which he endured with firmness, but which are often too much for us. When Christ was high, and glorious, I marvel that he loved us. I have known many a man who loved his friend when he was in the same low estate; but he has risen, and he has disdained to know the man at whose table he had fed. A lofty elevation tries the love which we bear to those who are inferior to us in rank. Now, Christ Jesus, the Lord of heaven and the King of angels, condescended to notice us before he came on earth, and always called us brethren: and since he has ascended up to heaven, and has re-assumed the diadem. and once more sits down at the right hand of God, he never has forgotten us. His high estate has never made him slight a disciple. When he rode into Jerusalem in triumph, we do not read that he disdained to confess that the humble fishermen were his followers. And “now, though he reigns exalted high, his love is still as great;” still he calls us brethren, friends; still he recognizes the kinship of the one blood. And yet, strange to say, we have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. “Ah!” said a woman, who had been wont to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, “I cannot do as much as I used to do.” “But how is that?” said one. Said she, “When I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, and now I have a guinea purse I have only a shilling heart.” It is a sad temptation to some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting-house and mix with the ignoble congregation, while they had but little; they have grown rich, there is a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room, they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as once they did, and Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any religious topic when they meet with their new friends. Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit, and they must spend so much time upon attire, and in maintaining their station and respectability, they cannot find time to pray as they did. The house of God has to be neglected for the party, and Christ has less of their heart than ever he had. “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” And hast thou risen so high that thou art ashamed of Christ? and art thou grown so rich, that Christ in his poverty is despised? Alas! poor wealth! alas! base wealth! vile wealth! ‘Twere well for thee if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of thine affection.



But once again: what a trial of love was that, when Christ began to suffer for us! There are many men, I doubt not, who are true believers, and love their Savior, who would tremble to come to the test of suffering. Imagine yourself my brother, taken to-day into some dark dungeon of the Inquisition; conceive that all the horrors of the dark ages are revived, you are taken down a long dark staircase, and hurried you know not whither, at last you come to a place, far deep in the bowels of the earth, and round about you see hanging on the walls the pincers, the instruments of torture of all kinds and shapes. There are two inquisitors there who say to you, "Are you prepared to renounce your heretical faith, and to return to the bosom of the church?" I conceive my brethren and sisters, that you would have strength of mind and grace enough to say, "I am not prepared to deny my Savior." But when the pincers began to tear the flesh, when the hot coals began to scorch, when the rack began to dislocate the bones; when all the instruments of torture were wreaking their hellish vengeance, unless the supernatural hand of God should be mightily upon you, I am sure that in your weakness you would deny your Master, and in the hour of your peril would forsake the Lord that bought you. True, the love of Christ in the heart, when sustained by his grace, is strong enough to bear us through; but I am afraid that with many of us here present, if we had no more love than we have now, we should come out from the inquisition miserable apostates from the faith. But now, remember Christ. He was exposed to tortures, which were really more tremendous, far. There is no engine of Romish cruelty that can equal that dreadful torture which forced a sweat of blood from every pore. Christ was scourged and he was crucified; but there were other woes unseen by us, which were the soul of his agonies. Now, if Christ in the hour of sore trial had said, "I disown my disciples, I will not die," he might have come down from the cross; and who could accuse him of evil? He owed us nothing; we could do nothing for him. Poor worms would be all that he would disown. But our Master, even when the blood-sweat covered him as with a mantle of gore, never thought of disowning us — NEVER. "My Father," said he once, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But there was always the "If it be possible." If it be possible to save without it, let the cup pass; but if not thy will be done. You never hear him say in Pilate's hall one word that would let you imagine that he was sorry he had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us; and when his hands are pierced, and when he is parched with fever, and his

tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and his whole body is dissolved into the dust of death, you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like going back. It is the cry of one determined to go on, though he knows he must die on his onward march. It was love that could not be stayed by death, but overcame all the horrors of the grave.

Now, what say we to this? We who live in these gentler times, are we about to give up our Master, when we are tried and tempted for him? Young man in the workshop! it is your lot to be jeered at because you are a follower of the Savior; and will you turn back from Christ because of a jeer? Young woman! you are laughed at because you profess the religion of Christ, shall a laugh dissolve the link of love that knits your heart to him, when all the roar of hell could not divert his love from you. And you who are suffering because you maintain a religious principle, are you cast out from men; will you not bear that the house should be stripped, and that you shall eat the bread of poverty, rather than dishonor such a Lord? Will you not go forth from this place, by the help of God's Spirit, vowing and declaring that in life, come poverty, come wealth — in death, come pain, or come what may, you are and ever must be the Lord's; for this is written on your heart, "We love him, because he first loved us."

# FREE GRACE

## SERMON NO. 233

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 9TH, 1859,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”*

— *Ezekiel 36:32.*

THERE are two sins of man that are bred in the bone, and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is self-exaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians, and those who understand best the gospel of Christ, find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature, instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God alone. Over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God's work from first to last, and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error — that we are to save ourselves, or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation — always rises up, and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God. Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son — Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar, to wife, and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God's promise; but instead of Ishmael's helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham's heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. “Cast out,” said the Scripture, “the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.” Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is

tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise, and we set to work ourselves to do something, and what do we do? Sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham's heart to send Ishmael away? Ah! and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of grace. Oh, beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting Philosophic rules and principles which we think will effect the Divine work. We shall but mar it; we shall bring grief into our own spirits. But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help, and strength, and grace, and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort, and to God's glory. That error, then, I say is in our bone, and will always dwell with us, and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. "Not for your sakes do I this." He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. "I will take you from among the heathen." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." "I will give you a new heart." "I will put my Spirit within you." It is all of God: therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine, and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone, is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely. You will find the most abandoned drunkard pride himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world, exalt what they imagine to be a virtue — the fact that they do not profess to have any; and they think themselves to be extremely excellent, because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile. Somehow the human mind clings to human merit; it always will hold to it, and when you take away everything upon which you think it could rely, in less than a

moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit, is like the spider, it bears its support in its own bowels, and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another, you may take the thread from one place, and you will find it clinging to your finger, and when you seek to brush it down with one hand you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of; it is ever ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust. It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak, and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian, and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious truth, and a giving up to the power and grace of God, who will never save us, unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to expound at large the doctrine contained in this text; in the next place I shall endeavor to show its force and truthfulness; and then in the third place I shall seek God's Holy Spirit to apply the useful, practical lessons which are to be drawn from it.

**I.** I shall endeavor to EXPOUND THIS TEXT. "Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord God." The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God, and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God — the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them; they were swept from their starry seats in Heaven, and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them; but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment. The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously; at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sin of mankind. However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels, and suffered them forever to expiate

their offenses in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale; the election of manhood, and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know, and which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I been put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? Have they not the greatest mental strength? If they had been redeemed, would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves? Those bright beings — Lucifer, son of the morning, and those stars that walked in his train — if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who doeth as He wills with His own, and giveth no account of His matters, but who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay, took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham, and chose men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? certainly not in man. "Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways."

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it; but when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it. Come, then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved, and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God's bosom. The reason why this day the gospel is preached to you and not the heathen far away, is not because, as a race, we are superior to the heathen; it is not because we deserve more at God's hands; His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love. There is not reason in us why we should have the gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today, some of us have received the gospel, and have been changed by it, and have become the heirs of light and immortality, whereas others are left still to be the heirs of

wrath. But there is no reason in us why we should have been taken and others left.

*“There was nothing in us to merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight.  
’Twas ‘Even so, Father!’ we ever must sing,  
Because it seem’d good in thy sight.”*

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that, long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion; and there and then foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin, and deserve His anger, determined, in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children, and should be brought to Heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts. to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall; all without the slightest claim upon His mercy; all, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of any one, and His choice of all His people, are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will, and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do; for thus saith the text: “Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!”

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world, and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father hath chosen. Now come ye to the cross of Christ; bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite, that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us. The little good that is in us — the no good that is in us — for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love

which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the cross, ye merit-mongers, ye that delight in your own works; and answer this question: Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from Heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree, and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world's guilt? You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude, and by its many years of working; but you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty, and bowed Him to the death of the cross: that is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind, as impossibility can be. No; from the cross comes the cry — “Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel.”

After Christ's death, there comes, in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father hath chosen, and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls “out of darkness into marvelous light.” Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any, merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men, and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men, and let them march in review, and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, “I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this — nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men.” For, look ye here. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, “Come forth and live,” it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us. Therefore, know ye this, men and brethren, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God; and if the Spirit shall choose



to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further: this truth, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus; they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" they are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh, and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people — His own free sovereign grace. If, my brother, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian; it is simply and only because of God's mercy. He is not moved to anything He does for you by anything .that you do for Him; His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept.

***"Nor death, nor Hell shall e'er remove  
His favorites from His breast;  
In the dear bosom of His love  
They must forever rest."***

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because he in his sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And to conclude my exposition of this text. This shall hold good in Heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white. Our hands shall soon bear the palm; our ears shall be delighted with celestial melodies, and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God's glory. But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to Heaven shall be His own love, and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it; we must labor, but the wage at the days' end shall be a wage of grace, and not a debt. We must honor God here,

looking for the recompense of the reward; but that recompense will not be given on a legal ground, because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God had loved us, for no reason that was in us. When you and I and each of us shall enter Heaven, our song shall be, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory;” and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true; we shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing, and that we were nothing, but that God did it all — that we had nothing in us to be the motive of his doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself; therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honor forever and ever.

Now, this, I take it, is the meaning of the text; distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there It stands. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” His truth we must preach, and this we must proclaim. Salvation is “not of men, neither by man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood,” nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God, and God alone.

## **II.** And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.

Consider a moment man’s character. It will humble us, and it will tend to confirm this truth in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God, and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin, and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm — every one of them. The public cry is everywhere — “This man must die; the laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigor. He who beareth not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die; he richly deserves it.” You look through his character: you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender; he has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, “The case is hopeless with this man; his crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretense of excuse, or

any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch; let him die!" Now, if her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight, that the only reason that can move her to spare that man, must be her own love, her own compassion? For, as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man's character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin. Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God. Ah! my hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended; but there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience, and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved. My hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, It has been because providence has stayed your hand, Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel that the vileness of your imagination and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt, and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you, and have gone over your head. Now, man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it, because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse, and you feel it. Oh! bless His dear name, that He has devised this way, whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you. I want you to go back to Newgate again to this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by her Majesty in person. She goes to him, and she says to him, "Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you; you deserve it not; but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands." Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her — curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her, and utter blasphemies, and imprecate curses upon her head. She retires; she is gone; but so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, she continually sends messengers, and

these go to him, and they say, “If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy; not because you deserve it, but because her Majesty is compassionate, and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?” Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case — suppose he turns upon his seat and says, “I don’t care whether I am hanged or not; I’ll take my chance along with other people; I shall take no notice of you.” And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned, and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows. Now, if her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, “Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love; she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die.” And now what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? and has He not said to you, “Sinner! come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool.” And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience — cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word, and railed against His ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you, and his message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.” And what will you do. Why, if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message — despise it. It will glance off from you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail, and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes; but must be from His own infinite love; it cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His gospel, trodden under foot the blood of Jesus, and have refused to be saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace, and free grace alone.

But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin, and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where

others are confined, and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart; he utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him, and endeavors to make others as vile as himself. Now, what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others; and if he be spared, is it not as plain as a pike — staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign. And now look you here: is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but lead others into sin? I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation. Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children's souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches, and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious, and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you. O my hearer, is not this thy case? Does not thy heart confess it? And does not the tear flow down thy cheek? Remember, then, this must be true: if God shall save thee, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in thee, for thou deservedst now to die, and if He spare thee it must be sovereign love and sovereign grace.

I will just use one other illustration, and then, I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Every one can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection; we are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black; and great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man. Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a

tribe of devils living, that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them. Well, now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If, then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man's love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save men must be God's own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable — "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." God sees us, abandoned, evil, wicked, and deserving His wrath; if He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it — nothing whatever in us.

**III.** And now, having thus preached this doctrine, and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION. And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labor with your hearts!

First, since this doctrine is true, how humble a Christian man ought to be. If thou be saved, thou hast had nought to do with it; God has done it. If thou be saved, thou hast not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which thou hast received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them. I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long, and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society, and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul's good, it broke her heart. What should a man of God care about her? she was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her? Ah! but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against thee, and yet thou hast loved me, unworthy me! How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before Thee in speechless gratitude. Remember, my dear brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been, to this day, hardened in heart, without God, and without Christ, had not free grace saved you. Can you be proud then? — proud of mercy

which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you? — proud of grace which has been given you against your will, until your will was changed by sovereign grace? And think again. All the mercy you have you once refused, Christ sups with you; be not proud of His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked, and you refused — when He came to the door and said, “My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night; open to me, my beloved;” and you barred it in His face and would not let Him enter. Be not proud, then, of what thou hast, when thou rememberest that thou didst once reject Him. Does God embrace Thee in His arms of love? Remember, once thou liftedst up thine hand of rebellion against Him. Is thy name written in His book? Ah! there was a time when, if it had been in thy power, thou wouldst have erased the sacred lines that contained thine own salvation. Can we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson: let us learn another.

This doctrine is true, and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest gratitude. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh! I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate; I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother’s tears shed over me in vain, and a father’s admonition lost upon me, and yet I found myself saved by grace, and I could only say, “Lord, I bless Thee that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit I had never been saved. If thou hadst waited till there was something good in me, thou wouldst have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of hell, for good in man there never would have been, unless thou hadst first put it there.” And then I thought immediately, “Oh! how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!” Ah! let me try if I cannot. O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you; He will not save you, if you have anything to recommend you, for His says, “Not for you sake do I this.” Go to Christ with earrings in your ears, and jewels upon you; wash your face, and array yourself with gold and silver, and go before Him and say, “Lord, save me; I have washed myself and clothed myself; save me!” “Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this.” Go

to Him again, and say, "Lord, I have put a rope about my neck, and sackcloth about my loins; see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need; now save me!" "No," saith He, "I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes, and now I will not save you because of your rags; I will save you for nothing about you; if I do save you, it will be from something in my heart, not from anything you feel. Get ye gone!" But if today you go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved — there is one in Heaven; Lord, I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer; Lord, I deserve it, and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if thou wouldst save me I should make but a poor Christian, after all; I fear that my future works will be no honor to Thee — I wish they could be, but thy grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But, Lord, thou I have nothing to bring, and nothing to say for myself, I do say this: I have heard that thou hast come into the world to save sinners — O Lord, save me!

*'I the chief of sinners am.'*

I confess I do not feel this as I ought, I do not mourn it as I ought; I have no repentance to recommend me; nay, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe thy promise as I ought; but oh! I cling to this text. Lord, thou hast said thou wilt not do it for my sake. I thank Thee thou hast said that. Thou couldst not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why thou shouldst. Lord, I claim thy gracious promise. 'Be merciful to me, a sinner.'" Ah! you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you; it is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your churches regularly, and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath, or never swore an oath, or did anything wrong, this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots, and drunkards, and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are. Ah! well, this is your text — "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You are "whole" — you are; you "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Go your way. Christ came to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it, and perish in the doing of it. But I feel that the same gospel that suits a harlot suits me, and that that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved. Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty — some more, some less, but



all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy, and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust, and sigh out again, "Lord have mercy upon us for whom Jesus died."

*"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."*

Sinner, come now; come now, I beseech thee; I entreat thee, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come, now, receive His mercy; now bend your willing necks to His yoke; and then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love, and at last to sing in Heaven the song of the redeemed — "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory forever. Amen."

*"O thou great eternal Jesus,  
High and mighty Prince of Peace,  
How Thy wonders shine resplendent,  
In the wonders of Thy grace:  
Thy rich gospel scorns conditions,  
Breathes salvation free as air;  
Only breathes triumphant mercy,  
Baffling guilt, and all despair.*

*"O the grandeur of the gospel,  
How it sounds the cleansing blood;  
Shows the bowels of a Savior,  
Shows the tender heart of God.  
Only treats of love eternal,  
Swells the all-abounding grace,  
Nothing knows but life and pardon,  
Full redemption, endless peace."*

# PREDESTINATION AND CALLING

## SERMON NO. 241

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 6TH, 1859,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” — Romans 8:30*

THE GREAT BOOK OF GOD’S DECREES is fast closed against the curiosity of man. Vain man would be wise; he would break the seven seals thereof, and read the mysteries of eternity. But this cannot be; the time has not yet come when the book shall be opened, and even then the seals shall not be broken by mortal hand, but it shall be said, “The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book and break the seven seals thereof.”

*Eternal Father, who shall look  
Into thy secret will?  
None but the Lamb shall take the book,  
And open every seal.*

None but he shall ever unroll that sacred record and read it to the assembled world. How then am I to know whether I am predestinated by God unto eternal life or not? It is a question in which my eternal interests are involved; am I among that unhappy number who shall be left to live in sin and reap the due reward of their iniquity; or do I belong to that goodly company, who albeit that they have sinned shall nevertheless be washed in the blood of Christ, and shall in white robes walk the golden streets of paradise? Until this question be answered my heart cannot rest, for I am intensely anxious about it. My eternal destiny infinitely more concerns me than all the affairs of time. Tell me, oh, tell me, if ye know, seers and prophets, is my name recorded in that book of life? Am I one of those who are ordained unto eternal life, or am I to be left to follow my own lusts and passions, and to destroy my own soul? Oh! man, there is an

answer to thy inquiry; the book cannot be opened, but God himself hath published many a page thereof. He hath not published the page whereon the actual names of the redeemed are written; but that page of the sacred decree whereon their character is recorded is published in his Word, and shall be proclaimed to thee this day. The sacred record of God's hand is this day published everywhere under heaven, and he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto him. O my hearer, by thy name I know thee not, and by thy name God's Word doth not declare thee, but by thy character thou mayest read thy name; and if thou hast been a partaker of the calling which is mentioned in the text, then mayest thou conclude beyond a doubt that thou art among the predestinated — "For whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And if thou be called, it follows as a natural inference thou art predestinated.

Now, in considering this solemn subject, let me remark that there are two kinds of callings mentioned in the Word of God. The first is the general call, which is in the gospel sincerely given to everyone that heareth the word. The duty of the minister is to call souls to Christ, he is to make no distinction whatever — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The trumpet of the gospel sounds aloud to every man in our congregations — "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man"  
(Proverbs 8:4).

This call is sincere on God's part; but man by nature is so opposed to God, that this call is never effectual, for man disregards it, turns his back upon it, and goes his way, caring for none of these things. But mark, although this call be rejected, man is without excuse in the rejection; the universal call has in it such authority, that the man who will not obey it shall be without excuse in the day of judgment. When thou art commanded to believe and repent, when thou art exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, the sin lies on thy own head if thou dost despise the exhortation, and reject the commandment. And this solemn text drops an awful warning: "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation." But I repeat it, this universal call is rejected by man; it is a call, but it is not a

attended with divine force and energy of the Holy Spirit in such a degree as to make it an unconquerable call, consequently men perish, even though they have the universal call of the gospel ringing in their ears. The bell of God's house rings every day, sinners hear it, but they put their fingers in their ears, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and though they are bidden and are called to the wedding (Luke 14:16,17,18), yet they will not come, and by not coming they incur God's wrath, and he declareth of such, —

“None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper”  
(Luke 14:24).

The call of our text is of a different kind; it is not a universal call, it is a special, particular, personal, discriminating, efficacious, unconquerable, call. This call is sent to the predestinated, and to them only; they by grace hear the call, obey it, and receive it. These are they who can now say, “Draw us, and we will run after thee.”

In preaching of this call this morning, I shall divide my sermon into three brief parts. — First, I shall give illustrations of the call; second, we shall come to examine whether we have been called; and then third, what delightful consequences flow therefrom. Illustration, examination, consolation.

**I.** First, then, for ILLUSTRATION. In illustrating the effectual call of grace, which is given to the predestinated ones, I must first use the picture of Lazarus. See you that stone rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher? Much need is there for the stone that it should be well secured, for within the sepulcher there is a putrid corpse. The sister of that corrupt body stands at the side of the tomb, and she says, “Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.” This is the voice of reason and of nature. Martha is correct; but by Martha's side there stands a man who, despite all his lowliness, is very God of very God. “Roll ye away the stone,” saith he, and it is done; and now, listen to him; he cries, “Lazarus, come forth!” that cry is directed to a mass of putridity, to a body that has been dead four days, and in which the worms have already held carnival; but, strange to say, from that tomb there comes a living man; that mass of corruption has been quickened into life, and out he comes, wrapped about with graveclothes, and having a napkin about his head. “Loose him and let him

go,” saith the Redeemer; and then he walks in all the liberty of life. The effectual call of grace is precisely similar; the sinner is dead in sin; he is not only in sin but dead in sin, without any power whatever to give to himself the life of grace. Nay, he is not only dead, but he is corrupt; his lusts, like the worms, have crept into him, a foul stench riseth up into the nostrils of justice, God abhorreth him, and justice crieth, “Bury the dead out of my sight, cast it into the fire, let it be consumed.” Sovereign Mercy comes, and there lies this unconscious, lifeless mass of sin; Sovereign Grace cries, either by the minister, or else directly without any agency, by the Spirit of God, “come forth!” and that man lives. Does he contribute anything to his new life? Not he; his life is given solely by God. He was dead, absolutely dead, rotten in his sin; the life is given when the call comes, and, in obedience to the call, the sinner comes forth from the grave of his lust, begins to live a new life, even the life eternal, which Christ gives to his sheep.

“Well,” cries one, “but what are the words which Christ uses when he calls a sinner from death?” Why the Lord may use any words. It was not long ago there came unto this hall, a man who was without God and without Christ, and the simple reading of the hymn —

*“Jesus lover of my soul,”*

was the means of his quickening. He said within himself, “Does Jesus love me? then I must love him,” and he was quickened in that selfsame hour. The words which Jesus uses are various in different cases. I trust that even while I am speaking this morning, Christ may speak with me, and some word that may fall from my lips, unpremeditated and almost without design, shall be sent of God as a message of life unto some dead and corrupt heart here, and some man who has lived in sin hitherto, shall now live to righteousness, and live to Christ. That is the first illustration I will give you of what is meant by effectual calling. It finds the sinner dead, it gives him life, and he obeys the call of life and lives.

But let us consider a second phase of it. You will remember while the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive enough so far as any opposition to God may be concerned. He is powerless to obey, but he is mighty enough to resist the call of divine grace. I may illustrate it in the case of Saul of Tarsus: this proud Pharisee abhors the Lord Jesus Christ; he has seized

upon every follower of Jesus who comes within his grasp; he has haled men and women to prison; with the avidity of a miser who hunts after gold, he has hunted after the precious life of Christ's disciple, and having exhausted his prey in Jerusalem, he seeks letters and goes off to Damascus upon the same bloody errand. Speak to him on the road, send out the apostle Peter to him, let Peter say, "Saul, why dost thou oppose Christ? The time shall come when thou shalt yet be his disciple." Paul would turn round and laugh him to scorn — "Get thee gone thou fisherman, get thee gone — I a disciple of that imposter Jesus of Nazareth! Look here, this is my confession of faith; here will I hale thy brothers and thy sisters to prison, and beat them in the synagogue and compel them to blaspheme and even hunt them to death, for my breath is threatening, and my heart is as fire against Christ." Such a scene did not occur, but had there been any remonstrance given by men you may easily conceive that such would have been Saul's answer. But Christ determined that he would call the man. Oh, what an enterprise! Stop HIM? Why he is going fast onward in his mad career. But lo, a light shines round about him and he falls to the ground, and he hears a voice crying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul's eyes are filled with tears, and then again with scales of darkness, and he cries, "Who art thou?" and a voice calls, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It is not many minutes before he begins to feel his sin in having persecuted Jesus, nor many hours ere he receives the assurance of his pardon, and not many days ere he who persecuted Christ stands up to preach with vehemence and eloquence unparalleled, the very cause which he once trod beneath his feet. See what effectual calling can do. If God should choose this morning to call the hardest-hearted wretch within hearing of the gospel, he must obey. Let God call — a man may resist, but he cannot resist effectually. Down thou shalt come, sinner, if God cries down; there is no standing when he would have thee fall. And mark, every man that is saved, is always saved by an overcoming call which he cannot withstand; he may resist it for a time, but he cannot resist so as to overcome it, he must give way, he must yield when God speaks. If he says, "Let there be light," the impenetrable darkness gives way to light; if he says, "Let there be grace," unutterable sin gives way, and the hardest-hearted sinner melts before the fire of effectual calling.

I have thus illustrated the call in two ways, by the state of the sinner in his sin, and by the omnipotence which overwhelms the resistance which he offers. And now another case. The effectual call may be illustrated in its sovereignty by the case of Zaccheus. Christ is entering into Jericho to preach. There is a publican living in it, who is a hard, griping, grasping, miserly extortioner. Jesus Christ is coming in to call some one, for it is written he must abide in some man's house. Would you believe it, that the man whom Christ intends to call is the worst man in Jericho — the extortioner? He is a little short fellow, and he cannot see Christ, though he has a great curiosity to look at him; so he runs before the crowd and climbs up a sycamore tree, and thinking himself quite safe amid the thick foliage, he waits with eager expectation to see this wonderful man who had turned the world upside down. Little did he think that he was to turn him also. The Savior walks along preaching and talking with the people until he comes under the sycamore tree, then lifting up his eyes, he cries — “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide in thy house.” The shot took effect, the bird fell, down came Zaccheus, invited the Savior to his house, and proved that he was really called not by the voice merely but by grace itself, for he said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold;” and Jesus said, “This day is salvation come unto thy house.” Now why call Zaccheus? There were many better men in the city than he. Why call him? Simply because the call of God comes to unworthy sinners. There is nothing in man that can deserve this call; nothing in the best of men that can invite it; but God quickeneth whom he will, and when he sends that call, though it come to the vilest of the vile, down they come speedily and swiftly; they come down from the tree of their sin, and fall prostrate in penitence at the feet of Jesus Christ.

But now to illustrate this call in its effects, we remind you that Abraham is another remarkable instance of effectual calling. “Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee,” and “by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Ah! poor Abraham, as the world would have had it, what a trial

his call cost him! He was happy enough in the bosom of his father's household, but idolatry crept into it, and when God called Abraham, he called him alone and blessed him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and said to him, "Go forth, Abraham!" and he went forth, not knowing whither he went. Now, when effectual calling comes into a house and singles out a man, that man will be compelled to go forth without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. He must come out from his very dearest friends, from all his old acquaintances, from those friends with whom he used to drink, and swear, and take pleasure; he must go straight away from them all, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. What a trial to Abraham's faith, when he had to leave all that was so dear to him, and go he knew not whither! And yet God had a goodly land for him, and intended greatly to bless him. Man! if thou art called, if thou art called truly, there will be a going out, and a going out alone. Perhaps some of God's professed people will leave you; you will have to go without a solitary friend, — maybe you will even be deserted by Sarah herself, and you may be a stranger in a strange land, a solitary wanderer, as all your fathers were. Ah! but if it be an effectual call, and if salvation shall be the result thereof, what matters it though thou dost go to heaven alone? Better to be a solitary pilgrim to bliss, than one of the thousands who throng the road to hell.

I will have one more illustration. When effectual calling comes to a man, at first he may not know that it is effectual calling. You remember the case of Samuel; the Lord called Samuel, and he arose and went to Eli, and he said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." Eli said, "I called not, lie down again. And he went and lay down." The second time the Lord called him, and said, "Samuel, Samuel," and he arose again, and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," and then it was that Eli, not Samuel, first of all perceived that the Lord had called the child. And when Samuel knew it was the Lord, he said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." When the work of grace begins in the heart, the man is not always clear that it is God's work; he is impressed under the minister, and perhaps he is rather more occupied with the impression than with the agent of the impression; he says, "I know not how it is, but I have been called; Eli, the minister, has called me." And perhaps he goes to Eli to ask what he wants with him. "Surely," said he, "the minister knew me, and spoke something personally to me, because he knew my case." And he goes to Eli, and it is not till



afterwards, perhaps, that he finds that Eli had nothing to do with the impression, but that the Lord had called him. I know this — I believe God was at work with my heart for years before I knew anything about him. I knew there was a work; I knew I prayed, and cried, and groaned for mercy, but I did not know that was the Lord's work; I half thought it was my own. I did not know till afterwards, when I was led to know Christ as all my salvation, and all my desire, that the Lord had called the child, for this could not have been the result of nature, it must have been the effect of grace. I think I may say to those who are the beginners in the divine life, so long as your call is real, rest assured it is divine. If it is a call that will suit the remarks which I am about to give you in the second part of the discourse, even though you may have thought that God's hand is not in it, rest assured that it is, for nature could never produce effectual calling. If the call be effectual, and you are brought out and brought in — brought out of sin and brought to Christ, brought out of death into life, and out of slavery into liberty, then, though thou canst not see God's hand in it, yet it is there.

**II.** I have thus illustrated effectual calling. And now as a matter of EXAMINATION let each man judge himself by certain characteristics of heavenly calling which I am about to mention. If in your Bible you turn to 2 Timothy 1:9, you will read these words — “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.” Now here is the first touchstone by which we may try our calling — many are called but few are chosen, because there are many kinds of call, but the true call, and that only, answers to the description of the text. It is “an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” This calling forbids all trust in our own doings and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. If you are living in sin, you are not called; if you can still continue as you were before your pretended conversion, then it is no conversion at all; that man who is called in his drunkenness, will forsake his drunkenness; men may be called in the midst of sin, but they will not continue in it any longer. Saul was anointed to be king when he was seeking his father's asses; and many a man has been called when he has been seeking his own lust, but he will leave the asses, and leave the lust, when once he is called. Now, by this

shall ye know whether ye be called of God or not. If ye continue in sin, if ye walk according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, then are ye still dead in your trespasses and your sins; but as he that hath called you is holy, so must ye be holy. Can ye say, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I desire to keep all thy commandments, and to walk blamelessly in thy sight. I know that my obedience cannot save me, but I long to obey. There is nothing that pains me so much as sin; I desire to be quit and rid of it; Lord help me to be holy”? Is that the panting of thy heart? Is that the tenor of thy life towards God, and towards his law? Then, beloved, I have reason to hope that thou hast been called of God, for it is a holy calling wherewith God doth call his people.

Another text. In Philippians 3:13 and 14 you find these words.

“Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Is then your calling a high calling, has it lifted up your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it lifted up your hopes, to hope no longer for things that are on earth, but for things that are above? Has it lifted up your tastes, so that they are no longer grovelling, but you choose the things that are of God? Has it lifted up the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend your life with God in prayer, in praise, and in thanksgiving, and can no longer be satisfied with the low and mean pursuits which you followed in the days of your ignorance? Recollect, if you are truly called it is a high calling, a calling from on high, and a calling that lifts up your heart, and raises it to the high things of God, eternity, heaven, and holiness. In Hebrews 3:1, you find this sentence. “Holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling.” Here is another test. Heavenly calling means a call from heaven. Have you been called, not of man but of God? Can you now detect in your calling, the hand of God, and the voice of God? If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? and is it a call to heaven as well as from heaven? Can you heartily say that you can never rest satisfied till you

— *“behold his face  
And never, never sin,  
But from the rivers of his grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in.”*

Man, unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven is thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling, for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

There is another test. Let me remind you, that there is a passage in scripture which may tend very much to your edification, and help you in your examination. Those who are called, are men who before the calling, groaned in sin. What says Christ? — “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Now, if I cannot say the first things because of diffidence, though they be true, yet can I say this, that I feel myself to be a sinner, that I loathe my sinnership, that I detest my iniquity, that I feel I deserve the wrath of God on account of my transgressions? If so, then I have a hope that I may be among the called host whom God has predestinated. He has called not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Self-righteous man, I can tell thee in the tick of a clock, whether thou hast any evidence of election. I tell thee — No; Christ never called the righteous; and if he has not called thee, and if he never does call thee, thou art not elect, and thou and thy self-righteousness must be subject to the wrath of God, and cast away eternally. Only the sinner, the awakened sinner, can be at all assured that he has been called; and even he, as he gets older in grace, must look for those higher marks of the high heavenly and holy calling in Christ Jesus.

As a further test, — keeping close to scripture this morning, for when we are dealing with our own state before God there is nothing like giving the very words of scripture, — we are told in the first epistle of Peter, the second chapter, and the ninth verse, that God hath called us out of darkness into marvelous light. Is that your call? Were you once darkness in regard to Christ; and has marvelous light manifested to you a marvelous Redeemer, marvelously strong to save? Say soul, canst thou honestly declare that thy past life was darkness and that thy present state is light in the Lord? “For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the

Lord; walk as children of the light.” That man is not called who cannot look back upon darkness, ignorance, and sin, and who cannot now say, that he knows more than he did know, and enjoys at times the light of knowledge, and the comfortable light of God’s countenance.

Yet again. Another test of calling is to be found in Galatians, the fifth chapter, and the fifteenth verse. “Brethren, ye have been called into liberty.” Let me ask myself again this question, Have the fetters of my sin been broken off, and am I God’s free man? Have the manacles of justice been snapped, and am I delivered — set free by him who is the great ransom of spirits? The slave is not called. It is the free man that has been brought out of Egypt, who proves that he has been called of God and is precious to the heart of the Most High.

And yet once more, another precious means of test in the first of Corinthians, the first chapter, and the ninth verse. “He is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Do I have fellowship with Christ? do I converse with him, commune with him? Do I suffer with him, suffer for him? Do I sympathize with him in his objects and aims? Do I love what he loves; do I hate what he hates? Can I bear his reproach; can I carry his cross; do I tread in his steps; do I serve his cause, and is it my grandest hope that I shall see his kingdom come, that I shall sit upon his throne, and reign with him? If so, then am I called with the effectual calling, which is the work of God’s grace, and is the sure sign of my predestination.

Let me say now, before I turn from this point, that it is possible for a man to know whether God has called him or not, and he may know it too beyond a doubt. He may know it as surely as if he read it with his own eyes; nay, he may know it more surely than that, for if I read a thing with my eyes, even my eyes may deceive me, the testimony of sense may be false, but the testimony of the Spirit must be true. We have the witness of the Spirit within, bearing witness with our spirits that we are born of God. There is such a thing on earth as an infallible assurance of our election. Let a man once get that, and it will anoint his head with fresh oil, it will clothe him with the white garment of praise, and put the song of the angel into his mouth. Happy, happy man! who is fully assured of his interest in the covenant of grace, in the blood of atonement, and in the glories of heaven!

Such men there are here this very day. Let them “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”

What would some of you give if you could arrive at this assurance? Mark, if you anxiously desire to know, you may know. If your heart pants to read its title clear it shall do so ere long. No man ever desired Christ in his heart with a living and longing desire, who did not find him sooner or later. If thou hast a desire, God has given it thee. If thou pantest, and criest, and groanest after Christ, even this is his gift; bless him for it. Thank him for little grace, and ask him for great grace. He has given thee hope, ask for faith; and when he gives thee faith, ask for assurance; and when thou gettest assurance, ask for full assurance; and when thou hast obtained full assurance, ask for enjoyment; and when thou hast enjoyment, ask for glory itself; and he shall surely give it thee in his own appointed season.

**III.** I now come to finish up with CONSOLATION. Is there anything here that can console me? Oh, yes, rivers of consolation flow from my calling. For, first, if I am called then I am predestinated, there is no doubt about it. The great scheme of salvation is like those chains which we sometimes see at horse-ferries. There is a chain on this side of the river fixed into a staple, and the same chain is fixed into a staple at the other side, but the greater part of the chain is for the most part under water, and you cannot see it: you only see it as the boat moves on, and as the chain is drawn out of the water by the force that propels the boat. If today I am enabled to say I am called, then my boat is like the ferry-boat in the middle of the stream. I can see that part of the chain, which is named “calling,” but blessed be God, that is joined to the side that is called “election,” and I may be also quite clear that it is joined on to the other side, the glorious end of “glorification.” If I be called I must have been elected, and I need not doubt that. God never tantalized a man by calling him by grace effectually, unless he had written that man’s name in the Lamb’s book of life. Oh, what a glorious doctrine is that of election, when a man can see himself to be elect. One of the reasons why many men kick against it is this, they are afraid it hurts them. I never knew a man yet, who had a reason to believe that he himself was chosen of God, who hated the doctrine of election. Men hate election just as thieves hate Chubb’s patent locks; because they cannot get at the treasure themselves, they therefore hate the guard which protects it. Now election shuts up the precious treasury of God’s covenant blessings

for his children — for penitents, for seeking sinners. These men will not repent, will not believe; they will not go God's way, and then they grumble and growl, and fret, and fume, because God has locked the treasure up against them. Let a man once believe that all the treasure within is his, and then the stouter the bolt, and the surer the lock, the better for him. Oh, how sweet it is to believe our names were on Jehovah's heart, and graven on Jesus' hands before the universe had a being! May not this electrify a man of joy, and make him dance for very mirth? Chosen of God ere time began.

Come on, slanderers! rail on as pleases you. Come on thou world in arms! Cataracts of trouble descend if you will, and you, ye floods of affliction, roll if so it be ordained, for God has written my name in the book of life. Firm as this rock I stand, though nature reels and all things pass away. What consolation then to be called: for if I am called, then I am predestinated. Come let us at the sovereignty which has called us, and let us remember the words of the apostle, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

A second consolation is drawn from the grand truth, that if a man be called he will certainly be saved at last. To prove that, however, I will refer you to the express words of scripture: Romans 11:29 — "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never repents of what he gives, nor of what he calls. And indeed this is proved by the very chapter out of which we have taken our text. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," everyone of them. Now, believer, thou mayest be very poor, and very sick, and very much unknown and despised, but sit thee down and review thy calling this morning, and the consequences that flow from it. As sure as thou art God's called child today, thy poverty shall

soon be at an end, and thou shalt be rich to all the intents of bliss. Wait awhile; that weary head shall soon be girt with a crown. Stay awhile; that horny hand of labor shall soon grasp the palm branch. Wipe away that tear; God shall soon wipe away thy tears for ever. Take away that sigh — why sigh when the everlasting song is almost on thy lip? The portals of heaven stand wide open for thee. A few winged hours must fly; a few more billows must roll o'er thee, and thou wilt be safely landed on the golden shore. Do not say, "I shall be lost; I shall be cast away." Impossible.

*Whom once he loves he never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.*

If he hath called thee, nothing can divide thee from his love. The wolf of famine cannot gnaw the bond; the fire of persecution cannot burn the link, the hammer of hell cannot break the chain; old time cannot devour it with rust, nor eternity dissolve it, with all its ages. Oh! believe that thou art secure; that voice which called thee, shall call thee yet again from earth to heaven, from death's dark gloom to immortality's unuttered splendours; Rest assured, the heart that called thee, beats with infinite love towards thee, a love undying, that many waters cannot quench, and that floods cannot drown. Sit thee down; rest in peace; lift up thine eye of hope, and sing thy song with fond anticipation. Thou shall soon be with the glorified, where thy portion is; thou art only waiting here to be made meet, for the inheritance, and that done, the wings of angels shall waft thee far away, to the mount of peace, and joy, and blessedness, where

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

thou shall rest for ever and ever. Examine yourselves then whether you have been called. — And may the love of Jesus be with you. Amen.

# LITTLE SINS

## SERMON NO. 248

DELIVERED ON APRIL 17, 1859

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Is it not a little one?” — Genesis 19:20.*

THESE words we shall take for a *motto*, rather than a *text* in the ordinary acceptance of that term. I shall not this morning attempt to explain the connection. It was the utterance of Lot, when he pleaded for the salvation of Zoar; but I shall take it altogether away from the connection in which it stands, and make use of it in another fashion. The great Father of Lies hath multitudes of devices by which he seeks to ruin the souls of men. He uses false weights and false balances in order to deceive them. Sometimes he uses false times, declaring at one hour that it is too early to seek the Lord, and at another that it is now too late. And he uses false quantities, for he will declare that great sins are but little, and as for what he confesses to be little sins, he makes them afterwards to be nothing at all — mere peccadilloes, almost worthy of forgiveness in themselves. Many souls, I doubt not, have been caught in this trap, and being snared thereby, have been destroyed. They have ventured into sin where they thought the stream was shallow, and, fatally deceived by its depth, they have been swept away by the strength of the current to that cataract which is the ruin of such vast multitudes of the souls of men.

It shall be my business this morning to answer this temptation, and try to put a sword in your hands wherewith to resist the enemy when he shall come upon you with this cry; — “Is it not a little one?” and tempt you into sin because he leads you to imagine that there is but very little harm in it. “Is it not a little one?”

With regard then to this temptation of Satan concerning the littleness of sin, I would make this first answer, *the best of men have always been*



*afraid of little sins.* The holy martyrs of God have been ready to endure the most terrible torments rather than step so much as one inch aside from the road of truth and righteousness. Witness Daniel: when the king's decree went forth that no man should worship God for such and such a time, nevertheless he prayed three times a day as aforetime, with his window open towards Jerusalem, not fearing the king's commandment. Why could he not have retired into an inner chamber? Why might he not have ceased from vocal prayer, and have kept his petitions in his thought and in his heart? Would he not have been as well accepted as when he kneeled as usual, with the window open, so that all the world might see him? Ah! but Daniel judged that little as the offense might seem, he would rather suffer death at the jaws of the lion, than he would by that little offense provoke the anger of his God, or lead men to blaspheme his holy name, because his servant had been afraid to obey. Mark, too, the three holy children. They are asked by king Nebuchadnezzar simply to bend the knee and worship the golden image which he had set up. How slight the homage! One bend of the knee, and all is done. One prostration, and they may go their way safely. Not so. They will not worship the golden image which the king has set up. They can burn for God, but they cannot turn from God. They can suffer, but they will not sin; and though all the world might have excused them with the plea of expediency, if they had performed that one little act of idol worship, yet they will not do it, but would rather be exposed to the fury of a furnace, seven times heated, than commit an offense against the Most High. So also among the early Christians. You may have read of that noble warrior for Christ, Martin Arethusa, the bishop. He had led the people to pull down the idol temple in the city over which he presided; and when the apostate emperor Julian came to power, he commanded the people to rebuild the temple. They were bound to obey on pain of death. But Arethusa all the while lifted up his voice against the evil they were doing, until the wrath of the king fell upon him of a sudden. He was, however, offered his life on condition that he would subscribe so much as a single half penny towards the building of the temple; nay, less than that, if he would cast one grain of incense into the censer of the false god he might escape. But he would not do it. He feared God, and he would not do the most tiny little sin to save his life. They therefore exposed his body, and gave him up to the children to prick him with knives; then they smeared him with honey, and he was exposed

to wasps and stung to death. But all the while the grain of incense he would not give. He could give his body to wasps, and die in the most terrible pains, but he could not, he would not, he dared not sin against God. A noble example!

Now, brethren, if men have been able to perceive so much of sin in little transgressions, that they would bear inconceivable tortures rather than commit them, must there not be something dreadful after all in the thing of which Satan says, "Is it not a little one?" Men, with their eyes well opened by divine grace, have seen a whole hell slumbering in the most minute sin. Gifted with a microscopic power, their eyes have seen a world of iniquity hidden in a single act, or thought, or imagination of sin; and hence they have avoided it with horror, — have passed by and would have nought to do with it. But if the straight road to heaven be through flames, through floods, through death itself, they had sooner go through all these torments than turn one inch aside to tread an easy and an erroneous path. I say this should help us when Satan tempts us to commit little sins, — this should help us to the answer, "No, Satan, if God's people think it great, they know better than thou dost. Thou art a deceiver; they are true. I must shun all sin, even though thou sayest it is but little." It may be further answered, in reply to this temptation of Satan with regard to little sins, thus: — "Little sins lead to great ones. Satan! thou biddest me commit a small iniquity. I know thee whom thou art, thou unholy one! Thou desirest me to put in the thin end of the wedge. Thou knowest when that is once inserted thou canst drive it home, and split my soul in twain. Nay, stand back! Little though the temptation be, I dread thee, for thy little temptation leads to something greater, and thy small sin makes way for something worse."

We all see in nature how easily we may prove this, — *that little things lead to greater things*. If it be desired to bridge a gulf, it is often the custom to shoot an arrow, and cross it with a line almost as thin as film. That line passes over and a string is drawn after it, and after that some small rope, and after that a cable, and after that the swinging suspension bridge, that makes a way for thousands. So it is oft times with Satan. It is but a thought that he would shoot across the mind. That thought shall carry a desire; that desire a look; that look a touch; that touch a deed; that deed a habit; and that habit something worse, until the man, from little beginnings,

shall be swamped and drowned in iniquity. Little things, we say, lead on to something worse. And thus it has always been. A spark is dropped by some unwary traveler amidst the dry grass of the prairie. It is but a spark; "Is it not a little one?" A child's foot may tread it out; one drop from the rain-cloud may quench it. But ah! what sets the prairie in a blaze? what bids the rolling waves of flame drive before them all the beasts of the field? what is it that consumes the forest, locking it in its fiery arms? what is it that burns down the habitation of man, or robs the reaper of his harvest? It is this solitary spark, — the one spark — the breeder of the flames. So is it with little sins. Keep them back Oh Satan! They be sparks, but the very fire of hell is only a growth from them. The spark is the mother of conflagration, and though it be a little one I can have nought to do with it. Satan always begins with us as he did with Achan. He showed Achan, first of all, a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold. Achan looked at it: was it not a little thing to do, — to look? Achan touched it: was not that a little thing? How slight a sin — to touch the forbidden thing! He takes it, and carries it away to his tent, and — here is worse, — he hides it. And at length he must die for the awful crime. Oh! take heed of those small beginnings of sin. Beginnings of sin are like the letting out of water: first, there is an ooze; then a drip; then a slender stream; then a vein of water; and then, at last, a flood: and a rampart is swept before it, a continent is drowned. Take heed of small beginnings, for they lead to worse. There was never a man yet that came to the gallows but confessed that he began with small thefts; — the stealing of a book at school — the pilfering, afterwards, from his master's till leading to the joining of the gang of robbers, — the joining of the gang of robbers leading to worse crimes and, at last, the deed was done, the murder was committed, which brought him to an ignominious death. Little sins often act as burglars do; — burglars sometimes take with them a little child; they put the little child into a window that is too small for them to enter, and then he goes and opens the door to let in the thieves. So do little sins act. They are but little ones, but they creep in, and they open the door for great ones. A traitor inside the camp may be but a dwarf, and may go and open the gates of the city and let in a whole army. Dread sin; though it be never so small, dread it. You cannot see all that is in it. It is the mother of ten thousand mischiefs. The mother of mischief, they say, is as small as a midge's egg;

and certainly, the smallest sin has ten thousand mischiefs sleeping within its bowels.

St. Augustine gives a picture of how far men will go when they once begin to sin. There was a man who in argument declared that the devil made flies; “Well,” said the man with whom he was arguing, “If the devil made flies, then it is but little more to say the devil made worms!” “Well” said the other, “I believe it.” “Well” said the man, “If the devil made worms, how do you know but what he made small birds?” “Well,” said the other, “It is likely he did!” “Well,” resumed the man with whom he was arguing, “But if he made small birds, why may he not have made big ones? And if he made big birds, why may he not have made man? And if he made man, why may he have not made the world?” “You see,” says St. Augustine, “By one admission, by once permitting the devil to be thought the creator of a fly, the man came to believe that the devil was the Creator.” Just get one small error into your minds, get one small evil into your thoughts, commit one small act of sin in your life, permit these things to be dandled, and fondled, favored, petted, and treated with respect, and you cannot tell whereunto they may grow. They are small in their infancy: they will be giants when they come to their full growth. Thou little knowest how near thy soul may be to destruction, when thou wantonly indulgest in the smallest act of sin!

Another argument may be used to respond to this temptation of the devil. He says, “Is it not a little one?” “Yes,” we reply, “*But little sins multiply very fast.*” Like all other little things, there is a marvelous power of multiplication in little sins. As for murder, it is a masterly sin; but we do not often hear of it compared with the multitude of minor sins. The smaller the guilt, the more frequent it becomes. The elephant hath but a small progeny and multiplieth slowly. But the aphis hath thousands springing from it within an hour. It is even so with little sins: they multiply rapidly, beyond all thought — one becomes the mother of multitudes. And, mark this, little sins are as mighty for mischief in their multitude, as if they were greater sins. Have you ever read the story of the locusts when they sweep through a land? I was reading but yesterday of a missionary who called all the people together when he heard that the locusts were coming up the valley; and kindling huge fires, they hoped to drive off the living stream. The locusts were but small; but it seemed as if

the whole of the blazing fires were quenched — they marched over the dead and burning bodies of their comrades, and on they went, one living stream. Before them everything was green, like the garden of Eden; behind them everything was dry and desert. The vines were barked, the trees had lost every leaf, and stretched their naked arms to the sky, as if winter had rent away their foliage. There was not then so much as a single blade of grass, or sprig upon the tree, that even a goat might have eaten. The locusts had done all this, and left utter devastation in their track. Why this? The locust is but a little thing! Ay, but in their number how mighty they become! Dread then a little sin, for it will be sure to multiply. It is not one, it is many of these little sins. The plague of lice, or the plague of flies in Egypt, was perhaps the most terrible that the Egyptians ever felt. Take care of those little insect sins which may be your destruction. Surely if you are led to feel them, and to groan under them, and to pray to God for deliverance from them, it may be said that in your preservation is the finger of God. But let these sins alone, let them increase and multiply, and your misery is near at hand. Listen not then to the evil voice of Satan when he cries, “Is it not a little one?”

Years ago there was not a single thistle in the whole of Australia. Some Scotchman who very much admired thistles — rather more than I do — thought it was a pity that a great island like Australia should be without that marvelous and glorious symbol of his great nation. He, therefore, collected a packet of thistle-seeds, and sent it over to one of his friends in Australia. Well, when it was landed, the officers might have said, “Oh, let it in; ‘is it not a little one?’ Here is but a handful of thistle-down, oh, let it come in; it will be but sown in a garden — the Scotch will grow it in their gardens; they think it a fine flower, no doubt, — let them have it, it is but meant for their amusement.” Ah, yes, it was but a little one; but now whole districts of country are covered with it, and it has become the farmer’s pest and plague. It was a little one; but, all the worse for that, it multiplied and grew. If it had been a great evil, all men would have set to work to crush it. This little evil is not to be eradicated, and of that country it may be said till doomsday, — “Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth.” Happy would it have been if the ship that brought that seed had been wrecked. No boon is it to those of our countrymen there on the other side of the earth, but a vast curse. Take heed of the thistle-seed; little sins are

like it. Take care they are not admitted into your heart. Endeavor to shun them as soon as Satan presents them. Go, seek by the grace of God and his Holy Spirit to keep them away; for if not, these little sins will multiply so fast, that they will be your ruin and destruction.

Once again; little sins, after all, if you look at them in another aspect, are great. *A little sin involves a great principle.* Suppose that to-morrow the Austrians should send a body of men into Sardinia. If they only send a dozen it would be equal to a declaration of war. It may be said, "Is it not a little one? — a very small band of soldiers that we have sent?" "Yes," it would be replied, "but it is the principle of the thing. You cannot be allowed with impunity to send your soldiers across the border. War must be proclaimed, because you have violated the frontier, and invaded the land." It is not necessary to send a hundred thousand troops into a country to break a treaty. It is true the breach of the treaty may appear to be small; but if the slightest breach be allowed, the principle is gone. There is very much more in principle than men imagine. In a sin against God, it is not so much the thing itself as the principle of the thing at which God looks; and the principle of obedience is as much broken, as much dishonored by a little sin as by a great sin. O man! the Creator hath made thee to obey him. Thou breakest his law; thou sayst it is but a little breach. Still it is a breach. The law is broken. Thou art disobedient. His wrath abideth on thee. The principle of obedience is compromised in thy smallest transgression, and, therefore, is it great. Besides, I don't know whether the things Christian men call *little sins* are not, after all, greater than what they call *great sins*, in some respects. If you have a friend, and he does you a displeasure for the sake of ten thousand pounds, you say, "Well, he had a very great temptation. It is true he has committed a great fault, but still he has wronged me to some purpose." But suppose your friend should vex and grieve your mind for the sake of a farthing; what would you think of that? "This is wanton," you would say. "This man has done it out of sheer malevolence toward me." Now, if Adam had been denied by his Maker the whole of Paradise, and had been put into a stony desert, I do not think that, had he taken all Paradise to himself, there would have been more sin in that act, than when placed in the midst of the garden, he simply stole one fruit from the forbidden tree. The transgression involved a great principle, because he did it wantonly. He

had so little to gain, he had so much to lose when he dishonored God. It has been said, that to sin without temptation is to sin like the devil, for the devil was not tempted when he sinned; and to sin with but little temptation is to sin like the devil. When there is great temptation offered, I do not say there is any excuse, but when there is none, where the deed is but little, bringing but little pleasure, and involving but a small consequence, there is a wantonness about the sin which makes it greater in moral obliquity, than many other iniquities that men commit. Ay, you cry out against a great felon, when he is discovered; see of how much he robbed men; see how he wronged the widow and robbed the fatherless! I know it. God forbid that I should make any excuse for him; but that man had a name to maintain. He had thousands of temptations before him to get immensely rich. He thought he never should be discovered. He had a family to keep. He had got involved in expensive habits, and there are many things to be said for his extenuation. But you, if you indulge in some slight sin which brings you no pleasure, which involves no important interests, by which you have nothing to get, I say you sin wantonly. You have committed an act which has in it the very virus and bitterness of wilful obstinate, designing disobedience, because there is not even the extenuation, or excuse, or apology, that you should gain something thereby. Little sins are, after all, tremendous sins, viewed in the light of God's law. Looked upon as involving a breach of that inviolable standard of right, and considered as having been committed wantonly, I say they are great, and I know not that those sins men conceive to be gross and great, are greater and grosser in reality than these.

Thus I have given you several arguments with which to answer that temptation, "Is it not a little one?"

Now I am about to speak to the child of God only, and I say to him, "Brother if Satan tempts thee to say, 'Is it not a little one?'" reply to him, "Ah, Satan but little though it be, it may mar my fellowship with Christ. Sin cannot destroy but it will annoy; it cannot ruin my soul, but it will soon ruin my peace. Thou sayest it is a little one, Satan, but my Savior had to die for it, or otherwise I should have been shut out from heaven. 'That little one' may be like a little thorn in my flesh, to prick my heart and wound my soul. I cannot, I dare not indulge in this little sin, for I have been greatly forgiven, and I must greatly love. A little sin in others would

be a great sin for me — ‘How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.’”

Is it a little one, Satan? But a little stone in the shoe will make a traveler limp. A little thorn may breed a fester. A little cloud may hide the sun. A cloud of the size of a man’s hand may bring a deluge of rain. Avaunt Satan! I can have nought to do with thee; for since I know that Jesus bled for little sins, I cannot wound his heart by indulging in them afresh. A little sin, Satan! Hath not my Master said, “Take us the foxes, *the little* foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.” Lo! these little things do mischief to my tender heart. These little sins burrow in my soul, and soon make it to become a very den and hole of the wild beasts that Jesus hates, soon drive him away from my spirit so that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with me. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with his people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, “If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” There are very many Christians in the world that do not see their Savior’s face by the month together, and seem to be quite content without his company. I understand you not, nor do I wish to know how it is, that you can reconcile your souls to the absence of your Lord. A loving wife, without her husband for months and years, seems to me to be sorely tried. Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. We know that in our childhood it was always so, and we looked forward to our return home with joy. And art thou a child of God, yet happy without seeing thy Father’s face? What! thou the spouse of Christ, and yet content without his company! Surely, surely, surely, thou hast fallen into a sad state. Thou must have gone astray, if such be thy experience, for the true chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when he has left her. Ask, then, the question, what has driven Christ from you? He hides his face behind the wall of your sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops, the rocks are made of grains; and ah! surely the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins; and the rock which is to wreck thy barque, may have been made by daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins. Therefore, take heed thereunto; for if thou



wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed, I pray thee, of the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

And now, leaving the child of God thus awhile, I turn myself to address others of you who have some thought with regard to your souls, but who could not yet be ranked among those that fear God with a true heart. To you, I know, Satan often offers this temptation — “Is it not a little one?” May God help you to answer him whenever he thus attacks you. “Is it not a little one?” And so, young man, the devil has tempted thee to commit the first petty theft. “Is it not a little one?” And so he has bidden thee, young man, for the first time in thy life to spend the day of rest in foolish pleasure. It was but a little one, he said, and thou hast taken him at his word, and thou hast committed it. It was but a little one, and so you have told a lie. It was but a little one, and you have gone into the assembly of the frivolous and mixed in the society of scorners. It was but a little one, there could not be much hurt in it, it could not do much mischief to your soul. Ah! stop awhile. Dost thou know that a little sin, if wantonly indulged, will prevent thy salvation? “The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Christ will reveal salvation from all his sins to the man who hates all his sins; but if thou keepest one sin to thyself, thou shalt never have mercy at his hands. If thou wilt forsake all thy ways, and turn with full purpose of heart to Christ, the biggest sin thou hast ever committed shall not destroy thy soul; but if a little sin be harbored, thy prayers will be unheard, thy sighs disregarded, and thy earnest cries shall return into thy bosom without a blessing. You have been in prayer lately, you have been seeking Christ, you have been praying with all your might that God would meet with you. Now months have rolled over your head, you are not yet saved, not yet have you received the comfortable assurance of your pardon. Young man, is it not likely that some little known sin is still harbored in your heart? Mark, then, God will never be at one with thee till thou and thy sins are twain. Part with thy sins, or else part with all hope, though thou hide but so much as a grain of sin back from God. He will not, he cannot have any mercy on thee. Come to him just as thou art, but renounce thy sins. Ask him to set thee free from every lust, from every false way, from every evil

thing, or else, mark thee, thou shalt never find grace and favor at his hands. The greatest sin in the world, repented of, shall be forgiven, but the least unrepented sin shall sink thy soul lower than the lowest hell. Mark then, again, sinner, thou who indulgest in little sins sometimes. These little sins show that thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale of one of his hearers who sometimes visited the theater. He was a member of the church. So going to see him, he said, I understand Mr. So-and-so, you are very fond of frequenting the theater. No, sir, he said, that's false. I go now and then just for a great treat, still I don't go because I like it; it is not a habit of mine. Well, said Rowland Hill, suppose some one should say to me, Mr. Hill, I understand you eat carrion, and I should say, no, no, I don't eat carrion. It is true, I now and then have a piece of stinking carrion for a great treat. Why, he would say, you have convicted yourself, it shows that you like it better than most people, because you save it up for a special treat. Other men only take it as common daily food, but you keep it by way of a treat. It shows the deceitfulness of your heart, and manifests that you still love the ways and wages of sin.

Ah, my friends, those men that say little sins have no vice in them whatever, they do but give indications of their own character; they show which way the stream runs. A straw may let you know which way the wind blows, or even a floating feather; and so may some little sin be an indication of the prevailing tendency of the heart. My hearer, if thou lovest sin, though it be but a little one, thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Thou art still a stranger to divine grace. The wrath of God abideth on thee. Thou art a lost soul unless God change thy heart.

And yet, another remark here. Sinner, thou sayest it is but a little one. But dost thou know that God will damn thee for thy little sins? Look angry now, and say the minister is harsh. But wilt thou look angry at thy God in the day when he shalt condemn thee for ever? If there were a good man in a prison to-day and you did not go to see him, would you think that a great sin? Certainly not, you say, I should not think of doing such a thing. If you saw a man hungry and you did not feed him, would you think that a great sin? No, you say, I should not. Nevertheless, these are the very things for which men are sent to hell. What said the Judge? "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was sick and in

prison and ye visited me not. Forasmuch as ye have not done this unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have not done it unto me.” Now, if these things, which we only consider to be little sins, actually send myriads to hell, ought we not to stop and tremble ere we talk lightly of sin, since little sins may be our eternal destroyers. Ah, man, the pit of hell is digged for little sins. An eternity of woe is prepared for what men call little sins. It is not alone the murderer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, that shall be sent to hell. The wicked, it is true, shall be sent there, but the little sinner with all the nations that forget God shall have his portion there also. Tremble, therefore, on account of little sins.

When I was a little lad, I one day read at family prayer the chapter in the Revelations concerning the “bottomless pit.” Stopping in the midst of it, I said to my grandfather, “Grandfather, what does this mean — ‘the bottomless pit?’” He said, “Go on child, go on.” So I read that chapter, but I took great care to read it the next morning also. Stopping again I said, “Bottomless pit, what does this mean?” “Go on,” he said, “Go on.” Well it came the next morning, and so on for a fortnight; there was nothing to be read by me of a morning but this same chapter, for explained it should be if I read it a month. And I can remember the horror of my mind when he told me what the idea was. There is a deep pit, and the soul is falling down, — oh how fast it is falling! There! the last ray of light at the top has disappeared, and it falls on — on — on, and so it goes on falling — on — on — on — for a thousand years! “Is it not getting near the bottom yet? won’t it stop?” No, no — the cry is, on — on — on, “I have been falling a million years, is it not near the bottom yet?” No, you are no nearer the bottom yet: it is the “*bottomless* pit;” it is on — on — on, and so the soul goes on falling, perpetually, into a deeper depth still, falling for ever into the “bottomless pit” — on — on — on, into the pit that has no bottom! Woe without termination, without hope of it’s coming to a conclusion. The same dreadful idea is contained in those words, “The wrath to come.” Mark, hell is always “the wrath to come.” If a man has been in hell a thousand years, it is still “to come.” As to what you have suffered in the past it is as nothing, in the dread account, for still the wrath is “to come.” And when the world has grown grey with age, and the fires of the sun are quenched in darkness, it is still “the wrath to come.” And when other worlds have sprung up, and have turned into their palsied age, it is still

“the wrath to come.” And when your soul, burnt through and through with anguish, sighs at last to be annihilated, even then this awful thunder shall be heard, “the wrath to come — to come — to come.” Oh, what an idea! I know not how to utter it! And yet for little sins, remember you incur “the wrath to come.” Oh, if I am to be damned, I would be damned for something; but to be delivered up to the executioner and sent into “the wrath to come” for little sins which do not even make me famous as a rebel, this is to be damned indeed. Oh that ye would arise, that ye would flee from the wrath to come, that ye would forsake the little sins, and fly to the great cross of Christ to have little sins blotted out, and little offenses washed away. For oh, — again I warn you, — if ye die with little sins unforgiven, with little sins unrepented of, there shall be no little hell; the great wrath of the great king is ever to come, in a pit without a bottom, in a hell the fire of which never shall be quenched, and the worm of which ne’er shall die. Oh, “the wrath to come! the wrath to come!” It is enough to make one’s heart ache to think of it. God help you to flee from it. May you escape from it now, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

## SERMON NO. 251

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 8TH, 1859,**

**AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“And I will put my Spirit within you.” — Ezekiel, 36:27.*

THE miracles of Christ are remarkable for one fact, namely that they are none of them unnecessary. The pretended miracles of Mahomet, and of the church of Rome, even if they had been miracles, would have been pieces of folly. Suppose that Saint Denis had walked with his head in his hand after it had been cut off, what practical purpose would have been subserved thereby? He would certainly have been quite as well in his grave, for any practical good he would have conferred on men. The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power; they are displays of power it is true, but they all of them have a practical end. The same thing may be said of the promises of God. We have not one promise in the Scripture which may be regarded as a mere freak of grace. As every miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, so is every promise that is given in the Word of God. And hence from the text that is before us, may I draw, and I think very conclusively, the argument, that if God in his covenant made with his people has promised to put his Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made, and it must be absolutely necessary also to our salvation that every one of us should receive the Spirit of God. This shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. I shall not hope to make it very interesting, except to those who are anxiously longing to know the way of salvation. We start, then, by laying down this proposition — that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, if we would be saved.

**1.** In endeavoring to prove this, I would first of all make the remark that this is very manifest if we remember what man is by nature. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation — that if he hear the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it, and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply, you do not know what man is by nature, otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick, that he is faint, that he has grown callous, and hardened, and seared, but it says he is absolutely dead. Whatever that term “death” means in connection with the body, that it means in connection with man’s soul, viewing it in its relation to spiritual things. When the body is dead it is powerless; it is unable to do any thing for itself; and when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless, and unable to do any thing of itself or for itself. When ye shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when ye shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin-lids, and walking down our streets alive and animate, as the result of their own power, then perhaps ye may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures, and may make themselves heirs of heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, not till then. The drift of the gospel is, that man is dead in sin, and that divine life is God’s gift; and you must go contrary to the whole of that drift, before you can suppose a man brought to know and love Christ, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit finds men as destitute of spiritual life as Ezekiel’s dry bones; he brings bone to bone, and fits the skeleton together, and then he comes from the four winds and breathes into the slain, and they live, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, and worship God. But apart from that, apart from the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God, men’s souls must lie in the valley of dry bones, dead, and dead for ever. But Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin; it tells us something worse than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to every thing that is good and right.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” — Romans 8:7.

— Turn you all Scripture through, and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without divine influence? He said, first, “No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;” but he said something more strong — “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” No man will come. Here lies the deadly mischief; not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong, and that his will is desperately set against every thing that is right. Go, Armenian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face, and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men will not come. They never will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come; you cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations. They will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will, nor can. Hence, then, from the fact that man’s nature is hostile to the divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another — hence it is necessary that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track, and then give him strength to run in it. Oh! if ye read man and understand him, ye cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work. It has been well remarked by a great writer, that he never knew a man who held any great theological error, who did not also hold a doctrine which diminished the depravity of man. The Armenian says man is fallen, it is true, but then he has power of will left, and that will is free; he can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the fall of man. On the other hand, the Antinomian says, man cannot do any thing, but that he is not at all responsible, and is not bound to do it, it is not his duty to believe, it is not his duty to repent. Thus, you see, he also diminishes the sinfulness of man; and has not right views of the fall. But once get the correct view, that man is utterly fallen, powerless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned, and you must be sound on all points of the great gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is — once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his

understanding darkened, his will perverse, and you must hold that if such a wretch as that be saved, it must be the work of the Spirit of God, and of the Spirit of God alone.

**2.** I have another proof ready to hand. Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by any thing else; for it is God's chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. "It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to divers churches and chapels into which you might step, and say, "Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect;" you sit down, and you say, "Well, if God means to work a great work, he will use a learned man like this." But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ, to any great degree? Go round your churches, if you please, and look at them, and then answer the question. Do you know any great men — men great in learning and wisdom — who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face, that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers, are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ. And where are souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely, and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows, who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly, and when the world speaks worst of him, feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel, in which God is pleased to put his heavenly treasure. I will dare to say it, that in every age of the world the most despised ministry has been the most useful; and I could find you at this day poor Primitive Methodist preachers who can scarce speak correct English, who have been the fathers of more souls, and have brought to Christ more than any one bishop on the bench. Why, the Lord hath been pleased always to make it so, that he will clothe with power the weak and



the foolish, but he will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position. Like the apostle Paul, it is every minister's business to glory in his infirmities. The world says, "Pshaw! upon your oratory; it is rough, and rude, and eccentric." Yet, 'tis even so, but we are content, for God blesses it. Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it; for now shall it be plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God, and of God alone. It is said that once upon a time a man exceedingly curious desired to see the sword with which a mighty hero had fought some desperate battles; casting his eye along the blade, he said, "Well, I don't see much in this sword." "Nay," said the hero, "but you have not examined the arm that wields it." And so when men come to hear a successful minister, they are apt to say, "I do not see any thing in him." No, but you have not examined the eternal arm that reaps its harvest with this sword of the Spirit. If ye had looked at the jaw-bone of the ass in Samson's hand, you would have said, "What! heaps on heaps with this!" No; bring out some polished blade; bring forth the Damascus steel! NO; but God would have all the glory, and, therefore, not with the polished steel, but with the jaw-bone must Samson get the victory. So with ministers; God has usually blessed the weakest to do the most good. Well, now, does it not follow from this, that it must be the work of the Spirit? Because, if there be nothing in the instrument that can lead thereunto, is it not the work of the Spirit when the thing is accomplished? Let me just put it to you. Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined not to believe are compelled to believe. Now, who does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason, because there is nothing in the successful ministry which would tend thereunto. It must be that the Spirit worketh in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished. You might as well expect to raise the dead by whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit. Melancthon went out to preach, you know, without the Spirit of the Lord, and he thought he should convert all the people, but he found out at last that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, and he had to go back and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit or ever he saw a soul saved. I say, that the fact that the ministry is blessed proves, since there is nothing

in the ministry, that salvation must be the work of a higher power. Other means, however, are made use of to bless men's souls. For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you, is there any thing in baptism that can possibly bless any body? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord's Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is any thing in the mere piece of bread that we eat, or in the wine that we drink? And yet, doubtless, the grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them, and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony; there must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence — the influence of the divine Spirit of God.

**3.** Let me again remind you, in the third place, that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that all which has been done by God the Father, and all that has been done God the Son must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects his people; from before all worlds he chooses them to himself, but let me ask you — what effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I possibly know. Can I climb to heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists which hide eternity, and open the seven seals of the book, and read my name recorded there? Ah! no; election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect which it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. And then, through my calling, I see my election, and, knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the

world. It is a precious thing — that doctrine of election — to a child of God. But what makes it precious? Nothing but the influence of the Spirit. Until the Spirit opens the eye to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret, no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God; but the Spirit doth it. He, by his divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God; and then we are enabled to “read our title clear to mansions in the skies.” Look, again, at the covenant of grace. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by his Father from before all worlds, and that in this covenant the persons of all his people were given to him, and were secured; but of what use, or of what avail is the covenant to us, until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the covenant to us? The covenant is, as it were, a holy tree laden with fruit; if the Spirit doth not shake that tree, and make the fruit fall therefrom, until it comes to the level of our standing, how can we receive it? Bring hither any sinner and tell him there is a covenant of grace, what is he advantaged thereby? “Ah,” says he, “I may not be included in it; my name may not be recorded there; I may not be chosen in Christ;” but let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart, richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and that man sees the covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and he cries with David, “It is all my salvation and all my desire.” Take, again, the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the room, place, and stead of all his people, and that all those who shall appear in heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace, seeing that Christ was punished in their room and stead, and that it would have been unjust if God punished them, seeing that he had punished Christ for them. We believe that Christ, having paid all their debts, they have a right to their freedom in Christ — that Christ having covered them with his righteousness, they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. But of what avail is this to me, until the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ’s blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace? You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by; it was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that he did atone for sins that were not his own; but you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps, even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the cross, and opened your eyes, and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, then there was something in the

blood indeed. When his hand dipped the hyssop in the blood, and when it applied that blood to, your spirit, then there was a joy and peace in believing, such as you had never known before. But ah, my hearer, Christ's dying is nothing to thee unless thou hast a living Spirit within thee. Christ brings thee no advantage, saving, personal, and lasting, unless the Spirit of God hath baptized thee in the fountain filled with his blood, and washed thee from head to foot therein. I only mention these few out of the many blessings of the covenant just to prove that they are, none of them, of any use to us, unless the Holy Spirit gives them to us. There hang the blessings on the nail — on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature; we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, and puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine-vat; but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with his blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without him neither the works of the Father, nor of the Son, are of any avail to us.

**4.** This brings us to another point. The experience of the true Christian is a reality; but it never can be known and felt without the Spirit of God. For what is the experience of the Christian? Let me just give a brief picture of some of its scenes. There is a person come into this hall this morning — one of the most reputable men in London. He has never committed himself in any outward vice; he has never been dishonest; but he is known as a staunch, upright tradesman. Now, to his astonishment, he is informed that he is a condemned, lost sinner, and just as surely lost as the thief who died for his crimes upon the cross. Do you think that man will believe it? Suppose, however, that he does believe it, simply because he reads it in the Bible, do you think that man will ever be made to feel it? I know you say, "Impossible!" Some of you, even now, perhaps, are saying, "Well, I never should!" Can you imagine that honorable, upright tradesman, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?" — standing side by side with the harlot and the swearer, and feeling in his own heart as if he had been as guilty as

they were, and using just the same prayer and saying, "Lord, save, or I perish." You cannot conceive it, can you? It is contrary to nature that a man who has been so good as he should pat himself down among the chief of sinners. Ah! but that will be done before he will be saved; he must feel that before he can enter heaven. Now, I ask, who can bring him to such a leveling experience as that, but the Spirit of God? Ye know very well proud nature will not stoop to it. We are all aristocrats in our own righteousness; we do not like to bend down and come among common sinners. If we are brought there, it must be the Spirit of God who casts us to the ground. Why, I know if any one had told me that I should ever cry to God for mercy, and confess that I had been the vilest of the vile, I should have laughed in their face; I should have said, "Why I have not done anything particularly wrong; I have not hurt anybody." And yet I know this very day I can take my place upon the lowest form, and if I can get inside heaven I shall feel happy to sit among the chief of sinners, and praise that Almighty love which has saved even me from my sins.. Now, what works this humiliation of heart? Grace. It is contrary to nature for an honest and an upright man in the eye of the world to feel himself a lost sinner. It must be the Holy Spirit's work, or else it never will be done. Well, after a man has been brought here, can you conceive that man at last conscience-stricken, and led to believe that his past life deserves the wrath of God? His first thought would be, "Well, now, I will live better than I ever have lived." He would say, "Now, I will try and play the hermit, and pinch myself here and there, and deny myself, and do penance; and in that way, by paying attention to the outward ceremonies of religion, together with a high moral character, I doubt not I shall blot out whatever slurs and stains there have been." Can you suppose that man brought at last to feel that, if ever he gets to heaven, he will have to get there through the righteousness of another? "Through the righteousness of another?" says he, "I don't want to be rewarded for what another man does, — not I. If I go there, I will go there and take my chance; I will go there through what I do myself. Tell me something to do, and I will do it; I will be proud to do it, however humiliating it may be, so that I may at last win the love and esteem of God." Now, can you conceive such a man as that brought to feel that he can do nothing? — that, good man as he thinks himself, he cannot do any thing whatever to merit God's love and favor; and that, if he goes to heaven, he must go through what Christ did? Just the same as the

drunkard must go there through the merits of Christ, so this moral man must enter into life, having nothing about him but Christ's perfect righteousness, and being washed in the blood of Jesus. We say that this is so contrary to human nature, so diametrically opposed to all the instincts of our poor fallen humanity, that nothing but the Spirit of God can ever bring a man to strip himself of all self-righteousness, and of all creature strength, and compel him to rest and lean simply and wholly upon Jesus Christ the Savior. These two experiences would be sufficient to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit to make a man a Christian. But let me now describe a Christian as he is after his conversion. Trouble comes, storms of trouble, and he looks the tempest in the face and says, "I know that all things work together for my good." His children die, the partner of his bosom is carried to the grave; he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." His farm fails, his crop is blighted; his business prospects are clouded, all seem to go, and he is left in poverty: he says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." You see him next laid upon a sick bed himself, and when he is there, he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." You see him approaching at last the dark valley of the shadow of death, and you hear him cry, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, and thou thyself art with me." Now, I ask you, what makes this man calm in the midst of all these varied trials, and personal troubles, if it be not the Spirit of God? O, ye that doubt the influence of the Spirit, produce the like without him, go ye and die as Christians die, and live as they live, and if you can show the same calm resignation, the same quiet joy, and the same firm belief that adverse things shall, nevertheless, work together for good, then we may be, perhaps, at liberty to resign the point, and not till then. The high and noble experience of a Christian in times of trial and suffering, proves that there must be the operation of the Spirit of God. But look at the Christian, too, in his joyous moments. He is rich. God has given him all his heart's desire on earth. Look at him: he says, "I do not value these things at all, except as they are the gift of God; I sit loose by them all and, notwithstanding this

house and home, and all these comforts, 'I am willing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' It is true, I want nothing here on earth; but still I feel that to die would be gain to me, even though I left all these." He holds earth loosely; he does not grasp it with a tight hand, but looks upon it all as dust, — a thing which is to pass away. He takes but little pleasure therein, saying, —

*"I've no abiding city here,  
I seek a city out of sight."*

Mark that man; he has plenty of room for pleasures in this world, but he drinks out of a higher cistern. His pleasure springs from things unseen; his happiest moments are when he can shut all these good things out, and when he can come to God as a poor guilty sinner, and come to Christ and enter into fellowship with him, and rise into nearness of access and confidence, and boldly approach to the throne of the heavenly grace. Now, what is it that keeps a man who has all these mercies from setting his heart upon the earth? This is a wonder, indeed, that a man who has gold and silver, and flocks and herds, should not make these his god, but that he should still say, —

*"There's nothing round this spacious earth  
That suits my large desire;  
To boundless joy and solid mirth  
My nobler thoughts aspire."*

These are not my treasure; my treasure is in heaven, and in heaven only. What can do this? No mere moral virtue. No doctrine of the Stoic ever brought a man to such a pass as that. No, it must be the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Spirit alone, that can lead a man to live in heaven, while there is a temptation to him to live on earth. I do not wonder that a poor man looks forward to heaven; he has nothing to look upon on earth. When there is a thorn in the nest, I do not wonder that the lark flies up, for there is no rest for him below. When you are beaten and chafed by trouble, no wonder you say, —

*"Jerusalem! my happy home!  
Name ever dear to me;  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy, and peace, and thee?"*

But the greatest wonder is, if you line the Christian's nest never so softly, if you give him all the mercies of this life, you still cannot keep him from saying, —

*“To Jesus, the crown of my hope,  
My soul is in haste to be gone;  
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,  
And waft me away to his throne.”*

**5.** And now, last of all, the acts, the acceptable acts, of the Christian's life, cannot be performed without the Spirit; and hence, again, the necessity for the Spirit of God. The first act of the Christian's life is repentance. Have you ever tried to repent? If so, if you tried without the Spirit of God you know that to urge a man to repent without the promise of the Spirit to help him, is to urge him to do an impossibility. A rock might as soon weep, and a desert might as soon blossom, as a sinner repent of his own accord. If God should offer heaven to man, simply upon the terms of repentance of sin, heaven would be as impossible as it is by good works; for a man can no more repent of himself, than he can perfectly keep God's law; for repentance involves the very principle of perfect obedience to the law of God. It seems to me that in repentance there is the whole law solidified and condensed; and if a man can repent of himself then there is no need of a Savior, he may as well go to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai at once. Faith is the next act in the divine life. Perhaps you think faith very easy; but if you are ever brought to feel the burden of sin you would not find it quite so light a labor. If you are ever brought into deep mire, where there is no standing, it is not so easy to put your feet on a rock, when the rock does not seem to be there. I find faith just the easiest thing in the world when there is nothing to believe; but when I have room and exercise for my faith, then I do not find I have so much strength to accomplish it. Talking one day with a countryman, he used this figure: “In the middle of winter I sometimes think how well I could mow; and in early spring I think, oh! how I would like to reap; I feel just ready for it; but when mowing time comes, and when reaping time comes, I find I have not strength to spare.” So when you have no troubles, couldn't you mow them down at once? When you have no work to do, couldn't you do it? But when work and trouble come you find how difficult it is. Many Christians are like the stag, who talked to itself, and said, “Why should I run away from the dogs? Look what a fine pair of horns I've got, and look what



heels I've got too; I might do these hounds some mischief. Why not let me stand and show them what I can do with my antlers? I can keep off any quantity of dogs." No sooner did the dogs bark, than off the stag went. So with us. "Let sin arise," we say, "we will soon rip it up, and destroy it; let trouble come, we will soon get over it; but when sin and trouble come, we then find what our weakness is. Then we have to cry for the help of the Spirit; and through him we can do all things, though without him we can do nothing at all. In all the acts of the Christian's life, whether it be the act of consecrating one's self to Christ, or the act of daily prayer, or the act of constant submission, or preaching the gospel, or ministering to the necessities of the poor, or comforting the desponding, in all these the Christian finds his weakness and his powerlessness, unless he is clothed about with the Spirit of God. Why, I have been to see the sick at times, and I have thought how I would like to comfort them; and I could not get a word out that was worth their hearing, or worth my saying; and my soul has been in agony to be the means of comforting the poor, sick, desponding brother; but I could do nothing, and I came out of the chamber, and half wished I had never been to see a sick person in my life: I had so learned my own folly. So has it been full often in preaching. You get a sermon up, study it, and come and make the greatest mess of it that can possibly be. Then you say, "I wish I had never preached at all." But all this is to show us, that neither in comforting nor in preaching can one do any thing right, unless the Spirit work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Every thing, moreover, that we do with out the Spirit is unacceptable to God; and whatever we do under his influence, however we may despise it, is not despised of God, for he never despises his own work, and the Spirit never can look upon what he works. in us with any other view than that of complacency and delight. If the Spirit helps me to groan, then God must accept the groaner. If thou couldst pray the best prayer in the world, without the Spirit, God would have nothing to do with it; but if thy prayer be broken, and lame, and limping, if the Spirit made it, God will look upon it, and say, as he did upon the works of creation, "It is very good;" and he will accept it. And now let me conclude by asking this question. My hearer, then have you the Spirit of God in you? You have some religion, most of you, I dare say. Well, of what kind is it? Is it a homemade article? Did you make yourself what you are? Then, if so, you are a lost man up to this moment. If, my hearer, you have

gone no further than you have walked yourself, you are not on the road to heaven yet; you have got your face turned the wrong way; but if you have received something which neither flesh nor blood could reveal to you, if you have been led to do the very thing which you once hated, and to love that thing which you once despised, and to despise that on which your heart and your pride were once set, then, soul, if this be the Spirit's work, rejoice; for where he hath begun the good work he will carry it on. And you may know whether it is the Spirit's work by this. Have you been led to Christ, and away from self: Have you been led away from all feelings, from all doings, from all willings, from all prayings, as the ground of your trust and your hope, and have you been brought nakedly to rely upon the finished work of Christ? If so, this is more than human nature ever taught any man; this is a height to which human nature never climbed. The Spirit of God has done that, and he will never leave what he has once begun, but thou shalt go from strength to strength, and thou shalt stand among the bloodwashed throng, at last complete in Christ, and accepted in the beloved. But if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber now to weep, now to repent, and now to look to Christ, and may you now have a divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer, and send us away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# THE STORY OF GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS

## SERMON NO. 263

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 17TH, 1859,**

**AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.” — Psalm 44:1.*

PERHAPS there are no stories that stick by us so long as those which we hear in our childhood, those tales which are told us by our fathers, and in our nurseries. It is a sad reflection that too many of these stories are idle and vain, so that our minds in early infancy are tinctured with fables, and inoculated with strange and lying narratives. Now, among the early Christians and the old believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now, and the stories with which their children were amused were of a far different class from those which fascinated us in the days of our babyhood. No doubt, Abraham would talk to young children about the flood, and tell them how the waters overspread the earth, and how Noah alone was saved in the ark. The ancient Israelites, when they dwelt in their own land, would all of them tell their children about the Red Sea, and the plagues which God wrought in Egypt when he brought his people out of the house of bondage. Among the early Christians we know that it was the custom of parents to recount to their children everything concerning the life of Christ, the acts of the apostles, and the like interesting narratives. Nay, among our puritanic ancestors such were the stories that regaled their childhood. Sitting down by the fireside, before those old Dutch tiles with the quaint eccentric drawings upon them of the history of Christ, mothers would teach their children about Jesus walking on the water, or of his multiplying the loaves of bread, or of his marvelous transfiguration, or of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Oh, how I would that the like were the tales of the present age, that the stories of our childhood would be again the stories of Christ, and that we would each of us believe that, after all, there can be nothing so interesting as that which is true, and nothing more striking than those stories which are written in sacred writ; nothing that can more truly move the heart of a child than the marvelous works of God which he did in the olden times. It seems that the psalmist who wrote this most musical ode had heard from his father, handed to him by tradition, the stories of the wondrous things which God had done in his day; and afterwards, this sweet singer in Israel taught it to his children, and so was one generation after another led to call God blessed, remembering his mighty acts.

Now, my dear friends, this morning I intend to recall to your minds some of the wondrous things which God has done in the olden time. My aim and object will be to excite your minds to seek after the like; that looking back upon what God has done, you may be induced to look forward with the eye of expectation, hoping that he will again stretch forth his potent hand and his holy arm, and repeat those mighty acts he performed in ancient days.

First, I shall speak of the marvelous stories which our fathers have told us, and which we have heard of the olden time; secondly, I shall mention some disadvantages under which these old stories labor wit regard to the effect upon our minds; and, then, I shall draw the proper inferences from those marvelous things which we have heard, that the Lord did in the days of yore.

**I.** To begin then, with THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS.

We have heard that God has at times done very mighty acts. The plain everyday course of the world hath been disturbed with wonders at which men have been exceedingly amazed. God hath not always permitted his church to go on climbing by slow degrees to victory, but he hath been pleased at times to smite one terrible blow, and lay his enemies down upon the earth, and bid his children march over their prostrate bodies. Turn back then, to ancient records, and remember what God hath done. Will ye not remember what he did at the Red Sea, how he smote Egypt and all its chivalry, and covered Pharaoh's chariot and horse in the Red

Sea? Have ye not heard tell how God smote Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, because they withstood the progress of his people? Have ye not learned how he proved that his mercy endureth for ever, when he slew those great kings and cast the mighty ones down from their thrones? Have you not read, too, how God smote the children of Canaan, and drove out the inhabitants thereof, and gave the land to his people, to be a possession by lot for ever? Have you not heard how when the hosts of Jabin came against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera? The river of Kishon swept them away, “that ancient river, the river Kishon,” and there was none of them left? Hath it not been told you, too, how by the hand of David, God smote the Philistines, and how by his right hand he smote the children of Ammon? Have you not heard how Midian was put to confusion, and the myriads of Arabia were scattered by Asa in the day of his faith? And have you not heard, too, how the Lord sent a blast upon the hosts of Sennacherib, so that in the morning they were all dead men? Tell — tell ye these, his wonders! Speak of them in your streets. Teach them to your children. Let them not be forgotten, for the right hand of the Lord hath done marvelous things, his name is known in all the earth.

The wonders, however, which most concern us, are those of the Christian era; and surely these are not second to those under the Old Testament. Have you never read how God won to himself great renown on the day of Pentecost? Turn ye to this book of the record of the wonders of the Lord and read. Peter the fisherman stood up and preached in the name of the Lord his God. A multitude assembled and the Spirit of God fell upon them; and it came to pass that three thousand in one day were pricked in their heart by the hand of God, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And know you not how the twelve apostles with the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, and the idols fell from their thrones? The cities opened wide their gates, and the messengers of Christ walked through the streets and preached. It is true that at first they were driven hither and thither, and hunted like partridges upon the mountains: but do ye not remember how the Lord did get unto himself a victory, so that in a hundred years after the nailing of Christ to the cross, the gospel had been preached in every nation, and the isles of the sea had heard the sound thereof? And have you forgotten how the heathen were baptized,

thousands at a time, in every river? What stream is there in Europe that cannot testify to the majesty of the gospel? What city is there in the land that cannot tell how God's truth has triumphed, and how the heathen has forsaken his false god, and bowed his knee to Jesus the crucified? The first spread of the gospel is a miracle never to be eclipsed. Whatever god may have done at the Red Sea, he hath done still more within a hundred years after the time when Christ first came into the world. It seemed as if a fire from heaven ran along the ground. Nothing could resist its force. The lightning shaft of truth shivered every pinnacle of the idol temple, and Jesus was worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

This is one of the things we have heard of the olden times.

And have ye never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Hath it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, how, whenever he preached, the church was thronged with attentive hearers; and there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spake with a majesty unparalleled, the word of God in truth and righteousness; the people listening, hanging forward to catch every word, and anon breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet; then silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator; and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands, and shouting for joy again? Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved. And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth, when Popery sat upon her throne and stretched her iron rod across the nations and shut the windows of heaven, and quenched the very stars of God and made thick darkness cover the people? Have ye never heard how Martin Luther arose and preached the gospel of the grace of God, and how the nations trembled, and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingle among the Swiss, and of Calvin in the city of Geneva, and of the mighty works that God did by them? Nay, as Britons have ye forgotten the mighty preacher of the truth — have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers that Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the gospel of God?

Oh, doth not history tell us that these men were like fire-brands in the midst of the dry stubble; that their voice was as the roaring of a lion, and their going forth like the springing of a young lion. Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock; they did push the nation before them, and as for the enemies, they said, "Destroy them." None could stand before them, for the Lord their God had girded them with might.

To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity, and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley, men whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings, and the church said: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" They come! they come! numberless as the birds of heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood. Within a few years, from the preaching of these two men, England was permeated with evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town, and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated. In those days of the slow-coach, when Christianity seemed to have bought up the old wagons in which our fathers once traveled — where business runs with steam, there oftentimes religion creeps along with its belly on the earth, — we are astonished at these tales, and we think them wonders. Yet let us believe them; they come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by his grace he will yet do again. He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is his name.

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden time; they derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our churches believe that things must grow, gently, by degrees; we must go step by step onward. Concentrated action and continued labor, they say, will ultimately bring success. But the marvel is, all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand. They were converted at once and baptized that very day; they were that hour turned to God, and become as truly

disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years. So was it in the day of Martin Luther: it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle and the candle burned, and there was the light in an instant — God works suddenly. If anyone could have stood in Wurtemberg, and have said: “Can Popery be made to quail, can the Vatican be made to shake?” The answer would have been: — “No; it will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations, and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process.” “Not so,” however, did God say. He smote the dragon sorely, and the nations went free; he cut the gates of brass, and broke in sunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in an hour. Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light, and upon them that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, did the light shine. So was it in Whitefield’s day. The rebuking of a slumbering church was not the work of ages; it was done at once. Have ye never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Camslang. He was preaching in the church-yard to a great congregation, that could not get into any edifice; and while preaching, the power of God came upon the people, and one after another fell down as if they were smitten; and at least it was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin. He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges, and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was equal to it.

So has it been in all revivals; God’s work has been done suddenly. As with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high; not slowly, but on cherubim right royally doth he ride; on the wings of the mighty wind does he fly. Sudden has been the work; men could scarce believe it true, it was done in so short a space of time. Witness the great revival which is going on in and around Belfast. After carefully looking at the matter, and after seeing some trusty and well-beloved brother who lived in that neighborhood, I am convinced, notwithstanding what enemies may say, that it is a genuine work of grace, and that God is doing wonders there. A friend who called to see me yesterday, tells me that the lowest and vilest



men, the most depraved females in Belfast, have been visited with this extraordinary epilepsy, as the world calls it; but with this strange rushing of the spirit, as we have it. Men who have been drunkards have suddenly felt an impulse compelling them to pray. They have resisted; they have sought to their cups in order to put it out; but when they have been swearing, seeking to quench the Spirit by their blasphemy, God has at last brought them on their knees, and they have been compelled to cry for mercy with piercing shrieks, and to agonize in prayer; and then after a time, the Evil one seems to have been cast out of them, and in a quiet, holy, happy frame of mind, they have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and have walked in his fear and love. Roman Catholics have been converted. I thought that an extraordinary thing; but they have been converted very frequently indeed in Ballymena and in Belfast. In fact, I am told the priests are now selling small bottles of holy water for people to take, in order that they may be preserved from this desperate contagion of the Holy Spirit. This holy water is said to have such efficacy, that those who do not attend any of the meetings are not likely to be meddled with by the Holy Spirit — so the priests tell them. But if they go to the meetings, even this holy water cannot preserve them — they are as liable to fall prey to the Divine influence. I think they are just as likely to do so without as with it. All this has been brought about suddenly, and although we may expect to find some portion of natural excitement, yet I am persuaded it is in the main a real, spiritual, and abiding work. There is a little froth on the surface, but there is a deep running current that is not to be resisted, sweeping underneath, and carrying everything before it. At least there is something to awaken our interest, when we understand that in the small town of Ballymena on market day, the publicans have always taken one hundred pounds for whiskey, and now they cannot take a sovereign all day long in all the public houses. Men who were once drunkards now meet for prayer, and people after hearing one sermon will not go until the minister has preached another, and sometimes a third; and at last he is obliged to say: “You must go, I am exhausted.” Then they will break up into groups in their streets and in their houses, crying out to God to let this mighty work spread, that sinners may be converted unto him. “Well,” says one, “we cannot believe it.” Very likely you cannot, but some of us can, for we have heard it with our ears, and our fathers have

told us the mighty works that God did in their days, and we are prepared to believe that God can do the same works now.

I must here remark again, in all these old stories there is one very plain feature. Whenever God has done a mighty work it has been by some very insignificant instrument. When he slew Goliath it was by little David, who was but a ruddy youth. Lay not up the sword of Goliath — I always thought that a mistake of David — lay up, not Goliath's sword, but lay up the stone, and treasure up the sling in God's armory for ever. When God would slay Sisera, it was a woman that must do it with a hammer and a nail. God has done his mightiest works by the meanest instruments: that is a fact most true of all God's works — Peter the fisherman at Pentecost, Luther the humble monk at the Reformation, Whitefield the potboy of the Old Bell Inn at Gloucester in the time of the last century's revival; and so it must be to the end. God works not by Pharaoh's horses or chariot, but he works by Moses' rod; he doth not his wonders with the whirlwind and the storm; he doth them by the still small voice, that the glory may be his and the honor all his own. Doth not this open a field of encouragement to you and to me? Why may not we be employed in doing some mighty work for God here? Moreover, we have noticed in all these stories of God's mighty works in the olden time, that wherever he has done any great thing it has been by someone who has had very great faith. I do verily believe at this moment that, if God willed it, every soul in this hall would be converted now. If God chose to put forth the operations of his own mighty Spirit, not the most obdurate heart would be able to stand against it. "He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." He will do as he pleases; none can stay his hand. "Well," says one, "but I do not expect to see any great things." Then, my dear friend, you will not be disappointed, for you will not see them; but those that expect them shall see them. Men of great faith do great things. It was Elijah's faith that slew the priests of Baal. If he had the little heart that some of you have, Baal's priests had still ruled over the people, and would never have been smitten with the sword. It was Elijah's faith that bade him say: "If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." And again: "Choose one bullock for yourselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood and put no fire under, call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah." It was his noble faith that bade him say: "Take the prophets of

Baal; let not one of them escape"; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there — a holocaust to God. The reason why God's name was so magnified, was because Elijah's faith in God was so mighty and heroic. When the Pope sent his bull to Luther, Luther burned it. Standing up in the midst of the crowd with the blazing paper in his hand he said: "See here, this is the Pope's bull." What cared he for all the Popes that were ever in or out of hell? And when he went to Worms to meet the grand Diet, his followers said: "You are in danger, stand back." "No," said Luther, "if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would not fear; I will go" — and into Worms he went, confident in the Lord his God. It was the same with Whitefield; he believed and he expected that God would do great things. When he went into his pulpit he believed that God would bless the people, and God did do so. Little faith may do little things, but great faith shall be greatly honored. O God! our fathers have told us this, that whenever they had great faith Thou hast always honored it by doing mighty works.

I will detain you no longer on this point, except to make one observation. All the mighty works of God have been attended with great prayer, as well as with great faith. Have you ever heard of the commencement of the great American revival? A man unknown and obscure, laid it up in his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After praying and wrestling and making the soul-stirring enquiry: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he hired a room, and put up an announcement that there would be a prayer-meeting held there at such-and-such an hour of the day. He went at the proper hour, and there was not a single person there; he began to pray, and prayed for half an hour alone. One came in at the end of the half-hour, and then two more, and I think he closed with six. The next week came around, and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times; at last the prayer-meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start prayer-meetings; at last there was scarcely a street in New York that was without a prayer-meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The prayer-meetings became daily ones, lasting for about an hour; petitions and requests were sent up, these were simply asked and offered before God, and the answers came; and many were the happy hearts that stood

up and testified that the prayer offered last week had been already fulfilled. Then it was when they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell upon the people, and it was rumored that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching in thorough earnest, and there had been hundreds converted in a week. The matter spread into and through the Northern States — these revivals of religion became universal, and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million people were converted to God through the short space of two or three months. Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast by the same means. The brother thought that it lay at his heart to pray, and he did pray; then he held a regular prayer-meeting; day after day they met together to entreat the blessing, and fire descended and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos but by hundreds and thousands, and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of his gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Make each of you your own estimate of them if you please.

**II.** Agreeable to my division, I have now to make a few observations upon THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOR. When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is: "Oh, that was a very long while ago." They imagine that times have altered since then. Says one: "I can believe anything about the Reformation — the largest accounts that can possibly be given, I can take in." "And so could I concerning Whitefield and Wesley," says another, "all that is quite true, they did labor vigorously and successfully, but that was many years ago. Things were in a different state then from what they are now." Granted; but I want to know what the things have to do with it. I thought it was God that did it. Has God changed? Is he not an immutable God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever? Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time he can do at another? Nay, I think I may push it a little further, and say what he has done once, is a prophecy of what he intends to do again — that the mighty works which have been accomplished in the olden time shall all be repeated, and the Lord's song shall be sung again in Zion, and he shall again be greatly glorified. Others among you say, "Oh, well I look upon these things as great prodigies — miracles. We are not to expect them every day." That is the very reason why we do not get them. If we

had learnt to expect them, we should no doubt obtain them, but we put them up on the shelf, as being out of the common order of our moderate religion, as being mere curiosities of Scripture history. We imagine such things, however true, to be prodigies of providence; we cannot imagine them to be according to the ordinary working of his mighty power. I beseech you, my friends, abjure that idea, put it out of your mind. Whatever God has done in the way of converting sinners is to be looked upon as a precedent, for “his arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that He cannot hear.” If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in ourselves, and with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy his grace as in the days of old. Yet there is yet another disadvantage under which these old stories labor. The fact is, we have not seen them. Why, I may talk to you ever so long about revivals, but you won’t believe them half so much, nor half so truly, as if one were to occur in your very midst. If you saw it with your own eyes, then you would see the power of it. If you had lived in Whitefield’s day, or had heard Grimshaw preach, you would believe anything. Grimshaw would preach twenty-four times a week: he would preach many times in the course of a sultry day, going from place on horseback. That man did preach. It seemed as if heaven would come down to earth to listen to him. He spoke with a real earnestness, with all the fire of zeal that ever burned in mortal breast, and the people trembled while they listened to him, and said, “Certainly this is the voice of God.” It was the same with Whitefield. The people would seem to move to and fro while he spoke, even as the harvest field is moved with the wind. So mighty was the energy of God that after hearing such a sermon the hardest-hearted men would go away and say: “There must be something in it, I never heard the like.” Can you not realize these as literal facts? Do they stand up in all their brightness before your eyes? Then I think the stories you have heard with your ears should have a true and proper effect upon your lives.

### **III.** This brings me in the third place to the PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD’S MIGHTY DEEDS.

I would that I could speak with the fire of some of those men whose names I have mentioned. Pray for me, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me, that I may plead with you for a little time with all my might,

seeking to exhort and stir you up, that you may get a like revival in your midst. My dear friends, the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about to-day? — then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing to our well-beloved a song concerning what he is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows, and sing an old song, and bless and praise his holy name for the things which he did to his ancient church, for the wonders which he wrought in Egypt, and in all the lands wherein he led his people, and from which he brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. When we have thus begun to praise God for what he has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other great duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer that he would repeat the like signs and wonders among us. Oh! men and brethren, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion — men whose faith is large enough, and their love fiery enough to lead them from this moment to exercise unceasing intercessions that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations. Why, look you here in this present assembly what objects there are for our compassion. Glancing round, I observe one and another whose history I may happen to know, but how many are there still unconverted — men who trembled and who know they have, but have shaken off their fears, and once more are daring their destiny, determined to be suicides to their own souls and to put away from them that grace which once seemed as if it were striving in their hearts. They are turning away from the gates of heaven, and running post-haste to the doors of hell; and will not you stretch out your hands to God to stop them in this desperate resolve? If in this congregation there were but one unconverted man and I could point him out and say: “There he sits, one soul that has never felt the love of God, and never has been moved to repentance,” with what anxious curiosity would every eye regard him? I think out of thousands of Christians here, there is not one who would refuse to go home and pray for that solitary unconverted individual. But, oh! my brethren, it is not one that is in danger of hell fire; here are hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures.

Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? Hitherto all other means have been used without effect. God is my witness how often I have striven in this pulpit to be the means of the conversion of men. I have preached my very heart out. I could say no more than I have said, and I hope the secrecy of my chamber is a witness to the fact that I do not cease to feel when I cease to speak; but I have a heart to pray for those of you who are never affected, or who, if affected, still quench the Spirit of God. I have done my utmost. Will not you come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Here they are; I commend them to you. Men and women whose hearts refuse to melt, whose stubborn knees will not bend; I give them up to you and ask you to pray for them. Carry their cases on your knees before God. Wife! never cease to pray for your unconverted husband. Husband! never stop your supplication till you see your wife converted. And, O fathers and mothers! have you no unconverted children? have you not brought them here many and many a Sunday, and they remain just as they have been? You have sent them first to one chapel and then to another, and they are just what they were. The wrath of God abideth on them. Die they must; and should they die now, to a certainty you are aware that the flames of hell must engulf them. And do you refuse to pray for them? Hard hearts, brutish souls, if knowing Christ yourself ye will not pray for those who come of your own loins — your children according to the flesh.

Dear friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we do but pray for a blessing. Look at the movement we have already seen; we have witnessed Exeter Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, crammed to the doors, but we have seen no effect as yet of all these mighty gatherings. Have we not tried to preach without trying to pray? It is not likely that the church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? O dear friends! let us agonize in prayer, and it shall come to pass that this Music Hall shall witness the sighs and groans of the penitent and the songs of the converted. It shall yet happen that this vast host shall not come and go as now it does, but little the better; but men shall go out of this hall, praising God and saying: — "It was good to be there; it was none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." Thus much to stir you up to prayer.

Another inference we should draw is that all the stories we have heard should correct any self-dependence which may have crept into our treacherous hearts. Perhaps we as a congregation have begun to depend upon our numbers and so forth. We may have thought: "Surely God must bless us through the ministry." Now let the stories which our fathers have told us remind you, and remind me, that God saves not by many nor by few; that it is not in us to do this but God must do it all; it may be that some hidden preacher, whose name has never been known, will yet start up in this city of London and preach the Lord with greater power than bishops or ministers have ever know before. I will welcome him; God be with him; let him come from where he may; only let God speed him, and let the work be done. Mayhap, however, God intends to bless the agency used in this place for your good and for your conversion. If so, I am thrice happy to think such should be the case. But place no dependence upon the instrument. No, when men laughed at us and mocked us most, God blessed us most; and now it is not a disreputable thing to attend the Music Hall. We are not so much despised as we once were, but I question whether we have so great a blessing as once we had. We would be willing to endure another pelting in the pillory, to go through another ordeal with every newspaper against us, and with every man hissing and abusing us, if God so pleases, if he will but give us a blessing. Only let him cast out of us any idea that our own bow and sword will get us victory. We shall never get a revival here unless we believe that it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, that can do it.

Having made this statement, I will endeavor to stir you up with confidence that the result may be obtained that I have pictured, and that the stories we have heard of the olden time, may become true in our day. Why should not every one of my hearers be converted? Is there any limitation in the Spirit of God? Why should not the feeblest minister become the means of salvation to thousands? Is God's arm shortened? My brethren, when I bid you pray that God would make the ministry quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword, for the salvation of sinners, I am not setting you a hard, much less an impossible, task. We have but to ask and to get. Before we call, God will answer; and while we are yet speaking he will hear. God alone can know what may come of this morning's sermon, if he chooses to bless it. From this moment you may pray more; from this moment God



may bless the ministry more. From this hour other pulpits may become more full of life and vigor than before. From this same moment the Word of God may flow, and run, and rush, and get to itself an amazing and boundless victory. Only wrestle in prayer, meet together in your houses, go to your closets, be instant, be earnest in season and out of season, agonize for souls, and all that you have heard shall be forgotten in what you shall see; and all that others have told you shall be as nothing compared with what you shall hear with your ears and behold with your eyes in your own midst. Oh ye, to whom all this is as an idle tale, who love not God, neither serve him, I beseech you stop and think for a moment. Oh, Spirit of God, rest on thy servant while a few sentences are uttered, and make them mighty. God has striven with some of you. You have had your times of conviction. You are trying now, perhaps, to be infidels. You are trying to say now — “There is no hell — there is no hereafter.” It will not do. You know there is a hell and all the laughter of those who seek to ruin your souls cannot make you believe that there is not. You sometimes try to think so, but you know that God is true. I do not argue with you now. Conscience tells you that God will punish you for sin. Depend upon it — you will find no happiness in trying to stifle God’s Spirit. This is not the path to bliss, to quench those thoughts which would lead you to Christ. I beseech you, take off your hands from God’s arm; resist not still His Spirit. Bow the knee and lay hold of Christ and believe on him. It will come to this yet. God the Holy Spirit will have you. I do trust that in answer to many prayers he intends to save you yet. Give way now, but oh, remember if you are successful in quenching the Spirit, your success will be the most awful disaster that can ever occur to you, for if the Spirit forsake you, you are lost. It may be that this is the last warning you will ever have. The conviction you are now trying to put down and stifle may be the last you will have, and the angel standing with the black seal and the wax may be now about to drop it upon your destiny, and say, “Let him alone. He chooses drunkenness — he chooses lust — let him have them; and let him reap the wages in the everlasting fires of hell.” Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus: repent and be converted every one of you. I am bold to say what Peter did. Breaking through every bond of every kind that could bind my lip, I exhort you in God’s name — Repent and escape from damnation. A few more months and years, and ye shall know what damnation means, except ye repent. Oh! fly to Christ

while yet the lamp holds out and burns, and mercy is still preached to you. Grace is still presented; accept Christ, resist him no longer; come to him now. The gates of mercy are wide open too-day; come now, poor sinner, and have thy sins forgiven. When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag, and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that the black flag was put up, and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up to-day; perhaps to-morrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the law; and then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world or in that which is to come. An old eastern conqueror when he came to a city used to light a brazier of coals, and, setting it high upon a pole he would, with sound of trumpet proclaim, that if they surrendered while the lamp held out and burned he would have mercy upon them, but that when the coals were out he would storm the city, pull it stone from stone, sow it with salt, and put men, women, and children, to a bloody death. To-day the thunders of God bid you to take the like warning. There is your light, the lamp, the brazier of hot coals. Year after year the fire is dying out, nevertheless there is coal left. Even now the wind of death is trying to blow out the last live coal. Oh! sinner, turn while the lamp continues to blaze. Turn now, for when the last coal is dead thy repentance cannot avail thee. Thy everlasting yelling in torment cannot move the heart of God; thy groans and briny tears cannot move him to pity thee. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Oh, to-day lay hold on Christ, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

# THE MEEK AND LOWLY ONE

## SERMON NO. 265

DELIVERED ON JULY 31, 1859

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

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

THE single sentence which I have selected for my text consists of these words: — “I am meek and lowly in heart.” These words might be taken to have three distinct bearings upon the context. They may be regarded as being *the lesson to be taught*: “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” One great lesson of the gospel is to teach us to be meek — to put away our high and angry spirits, and to make us lowly in heart. Peradventure, this is the meaning of the passage — that if we will but come to Christ’s school, he will teach us the hardest of all lessons, — how to be meek and lowly in heart. Again; other expositors might consider this sentence to signify, that is *the only Spirit in which a man can learn of Jesus*, — the Spirit which is necessary if we would become Christ’s scholars. We can learn nothing, even of Christ himself, while we hold our heads up with pride, or exalt ourselves with self-confidence. We must be meek and lowly in heart, otherwise we are totally unfit to be taught by Christ. Empty vessels may be filled; but vessels that are full already can receive no more. The man who knows his own emptiness can receive abundance of knowledge, and wisdom, and grace, from Christ; but he who glories in himself is not in a fit condition to receive anything from God. I have no doubt that both of these interpretations are true, and might be borne out by the connection. It is the *lesson of Christ’s school* — it is the *spirit of Christ’s disciples*. But I choose, rather, this morning, to regard these words as being *a commendation of the Teacher himself*. “Come unto me and learn; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” As much as to say, “I can

teach, and you will not find it hard to learn of me.” In fact, the subject of this morning’s discourse is briefly this: the gentle, lovely character of Christ should be a high and powerful inducement to sinners to come to Christ. I intend so to use it: first of all, noticing *the two qualities* which Christ here claims for himself. He is “*meek;*” and then he is “*lowly in heart;*” and after we have observed these two things, I shall come to *push the conclusion home*. Come unto him, all ye that are laboring and are heavy laden; come unto him, and take his yoke upon you; for he is meek and lowly in heart.

**I.** First, then, I am to consider THE FIRST QUALITY WHICH JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS. He declares that he is “MEEK.”

Christ is no egotist; he takes no praise to himself. If ever he utters a word in self-commendation, it is not with that object; it is with another design, namely that he may entice souls to come to him. Here, in order to exhibit this meekness, I shall have to speak of him in several ways.

**1.** First, Christ is meek, as opposed to the *ferocity* of spirit manifested by zealots and bigots. Take, for a prominent example of the opposite of meekness, the false prophet Mahomet. The strength of his cause lies in the fact, that he is *not* meek. He presents himself before those whom he claims as disciples, and says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am neither meek, nor lowly in heart; I will have no patience with you; there is my creed, or there is the scimitar — death or conversion, whichever you please.” The moment the Mahometan religion withdrew that very forcible argument of decapitation or impalement, it stayed in its work of conversion, and never progressed; for the very strength of the false prophet lays in the absence of any meekness. How opposite this is to Christ! Although he hath a right to demand man’s love and man’s faith, yet he comes not into the world to demand it with fire and sword. His might is under persuasion; his strength is quiet forbearance, and patient endurance; his mightiest force is the sweet attraction of compassion and love. He knoweth nothing of the ferocious hosts of Mahomet; he bids none of us draw our sword to propagate the faith, but saith, “Put up thy sword into its scabbard; they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.” “My kingdom is not of this world, else might my servants fight.” Nay, Mahomet is not the only instance we can bring; but even good men

are subject to the like mistakes. They imagine that religion is to be spread by terror and thunder. Look at John himself, the most lovely of all the disciples: he would call fire from heaven on a village of Samaritans, because they rejected Christ. Hark to his hot enquiry, — “Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Christ’s disciples were to him something like the sons of Zeruiah to David; or when Shimei mocked David, the sons of Zeruiah said, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.”

But David meekly said, “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? — and put them aside. He had something of the spirit of his Master; he knew that *his* honor was not then to be defended by sword or spear. O blessed Jesus! thou hast no fury in thy spirit; when men rejected thee thou didst not draw the sword to smite, but, on the contrary, thou didst yield thine eyes to weeping. Behold your Savior, disciples, and see whether he was not meek. He had long preached in Jerusalem without effect, and at last he knew that they were ready to put him to death; but what saith he, as, standing on the top of the hill, he beheld the city that had rejected his gospel? Did he invoke a curse upon it? Did he suffer one word of anger to leap from his burning heart? Ah! no; there were flames, but they were those of love; there were scalding drops, but they were those of grief. He beheld the city, and wept over it, and said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” And for a further proof of the absence of all uncharitableness, observe that, even when they drove the nails into his blessed hands, yet he had no curse to breathe upon them, but his dying exclamation was, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” O sinners! see what a Christ it is that we bid you serve. No angry bigot, no fierce warrior, claiming your unwilling faith: he is a tender Jesus. Your rejection of him has made his bowels yearn over you; and though you abhor his gospel, he has pleaded for you, saying,

Let him alone yet another year, till I dig about him; peradventure he may yet bring forth fruit.” What a patient master is he! Oh! will you not serve him!

2. But the idea is not brought out fully, unless we take another sense. There *is* a sternness which cannot be condemned. A Christian man will often feel him self called to bear most solemn and stern witness against the error of his times, But Christ's mission, although it certainly did testify against the sin of his times, yet had a far greater reference to the salvation of the souls of men. To show the idea that I have in my own mind, which I have not yet brought out, I must picture Elijah. What a man was he! His mission was to be the bold unflinching advocate of the right, and to bear a constant testimony against the wickedness of his age. And how boldly did he speak! Look at him: how grand the picture! Can you not conceive him on that memorable day, when he met Ahab, and Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Do you mark that mighty answer which Elijah gave him, while the king trembles at his words. Or, better still, can you picture the scene when Elijah said, "Take you two bullocks, ye priests, and build an altar, and see this day, whether God be God or Baal be God." Do you see him as he mocks the worshippers of Baal, and with a biting irony says to them, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." And do you see him in the last grand scene, when the fire has come down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and licked up the water, and burned the altar? Do you hear him cry, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one escape?" Can you see him in his might hewing them in pieces by the brook, and making their flesh a feast for the fowls of heaven? Now, you cannot picture Christ in the same position He had the stern qualities of Elijah, but he kept them, as it were, behind, hike sleeping thunder, that must not as yet waken and lift up its voice. There were some rumblings of time tempest, it is true, when he spoke so sternly to the Sadducees, and Scribes, and Pharisees; those woes were like murmurings of a distant storm, but it *was a distant* storm; whereas, Elijah lived in the midst of the whirlwind itself, and was no still small voice, but was as the very fire of God, and hike the chariot in which he mounted to heaven — fit chariot for such a fiery man! Christ here stands in marked contrast. Picture him in somewhat a like position to Elijah with Ahab. There is Jesus left alone with an adulterus woman. She has been taken in the very fact. Her accusers are present, ready to bear witness against her. By a simple sentence he emptied the room of every witness; convicted by their conscience they all retire. And now what does Christ say? The woman might have lifted her eyes, and have looked at him, and said, "Hast thou found me O mine enemy? " — for she might

have regarded Christ as the enemy of so base a sin as that which she had committed against her marriage bed. But instead thereof Jesus said, “Doth no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.” Oh, how different from the sternness of Elijah! Sinners! if I had to preach Elijah as your Savior I should feel that I had a hard task, for you might throw it in my teeth — “Shall we come to Elijah? He will call fire from heaven on us, as he did upon the captains and their fifties. Shall we come to Elijah? Surely he will slay us, for we have been like the prophets of Baal?” Nay, sinners; but I bid you come to Christ. Come to him, who, although he hated sin more than Elijah could do, yet nevertheless, loved the sinner — who, though he would not share iniquity, yet spares the transgressors, and has no words but those of love and mercy, and peace and comfort, for those of you who will now come and put your trust in him.

I must put in a word here by way of caveat. I am very far from imputing, for a single moment, any blame to Elijah. He was quite right. None but Elijah could have fulfilled the mission which his Master gave him. He needed to be all he was, and certainly not less stern; but Elijah was not sent to be a Savior; he was quite unfit for that. He was sent to administer a stern rebuke. He was God’s iron tongue of threatening, not God’s silver tongue of mercy. Now, Jesus is the silver tongue of grace. Sinners! hear the sweet bells ringing, as Jesus now invites you to come unto him. “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;” for I am not stern, I am not harsh, I am no fire-killing Elijah; I am the meek, tender, lowly-hearted Jesus.”

**3.** Christ is meek in heart. To exhibit this quality in another light, call to your minds Moses. Moses was the meekest of men; and yet Christ far excels Moses in his meekness. Around Moses there seems to be a hedge, a ring of fire. The character of Moses is like Mount Sinai; it hath bounds set about it, so that one cannot draw near unto him. Moses was not an approachable person, he was quiet and meek, and tender, but there was a sacred majesty about the King in Jeshurun that hedged his path, so that we cannot imagine the people making themselves familiar with him. Whoever read of Moses sitting down upon a well, and talking to a harlot like the woman of Samaria? Whoever heard a story of a Magdalene washing the feet of Moses? Can ye conceive Moses eating bread with a sinner, or

passing under a sycamore tree, and calling Zaccheus, the thievish publican, and bidding him come down? There is a kind of stately majesty in Moses, no mere affectation of standing alone, but a loneliness of superior worth. Men looked up to him as to some cloud-capped mountain, and despaired of being able to enter into the lofty circle, within which they might have communed with him. Moses always had in spirit what he once had in visible token; he had a glory about his brow, and before he could converse with men he must wear a veil, for they could not bear to look upon the face of Moses. But how different is Jesus! He is a man among men; wherever he goes no one is afraid to speak to him. You scarcely meet with any one who dares not approach him. There is a poor woman, it is true, who hath the flux, and she fears to come near him, because she is ceremonially unclean; but even she can come behind him in the press, and touch the hem of his garment, and virtue goeth Out of him. Nobody was afraid of Jesus. The mothers brought their little babes to him: whoever heard of their doing that to Moses? Did ever babe get a blessing of Moses? But Jesus was all meekness — the approachable man, feasting with the wedding guests, sitting down with sinners, conversing with the unholy and the unclean, touching the leper, and making himself at home with all men. Sinners! this is the one we invite you to — this homely man, Christ. Not to Moses, for you might say, “He hath horns of light, and how shall I draw near to his majesty! He is bright perfection — the very lightnings of Sinai rest upon his brow.” But sinners, ye cannot say that of Christ. He is as holy as Moses — as great, and far greater, but he is still so homely that ye may come to him. Little children, ye may put your trust in him. Ye may say your little prayer,

*“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild  
Look on me, a little Child;  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to thee.”*

He will not cast you away, or think you have intruded on him. Ye harlots, ye drunkards, ye feasters, ye wedding guests, ye may all come; “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” He is “meek and lowly in heart.” That gives, I think, a still fuller and broader sense to the term, “meek.”

4. But yet, to push the term a little further. Christ on earth was a king; but there as nothing about him of the exclusive pomp of kings, which excludes



the common people from their society. Look at the Eastern king Ahasuerus, sitting on his throne. He is considered by his people as a superior being. None may come in unto the king, unless he is called for. Should he venture to pass the circle, the guards will slay him, unless the king stretches out the golden scepter. Even Esther, his beloved wife, is afraid to draw near, and must put her life in her hand, if she comes into the presence of the king uncalled. Christ is a king; but where his pomp? Where the Janitor that keeps his door, and thrusts away the poor? Where the soldiers that ride on either side of his chariot to screen the monarch from the gaze of poverty? See thy King, O Sion! He comes, he comes in royal pomp! Behold, Judah, behold thy King cometh! But how cometh he? “Meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” And who are his attendants? See, the young children, boys and girls! They cry, “Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah!” And who are they that wait upon him? His poor disciples. They pull the branches from the trees; they cast their garments in the street, and there he rideth on — Judah’s royal King. His courtiers are the poor; his pomp is that tribute which grateful hearts delight to offer. O sinners, will you not come to Christ? There is nothing in him to keep you back. You need not say, like Esther did of old, “I will go in unto the king, if I perish I perish. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Christ is more ready to receive you than you are to come to him. Come to the King! “What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be done unto thee.” If thou stayest away, it is not because he shuts the door, it is because thou wilt not come. Come, filthy, naked, ragged, poor, lost, ruined, come, just as thou art. Here he stands, like a fountain freely opened for all comers. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.”

**5.** I will give you but one more picture to set forth the meekness of Christ, and I think I shall not have completed the story without it. The absence of all selfishness from the character of Christ, makes one ingredient of this precious quality of his meekness. You remember the history of Jonah. Jonah is sent to prophecy against Nineveh; but he is selfish. He will not go for he shall get no honor by it. He does not want to go so long a journey for so small a price. He will not go. He will take a ship and go to Tarshish. He is thrown out into the sea, swallowed by a fish, and vomited by it upon dry land. He goes away to Nineveh, and not wanting courage, he

goes through its streets, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." That one man's earnest cry moves the city from one end to the other. The king proclaims a first; the people mourn in sackcloth and confess their sins. God sends them tidings of mercy, and they are spared. But what will Jonah do? Oh, tell it not, ye heavens; let none hear it — that ever a prophet of God could do the like! He sits himself down, and he is angry with God. And why his anger? Because, says he, "God has not destroyed that city." If God had destroyed the city he would have shouted over the ruins, because his reputation would have been safe; but now that the city is saved, and his own reputation for a prophet tarnished, he must needs sit down in anger. But Christ is the very reverse of this. Sinners! Christ does thunder at you sometimes, but it is always that he may bring you to repentance. He does take Jonah's cry, and utter it far more mightily than Jonah could; he does warn you that there is a fire that never can be quenched, and a worm that dieth not; but if you turn to him, will he sit down and be angry? Oh! no; methinks I see him. There you come poor prodigals; your father falls upon your neck and kisses you, and you are accepted, and a feast is made. Here comes the elder brother, Jesus. What does he say? Is he angry because you are saved? Ah! no! "My Father," saith he, "my younger brother have all come home, and I love them; they shall share my honors; they shall sit upon my throne; they shall share my heaven." "Where I am, there they shall be also." I will take them into union with myself, and as they *have wasted their inheritance, all that I have shall be their's for ever*. Oh! come home, prodigal, there is no angry brother and no angry father. Come back, come back, my brother, my wandering brother, I invite thee; for Jesus is rejoiced to receive thee. Do you not see, then, that the meekness of Christ is a sweet and blessed reason why we should come to him?

## **II.** The second virtue which Christ claims for himself, is **LOWLINESS OF HEART.**

When I looked this passage out in the original, I half wondered how it was that Christ found such a sweet word for the expression of his meaning; for the Greeks, do not know much about humility, and they have not a very good word to set forth this idea of lowliness of heart. I find that if this passage stood in another connection, the word might even be interpreted "degraded, debased," for the Greeks thought that if a man was humble, he

degraded himself — that if he stooped, he debased himself right out. “Well,” says Christ, “if you think so, so be it, and he takes the word. The word means, “near the ground.” So is Christ’s heart. We cannot be so low that he will not stoop to reach us. I would just set out the lowliness of Christ’s heart in this way. Christ is “lowly in heart;” that is, he is willing to receive *the poorest* sinner in the world. The pharisee thought that the keeper of the gate of heaven would admit only the rich, and not the poor. Mark Christ’s teaching. There were two came to the gate once upon a time; one was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; he knocked, and thought that full sure he must enter; but “in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments.” There came another, borne on angel’s wings. It was a beggar, whose many sores the dogs had licked and he had not so much as to knock at the gate, for the angel’s carried him straight away into the very center of paradise, and laid him in Abraham’s bosom. Jesus Christ is willing to receive beggars into his bosom. Kings, you know, condescend, when they permit even the rich to be presented to them, and the kissing of a monarch’s hand is something very wonderful indeed, but to have the kisses of *his* lips who is the King of kings, is no uncommon thing for men that are shivering in rags, or that are sick upon miserable beds, in dingy attics. Christ is “lowly in heart;” he goes with what men call the vulgar herd; he hath nothing of affected royalty about him — he hath a nobler royalty than that, the royalty that is too proud to think anything of a stoop, that can only measure itself by its own intrinsic excellence, and not by its official standing. He receiveth the lowest, the meanest, the vilest, for he is “lowly in heart.” If I have among my congregation some of the poorest of the poor, let them come away to Christ, and let them not imagine that their poverty need keep them back. I am always delighted when I see a number of women here from the neighboring workhouse. I bless God that there are some in the workhouse that are willing to come; and though they have sometimes been put to a little inconvenience by so doing, yet I have known them sooner give up their dinner than give up coming to hear the Word. God bless the workhouse women, and may they be led to Christ, for he is meek and lowly in heart, and will not reject them. I must confess also, I like to see a smock frock here and there in the midst of the congregation. Oh! what a mercy, that in the palace of the Great King there shall be found these workmen, these blouses, They shall be made partakers of the kingdom of

God. He makes no difference between prince and pauper; he takes men to heaven just as readily from the workhouse, as from the palace.

Further, this lowliness of heart in Christ leads him to receive the most *ignorant* as well as the learned to himself. I know that sometimes poor ignorant people get a notion in their heads that they cannot be saved, because they cannot read and do not know much. I have sometimes, especially in country villages, received this answer, when I have been asking anything about personal religion. "Well, you know, sir, I never had any learning." Oh! but, ye unlearned, is this a reason why ye should stay away from him who is lowly in heart? It was said of an old Greek philosopher, that he wrote over his door, "None but the learned may enter here." But Christ, on the contrary, writes over his door, "He that is simple let him turn in hither." There are many great men with long handles to their names who know little of the gospel, while some of the poor unlettered ones spell out the whole secret, and become perfect masters in divinity. If they had degrees who deserve them, diplomas should often be transferred, and given to those who hold the plough handle or work at the carpenter's bench; for there is often more divinity in the little finger of a ploughman than there is in the whole body of some of our modern divines. "Don't they understand divinity?" you say. Yes, in the letter of it; but as to the spirit and life of it, D.D. often means DOUBLY DESTITUTE.

The lowliness of Christ may be clearly seen in yet another point of view. He is not only willing to receive the poor, and to receive the ignorant, but he is also ever ready to receive men, despite the vileness of their characters. Some teachers can stoop, and freely too, to both poor and ignorant; but they cannot stoop to the wicked. I think we have all felt a difficulty here. "However poor a man may be, or however little he knows," you say, "I don't mind talking with him, and trying to do him good; but I cannot talk with a man who is a rogue or a vagabond, or with a woman who has lost her character." I know you cannot; there are a great many things Christ did which we cannot do. We, who are the servants of Christ, have attempted to draw a line where duty has its bound. Like the domestic servant in some lordly mansion who stoops not to menial employment. We are above our work. We are so fastidious, that we cannot go after the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile. Not so, Christ. "He receiveth sinners and *eateth with* them." He, in the days of his flesh,

became familiar with the outcasts. He sought them out that he might save them; he entered their homes; he found his way into the slums. like some diligent officer of the police, he was willing to lodge where they lodged, eat at their table, and associate with their class to find them out. His *mission was to seek as well as to save*. Oh, see him stand, with arms wide open! Will that thief, who is justly executed for his crimes, be recognized by him? Yes, he will. There, with his arms outstretched, he hangs; the thief flies as it were to his bosom, and Jesus gives him a most blessed embrace. “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Christ has received the thief with open heart and open arms too. And there is Mary. Do you see her? She is washing the feet of Jesus. Why, she is a bad character, one of the worst women on the town. What will Christ say? Say? Why, hear how he speaks to Simon, the pious, reputable Pharisee. Saith he, after putting the parable concerning the two debtors, “which of them shall love him most?” — and then he explains that this woman hath had much forgiven, and therefore she loves him much. “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven,” saith he, and she goes her way in peace. There are many men you and I would not demean ourselves to notice, that Christ will take to heaven at last; for he is “lowly in heart.” He takes the base, the vilest, the scum, the offscouring, the filth, the garbage of the world, and out of such stuff and matter as that, he buildeth up a holy temple, and gathereth to himself trophies for his honor and praise.

And further, while I speak of the lowliness of Christ’s heart, I must remark another thing. Perhaps one is saying here, “Oh! sir, it is not what I have been, as to my conduct, that keeps me back from Christ; but I feel that what I am as to my nature restrains me; I am such a dolt, I shall never learn in his school I am such a hard-hearted one, he will never melt me, and if he does save me, I shall never be worth his having. Yes, but Christ is “lowly in heart.” There are some great goldsmiths that of course can only think of preparing and polishing the choicest diamonds; but Jesus Christ polishes a common pebble, and makes a jewel of it. Goldsmiths make their precious treasures out of precious materials; Christ makes his precious things out of dross. He begins always with bad material. The palace of our king is not made of cedar wood, as Solomon’s, or if it be made of wood, certainly he has chosen the knottiest trees and the knottiest planks wherewith to build his habitation. He has taken those to be his scholars

who were the greatest dunces; so amazing is the lowliness of Christ's heart. He sits down on the form with us to teach us the A,B,C, of repentance, and if we are slow to learn it he begins again, and takes us through our alphabet, and if we forget it he will often teach us our letters over again; for though he is able to teach the angels, yet he condescends to instruct babes, and as we go step by step in heavenly literature, Christ is not above teaching the elements. He teaches not only in the University, and the Grammar-school, where high attainments are valued, but he teaches in the day-school, where the elements and first principles are to be instilled. It is he who teaches the sinner, what *sinner* means in *deep* conviction, and what faith means in holy assurance. It is not only he who takes us to Pisgah, and bids us view the promised land, but it is he also who takes us to Calvary, and makes us learn that simplest of all things, the sacred writing of the cross. He, if I may use such a phrase, will not only teach us how to write them highly ornamental writing of the Eden Paradise, the richly gilded, illuminated letters of communion and fellowship, but he teaches us how to make the pot-hooks amid hangers of repentance and faith. he begins at the beginning; for he is "meek and lowly in heart." Come, then, ye dolts, ye fools; come ye *sinner*s, ye vile ones; come, ye dullest of all scholars, ye poor, ye illiterate, ye who are rejected and despised of men; come to him who was rejected and despised as well as you. Come and welcome! Christ bids you come!

*"Let not conscience make you linger  
 Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
 All the fitness he requireth,  
 Is to feel your need of him:  
 This he gives you;  
 'Tis his Spirit's rising beam.*

Come, poor sinners! come to a gentle Savior! and you shall never regret that you came to him.

**III.** Having thus spoken on the two marks of our Lord's character, I propose to conclude, if God shall help me, by knocking home the nail, by driving in the wedge, and pressing upon you a conclusion from these arguments. The conclusion of the whole matter is this, since Christ is "meek and lowly in heart," sinners come to him.

Come to him, then, first, whoever you may be, for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” When a man has done anything wrong, and wants a help through his difficulty, if about to employ some counsel to plead for him in a court of law, he might say, “Oh! don’t engage Mr. So-and-so for me; I hear he is a very hard-hearted man; I should not like to tell him what I have done, and entrust my case in his hands. Send for Mr. So-and-so; I have heard that he is very kind and gentle; let him come and hear my case, and let him conduct the pleadings for me:” Sinner! you are sinful, but Christ is very tender-hearted. Speed thy way to Christ’s private chamber, — your own closet of prayer. Tell him all you have done; he will not upbraid you: confess all your sins; he will not chide you. Tell him all your follies; he will not be angry with you. Commit your case to him, and with a sweet smile he will say, “I have cast thy sins behind my back; thou hast come to reason with me; I will discover to thee a matter of faith which excels all reason, — “ Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow Come to Christ, then, sinful ones, because he is “meek and lowly in heart,” and he can bear with the narrative of your offenses. “But, sir, I am very timid, and I dare not go.” Ah, but however timid you may be, you need not be afraid of him. He knows your timidity, and he will meet you with a smile, and say, “Fear not. Be of good cheer. Tell me thy sin, put thy trust in me, and thou shalt even yet rejoice to know my power to save. Come *now*,” saith he, “come to me at once. Linger no longer. *I* do not strive nor cry, nor cause my voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed *I* will not break, the smoking flax *I* will not quench; but *I* will bring forth judgment unto victory.” Come then, ye timid ones to Christ for he is meek and lowly in heart. “Oh,” says one, “but *I* am despairing; *I* have been so long under a sense of sin, *I* cannot go to Christ.” Poor soul! he is so meek and lowly, that, despairing though thou mayest be, take courage now; though it be like a forlorn hope to thee, yet go to him. Say, in the words of the hymn —

*“I’ll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose scepter pardon gives;  
Perhaps he may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives.  
I can but perish if I go;  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die.”*

And you may add this comfortable reflection —

*“But if I die with mercy sought, When I the King have tried,  
This were to die (delightful thought!)  
As sinner never died.”*

Come to him, then, timid and despairing; for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” First, he bids thee confess. What a sweet confessor! Put thy lip to his ear, and tell him all. He is “meek and lowly in heart.” Fear not. None of thy sins can move him to anger. If thou dost but confess them. If thou keepest them in thy heart, they shall be like a slumbering *volcano*; and a *furnace of destruction thou shalt* find even to the uttermost by-and-bye. But confess thy sins; tell them all; he is meek and lowly in heart.” Happy confession! when we have such a confessor.

Again, he bids thee trust him; and canst thou not trust him? He is “meek and lowly *in heart*.” Sinner! put confidence in Christ. There never was such a tender heart as his, never such a compassionate face. Look him in the face, poor soul, as thou seest him dying on the tree, and say, is not that a face that any man might trust! Look at him! Canst thou doubt him? Wilt thou withhold thy cause from such a Redeemer as this? No, Jesus! thou art so generous, so good, so kind Take thou my cause in hand. Just as I am, I come to thee. Save me, I beseech thee, for I put my trust in thee.

And then Jesus not only bids you confess and believe, but he bids you afterwards serve him. And sure, sinners, this should be a reason why you should do it. that he is so “meek and lowly in heart.” It is said, “Good masters make good servants.” What good servants you and I ought to be, for what a good Master we have! Never an ill word doth he say to us. If sometimes he pointeth out anything we have done amiss, it is only for our good. Not for his profit doth he chasten, but for ours. Sinner! I ask thee not to serve the god of this world — that foul fiend who shall destroy thee after all thy service. The devil is thy master now, and ye have heard the wages he bestows. But come and serve Christ, the meek and lowly one, who will give thee good cheer while thou art serving him, and give thee a blessed reward when thy work is done.

And now, best of all, sinners! come to Christ. Come to him in all his offices, for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” Sinner! thou art sick — Christ is a physician. If men have broken a bone, and they are about to have a



surgeon fetched, they say, "Oh! is he a feeling tender hearted man?" For there is many an army surgeon that takes off a leg, and never thinks of the pain he is giving. "Is he a kind man?" says the poor sufferer, when he is about to be strapped down upon the table." Ah! poor sufferer, Christ will heal thy broken bones, and he will do it with downy fingers. Never was there so light a touch as this heavenly surgeon has. "Tis pleasure even to be wounded by him, much more to be healed, Oh! what balm is that he gives to the poor bleeding heart! Fear not; there was never such a physician as this. If he give thee now and then a bitter pill and a sour draught, yet he will give thee such honied words and such sweet promises therewith, that thou shalt swallow it all up without murmuring. Nay, if he be with thee, thou canst even swallow up death in victory; and never know that thou hast died because victory hath taken the bitter taste away.

Sinner! thou art not only sick, and therefore bidden to come to him, but thou art moreover in debt, and he offers now to pay thy debts, and to discharge them in full. Come, come to him, for he is not harsh. Some men, when they do mean to let a debtor off, first have him in their office, and give him as much as they can of the most severe rebukes; — "You rogue, you! how dare you get in my debt, when you knew you could not pay? You have brought a deal of trouble on yourself, you have ruined your family," and so forth; and the good man gives him some very sound admonition, and very right too; till at length he says, "I'll let you off this time; come, now, I forgive you, and I hope you will never do so again." But Christ is even better than this. "There is all your debt," he says, "I have nailed it to the cross; sinner, I forgive thee all," and not one accusing word comes from his lips. Come, then, to him.

I fear I have spoilt my master in the painting; something like the artist who had to depict some fair damsel, and he so misrepresented her features, that she lost her reputation for beauty. I have sometimes feared lest I should do the same, and so distort the face of Christ, and so fail of giving the true likeness of his character that you would not love him. Oh! could you see him! If he could stand here for one moment, and tell you that he was meek and lowly in heart. Oh, methinks you would run to him and say, "Jesus, we come Thou meek and lowly Messiah, be thou our all!" Nay, you would not come; I am mistaken. If sovereign grace draw you not under the sound of the gospel, neither would you be converted though Christ should

appear before you. But hear now the message of that gospel — “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; for he that believeth on him, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not, must be damned.”

# THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

## SERMON NO. 273

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1859,**

**AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“The blood of the everlasting covenant.” — Hebrews 13:20.*

ALL God's dealings with men have had a covenant character. It hath so pleased Him to arrange it, that he will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with Him except in the same manner. Adam in the garden was under a covenant with God and God was in covenant with Him. That covenant he speedily brake. There is a covenant still existing in all its terrible power — terrible I say, because it has been broken on man's part, and therefore God will most surely fulfill its solemn threatenings and sanctions. That is the covenant of works. By this he dealt with Moses, and in this doth he deal with the whole race of men as represented in the first Adam. Afterwards when God would deal with Noah, it was by a covenant; and when in succeeding ages he dealt with Abraham, he was still pleased to bind himself to him by a covenant. That covenant he preserved and kept, and it was renewed continually to many of his seed. God dealt not even with David, the man after his own heart, except with a covenant. He made a covenant with his anointed; and beloved, he dealeth with you and me this day still by covenant. When he shall come in all his terrors to condemn, he shall smite by covenant — namely, by the sword of the covenant of Sinai; and if he comes in the splendors of his grace to save, he still comes to us by covenant — namely, the covenant of Zion; the covenant which he has made with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head and representative of his people. And mark, whenever we come into close and intimate dealings with God, it is sure to be, on our part, also by covenant. We make with God, after conversion, a covenant of gratitude; we come to

him sensible of what he has done for us, and we devote ourselves to him. We set our seal to that covenant when in baptism we are united with his church; and day by day, so often as we come around the table of the breaking of the bread, we renew the vow of our covenant, and thus we have personal intercourse with God. I cannot pray to him except through the covenant of grace; and I know that I am not his child unless I am his, first through the covenant whereby Christ purchased me, and secondly, through the covenant by which I have given up myself, and dedicated all that I am and all that I have to him. It is important, then, since the covenant is the only ladder which reaches from earth to heaven — since it is the only way in which God has intercourse with us, and by which we can deal with him, that we should know how to discriminate between covenant and covenant; and should not be in any darkness or error with regard to what is the covenant of grace, and what is not. It shall be our endeavor, this morning, to make as simple and as plain as possible, the matter of the covenant spoken of in our text, and I shall thus speak — first upon the covenant of grace; secondly, its everlasting character; and thirdly, the relationship which the blood bears to it. “The blood of the everlasting covenant.”

**I.** First of all, then, I have to speak this morning of THE COVENANT mentioned in the text; and I observe that we can readily discover at first sight what the covenant is not. We see at once that this is not the covenant of works, for the simple reason that this is an everlasting covenant. Now the covenant of works was not everlasting in any sense whatever. It was not eternal; it was first made in the garden of Eden. It had a beginning, it has been broken; it will be violated continually and will soon be wound up and pass away: therefore, it is not everlasting in any sense. The covenant of works cannot bear an everlasting title; but as the one in my text is an everlasting covenant, therefore it is not a covenant of works. God made a covenant first of all with the human race, which ran in this wise: “If thou, O man, wilt be obedient, thou shalt live and be happy, but if thou wilt be disobedient, thou shalt perish. In the day that thou disobey me thou shalt die. That covenant was made with all of us in the person of our representative, the first Adam. If Adam had kept that covenant, we believe we should everyone of us have been preserved. But inasmuch as he broke the covenant, you and I, and all of us, fell down and were considered

henceforth as the heirs of wrath, as inheritors of sin as prone to every evil and subject to every misery. That covenant has passed away with regard to God's people; it has been put away through the new and better covenant which has utterly and entirely eclipsed it by its gracious glory.

Again, I may remark that the covenant here meant is not the covenant of gratitude which is made between the loving child of God and his Savior. Such a covenant is very right and proper. I trust all of us who know the Savior have said in our very hearts: —

*“Tis done! The great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.”*

We have given up everything to him. But that covenant is not the one in the text, for the simple reason that the covenant in our text is an everlasting one. Now ours was only written out some few years ago. It would have been despised by us in the earlier parts of our life, and cannot at the very utmost be so old as ourselves.

Having thus readily shown what this covenant is not, may I observe what this covenant is. And here it will be necessary for me to subdivide this head again and to speak of it thus: To understand a covenant, you must know who are the contracting parties; secondly, what are the stipulations of the contract; thirdly, what are the objects of it; and then, if you would go still deeper, you must understand something of the motives which lead the contracting parties to form the covenant between themselves.

**1.** Now, in this covenant of grace, we must first of all observe the high contracting parties between whom it was made. The covenant of grace was made before the foundation of the world between God the Father, and God the Son; or to put it in a yet more scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity. This covenant was not made mutually between God and man. Man did not at that time exist; but Christ stood in the covenant as man's representative. In that sense we will allow that it was a covenant between God and man, but not a covenant between God and any man personally and individually. It was a covenant between God with Christ, and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed who were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world. It is a noble and glorious thought, the very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine which we teach, that long ere the day-star knew its

place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel's wing had stirred the un navigated ether, before a solitary song had distributed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, he had entered into solemn council with himself, with his Son, and with his Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, proposed, and predestinated the salvation of his people. He had, moreover, in the covenant arranged the ways and means, and fixed and settled everything which should work together for the effecting of the purpose and the decree. My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council-chamber, and by faith I behold the Father pledging himself to the Son, and the Son pledging himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives his pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled — the covenant which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy, and hope, and boast of all the saints.

**2.** And now, what were the stipulations of this covenant? They were somewhat in the wise. God has foreseen that man after creation would break the covenant of works; that however mild and gentle the tenure upon which Adam had possession of Paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him, and he would be sure to kick against it, and ruin himself. God had also foreseen that his elect ones, whom he had chosen out of the rest of mankind would fall by the sin of Adam, since they, as well as the rest of mankind, were represented in Adam. The covenant therefore had for its end the restoration of the chosen people. And now we may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus run the covenant. I cannot tell you it in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written: I am fain to bring it down to the speech which suiteth to the ear of flesh, and to the heart of the mortal. Thus, I say, run the covenant, in ones like these: "I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by him preserved, and kept, and led, and by him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be for ever the objects of my eternal love. Them I will forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect

righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally.” Thus run that glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant, gave his declaration, “I hereby covenant,” saith he, “that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption; I will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling; I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them, I will work in them every grace; I will keep their faith alive; I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless.” This was the one side of the covenant, which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept. As for the other side of the covenant this was the part of it, engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared, and covenanted with his Father: “My Father, on my part I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people I will keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify thy law, and make it honorable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon my head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom thou hast given me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all my sheep of whom, by thy blood, thou hast constituted me the shepherd — I will bring every one safe to thee at last.” Thus ran the covenant; and now, I think, you have a clear idea of what it was and how it stands — the covenant between God and Christ, between God the Father and God the Spirit, and God the Son as the covenant head and representative of all Gods elect. I have told you, as briefly as I could what were the stipulations of it. You will please to remark, my dear friends, that the covenant is, on one side, perfectly fulfilled. God the Son has paid the debts of all the elect. He has, for us men

and for our redemption, suffered the whole of wrath divine. Nothing remaineth now on this side of the question except that he shall continue to intercede, that he may safely bring all his redeemed to glory.

On the side of the Father this part of the covenant has been fulfilled to countless myriads. God the Father and God the Spirit have not been behindhand in their divine contract. And mark you, this side shall be as fully and as completely finished and carried out as the other. Christ can say of what he promised to do. "It is finished!" and the like shall be said by all the glorious covenanters. All for whom Christ died shall be pardoned, all justified, all adopted. The Spirit shall quicken them all, shall give them all faith, shall bring them all to heaven, and they shall, every one of them, without let or hindrance, stand accepted in the beloved, in the day when the people shall be numbered, and Jesus shall be glorified.

**3.** And now having seen who were the high contracting parties, and what were the terms of the covenant made between them, let us see what were the objects of this covenant Was this covenant made for every man of the race of Adam? Assuredly not; we discover the secret by the visible. That which is in the covenant is to be seen in due time by the eye and to be heard with the ear. I see multitudes of men perishing, continuing wantonly in their wicked ways, rejecting the offer of Christ which is presented to them in the Gospel day after day, treading under foot the blood of the Son of Man, defying the Spirit who strives with them; I see these men going on from bad to worse at last perishing in their sins. I have not the folly to believe that they have any part in the covenant of grace. Those who die impenitent, the multitudes who reject the Savior, are clearly proved to have no part and no lot in the sacred covenant of divine grace; for if they were interested in that, there would be certain marks and evidences which would show us this. We should find that in due time in this life they would be brought to repentance, would be washed in the Savior's blood, and would be saved. The covenant — to come at once straight to the matter, however offensive the doctrine may be — the covenant has relationship to the elect and none besides. Does this offend you? Be ye offended ever more. What said Christ? "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." If Christ prayeth for none but for the chosen, why should ye be angry that ye are also taught from the Word of God that in the covenant there was



provision made for the like persons, that they might receive eternal life. As many as shall believe, as many as shall trust in Christ, as many as shall persevere unto the end, as many as shall enter into the eternal rest, so many and no more are interested in the covenant of divine grace.

**4.** Furthermore, we have to consider what were the motives of this covenant. Why was the covenant made at all? There was no compulsion or constraint on God. As yet there was no creature. Even could the creature have an influence on the Creator, there was none existing in the period when the covenant was made. We can look nowhere for God's motive in the covenant except it be in himself, for of God it could be said literally in that day, "I am, and there is none beside me." Why then did he make the covenant? I answer, absolute sovereignty dictated it. But why were certain men the objects of it and why not others? I answer, sovereign grace guided the pen. It was not the merit of man, it was nothing which God foresaw in us that made him choose many and leave others to go on in their sins. It was nothing in them, it was sovereignty and grace combined that made the divine choice. If you, my brethren and sisters, have a good hope that you are interested in the covenant of grace, you must sing that song —

*“What was there in me to merit esteem,  
or give the Creator delight?”*

*‘Twas even so Father I ever sing,  
for so it seemed good in thy sight.”*

“He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy,” “for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” His sovereignty elected, and his grace distinguished, and immutability decreed. No motive dictated the election of the individuals, except a motive in himself of love and of divine sovereignty. Doubtless the grand intention of God in making the covenant at all was his own glory; any motive inferior to that would be beneath his dignity. God must find his motives in himself: he has not to look to moths and worms for motives for his deeds. He is the “I AM.”

*“He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

He doth as he wills in the armies of heaven. Who can stay his hand and say unto him, “What doest thou?” Shall the clay ask the potter for the

motive for his making it into a vessel? Shall the thing formed before its creation dictate to its Creator? No, let God be God, and let man shrink into his native nothingness, and if God exalt him, let him not boast as though God found a reason for the deed in man. He finds his motives in himself. He is self-contained, and findeth nothing beyond nor needeth anything from any but himself. Thus have I, as fully as time permits this morning, discussed the first point concerning the covenant. May the Holy Spirit lead us into this sublime truth.

**II.** But now, in the second place, we come to notice ITS EVERLASTING CHARACTER. It is called an everlasting covenant. And here you observe at once its antiquity. The covenant of grace is the oldest of all things. It is sometimes a subject of great joy to me to think that the covenant of grace is older than the covenant of works. The covenant of works had a beginning, but the covenant of grace had not; and blessed be God the covenant of works has its end, but the covenant of grace shall stand fast when heaven and earth shall pass away. The antiquity of the covenant of grace demands our grateful attention. It is a truth which tends to elevate the mind. I know of no doctrine more grand than this. It is the very soul and essence of all poetry, and in sitting down and in sitting down and meditating upon it. I do confess my spirit has sometimes been ravished with delight. Can you conceive the idea that before all things God thought of you? That when as yet he had not made his mountains, he had thought of thee, poor puny worm? Before the magnificent constellations began to shine, and ere the great center of the world had been fixed, and all the mighty planets and divers worlds had been made to revolve around it, then had God fixed the center of his covenant, and ordained the number of those lesser stars which should revolve round that blessed center, and derive light therefrom. Why, when one is taken up with some grand conceptions of the boundless universe, when with the astronomers we fly through space, when with we find it without end, and the starry hosts without number, does it not seem marvelous that God should give poor insignificant man the preference beyond even the whole universe besides? Oh this cannot make us proud, because it is a divine truth, but it must make us feel happy. Oh believer, you think yourself nothing, but God does not think so of you. Men despise you but God remembered you before he made anything. The covenant of love which he made with his

Son on your behalf is older than the hoary ages, and if ye fly back when as yet time had not begun, before those massive rocks that bear the marks of gray old age upon them, had begun to be deposited, he had loved and chosen you, and made a covenant on your behalf. Remember well these ancient things of the eternal hills.

Then, again, it is an everlasting covenant from its sureness. Nothing is everlasting which is not secure. Man may erect his structures and think they may last for ever, but the Tower of Babel has crumbled, and the very Pyramids bear signs of ruin. Nothing which man has made is everlasting, because he cannot ensure it against decay. But as for the covenant of grace, well David say of it, "It is ordered in all things and sure." It is

*“Signed, and sealed, and ratified,  
In all things ordered well.”*

There is not an “if” or a “but” in the whole of it from beginning to end. Free-will hates God’s “shalls” and “wills,” and likes man’s “ifs” and “buts,” but there are no “ifs” and “buts” in the covenant of grace. Thus the tenure runs: “I will” and “they shall.” Jehovah swears it and the Son fulfills it. It is — it must be true. It must be sure, for “I AM” determines. “Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” It is a sure covenant. I have sometimes said, if any man were about to build a bridge or a house if he would leave me just one single stone or one timber to put where I liked, I would undertake that his house would fall down. Let me if there is anyone about to construct a bridge, have just simply the placing of one stone — I will select which stone it shall be and I will defy him to build a bridge that shall stand. I should simply select the key-stone and then he might erect whatever he pleased and it should soon fall. Now, the Armenian’s covenant is one that cannot stand because there are one or two bricks in it (and that is putting it in the slightest form; I might have said, “because every stone in it,” and that would be nearer the mark) that are dependent on the will of man. It is left to the will of the creator whether he will be saved or not. If he will not, there is no constraining influence that can master and overcome his will. There is no promise that any influence shall be strong enough to overcome him, according to the Armenian. So the question is left to man, and God the mighty Builder — though he put stone on stone massive as the universe — yet may be defeated by this creature. Out upon such

blasphemy! The whole structure, from beginning to end, is in the hand of God. The very terms and conditions of that covenant are become its seals and guarantees, seeing that Jesus has fulfilled them all. Its full accomplishment in every jot and title is sure, and must be fulfilled by Christ Jesus, whether man will or man will not. It is not the creature's covenant, it is the Creator's. It is not man's covenant, it is the Almighty's covenant, and he will carry it out and perform it, the will of man notwithstanding. For this is the very glory of grace — that man hates to be saved — that he is enmity to him, yet God will have him redeemed — that God's consensus is. "You shall," and man's intention is "I will not, and God's "shall" conquers man's "I will not." Almighty grace rides victoriously over the neck of free will and leads it captive in glorious captivity to the all-conquering power of irresistible grace and love. It is a sure covenant, and therefore deserves the title of everlasting.

Furthermore, it is not only sure, but it is immutable. If it were not immutable, it could not be everlasting. That which changes passes away. We may be quite sure that anything that has the word "change" on it, will sooner or later die, and be put away as a thing of nought. But in the covenant, everything is immutable. Whatever God has established must come to pass, and not word, or line, or letter, can be altered. Whatever the Spirit voweth shall be done, and whatever God the Son promised hath been fulfilled, and shall be consummated at the day of his appearing. Oh if we could believe that the sacred lines could be erased — that the covenant could be blotted and blurred, why then my dear friends, we might lie down and despair. I have heard it said by some preachers, that when the Christian is holy, he is in the covenant; that when he sins, he is crossed out again; that when he repents, he is put in again, and if he fails he is scratched out once more; and so he goes in and out of the door, as he would in and out of his own house. He goes in at one door and out of another. He is sometimes the child of God, and sometimes the child of the devil — sometimes an heir of heaven, and anon an heir of hell. And I know one man who went so far as to say that although a man might have persevered through grace for sixty years, yet should he fall away the last year of his life — if he should sin and die so, he would perish everlastingly, and all his faith, and all the love which God had manifested to him in the day's gone by would go for nothing. I am very happy to say

that such a notion of God is just the very notion I have of the devil. I could not believe in such a God, and could not bow down before him. A god that loves today and hates tomorrow; a God that gives a promise, and yet foreknows after all that man shall not see the promise fulfilled; a God that forgives and punishes — that justifies and afterwards executes — is a God that I cannot endure. He is not the God of the Scriptures I am certain, for he is immutable, just, holy, and true, and having loved his own, he will love them to the end, and if he hath given a promise to any man, the promise shall be kept, and that man once in grace, is in grace forever, and shall without fall by-and-by enter into glory.

And then to finish up this point. The covenant is everlasting because it will never run itself out. It will be fulfilled but it will stand firm. When Christ hath completed all, and brought every believer to heaven; when the Father hath seen all his people gathered in — the covenant it is true, will come to a consummation, but not to a conclusion, for thus the covenant runs: The heirs of grace shall be blessed for ever, and as long as “for ever” lasts, this everlasting covenant will demand the happiness, the security, the glorification, of every object of it.

**III.** Having thus noticed the everlasting character of the covenant, I conclude by the sweetest and most precious portion of the doctrine — the relation which the blood bears to it — **THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.** The blood of Christ stands in a fourfold relationship to the covenant. With regard to Christ, his precious blood shed in Gethsemane, in Gabbatha and Golgotha, is the fulfillment of the covenant. By this blood sin is canceled; by Jesus’ agonies justice is satisfied; by his death the law is honored; and by that precious blood in all its mediatorial efficacy, and in all its cleansing power, Christ fulfills all that He stipulated to do on the behalf of his people towards God. Oh, believer, look to the blood of Christ, and remember that there is Christ’s part of the covenant carried out. And now, there remains nothing to be fulfilled but God’s part, there is nothing for thee to do; Jesus has done it all; there is nothing for free will to supply; Christ has done everything that God can demand. The blood is the fulfillment of the debtor’s side of the covenant, and now God becometh bound by his own solemn oath to show grace and mercy to all whom Christ has redeemed by his blood. With regard to the blood in another respect, it is to God the Father the bond of the covenant. When I see

Christ dying on the cross, I see the everlasting God from that time, if I may use the term of him who ever must be free, bound by his own oath and covenant to carry out every stipulation. Does the covenant say, “A new heart will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee?” It must be done, for Jesus died, and Jesus’ death is the seal of the covenant. Does it say, “I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean; from all their iniquities will I cleanse them?” Then it must be done, for Christ has fulfilled his part. And, therefore, now we can present the covenant no more as a thing of doubt; but as our claim on God through Christ, and coming humbly on our knees, pleading that covenant, our heavenly Father will not deny the promises contained therein, but will make every one of them yea and amen to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, again, the blood of the covenant has relation to us as the objects of the covenant, and that is its third light; it is not only a fulfillment as regards Christ, and a bond as regards his Father, but it is an evidence as regards ourselves. And here, dear brothers and sisters, let me speak affectionately to you. Are you relying wholly upon the blood? Has his blood — the precious blood of Christ — been laid to your conscience? Have you seen your sins pardoned, through his blood? Have you received forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus? Are you glorying in his sacrifice, and is his cross your only hope and refuge? Then you are in the covenant. Some men want to know whether they are elect. We cannot tell them unless they will tell us this. Dost thou believe? Is thy faith fixed on the precious blood? Then thou art in the covenant. And oh, poor sinner, if thou hast nothing to recommend thee; if thou art standing back, and saying “I dare not come! I am afraid! I am not in the covenant!” still Christ bids thee come. “Come unto me,” saith he. “If thou canst not come to the covenant Father, come to the covenant Surety. Come unto me and I will give thee rest.” And when thou hast come to him, and his blood has been applied to thee doubt not, but that in the red roll of election stands thy name. Canst thou read thy name in the bloody characters of a Savior’s atonement? Then shalt thou read it one day in the golden letters of the Father’s election. He that believeth is elected. The blood is the symbol, the token, the earnest, the surety, the seal of the covenant of grace to thee. It must ever be the telescope through which thou canst look to see the things that are afar off. Thou canst not see thy election with the naked eye, but

through the blood of Christ thou canst see it clear enough. Trust thou in the blood, poor sinner, and then the blood of the everlasting covenant is a proof that thou are an heir of heaven. Lastly, the blood stands in a relationship to all three, and here I may add that the blood is the glory of all. To the Son it is the fulfillment, to the Father the bond, to the sinner the evidence, and to all — To Father, Son, and sinner — it is the common glory and the common boast. In this the Father is well pleased; in this the Son also, with joy, looks down and sees the purchase of his agonies; and in this must the sinner ever find his comfort and his everlasting song, — “Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, are my glory, my song, for ever and ever!”

And now, my dear hearers, I have one question to ask, and I have done. Have you the hope that you are in the covenant? Have you put your trust in the blood? Remember, though you imagine, perhaps, from what I have been saying, that the gospel is restricted, that the gospel is freely preached to all. The decree is limited, but the good news is as wide as the world. The good spell, the good news, is as wide as the universe. I tell it to every creature under heaven, because I am told to do so. The secret of God, which is to deal with the application, that is restricted to God’s chosen ones, but not the message, for that is to be proclaimed to all nations. Now thou hast heard the gospel many and many a time in thy life. It runs thus: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Dost thou believe that? And this is thy hope — something like this: “I am a sinner. I trust Christ has died for me; I put my trust in the merit of his blood, and sink or swim, I have no other hope but this.

*‘Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling’“*

Thou hast heard it; hast thou received it in thy heart, and laid hold on it; then thou art one of those in the covenant. And why should election frighten thee? If thou hast chosen Christ, depend upon it he has chosen thee. If thy tearful eye is looking to him, then his omniscient eye has long looked on thee; if thy heart lovest him, his heart loves thee better than ever thou canst love, and if now thou art saying, “My father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth,” I will tell thee a secret — he has been thy guide, and has brought thee to be what thou now art, a humble seeker, and he will be

thy guide and bring thee safe at last. But art thou a proud, boastful, free-willer, saying, “I will repent and believe whenever I choose; I have as good a right to be saved as anybody, for I do my duty as well as others, and I shall doubtless get my reward” — if you are claiming a universal atonement, which is to be received at the option of man’s will, go and claim it, and you will be disappointed in your claim. You will find God will not deal with you on that ground at all, but will say, “Get thee hence, I never knew thee. He that cometh not to me through the Son cometh not at all.” I believe the man who is not willing to submit to the electing love and sovereign grace of God, has great reason to question whether he is a Christian at all, for the spirit that kicks against that is the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of the unhumiliated, unrenewed heart. May God take away the enmity out of your heart to his own precious truth, and reconcile you to himself through THE BLOOD of his Son, which is the bond and seal of the everlasting covenant.



# THE MINISTER'S FAREWELL

## SERMON NO. 289

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 11TH, 1858,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS,

*Upon the last occasion of his preaching in that place.*

*“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”  
— Acts 20:26-27.*

WHEN Paul was parting from his Ephesian friends, who had come to bid him farewell at Miletus, he did not request of them a commendation of his ability; he did not request of them a recommendation for his fervid eloquence, his profound learning, his comprehensive thought, or his penetrating judgment. He knew right well that he might have credit for all these, and yet be found a castaway at last. He required a witness which would be valid in the court of heaven, and of value in a dying hour. His one most solemn adjuration is: “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” In the apostle this utterance was no egotism; it was a fact that he had, without courting the smiles or fearing the frowns of any, preached the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it had been taught to him by the Holy Spirit, and as he had received it in his own heart. O that all ministers of Christ could honestly challenge the like witness!

Now, this morning I propose, by the help of God's Spirit, to do two things. The first will be to say a little upon the apostle's solemn declaration at parting; and then, afterwards, in a few solemn words, to take my own personal farewell.

**1.** In the first place, THE APOSTLE'S WORD AT PARTING: “I call you to record I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” The

first thing that strikes us is the declaration of the apostle concerning the doctrines he had preached. He had preached ALL the counsel of God. By which I think we are to understand that he had given to his people the entire gospel. He had not dwelt upon some one doctrine of it, to the exclusion of the rest; but it had been his honest endeavor to bring out every truth according to the analogy of faith. He had not magnified one doctrine into a mountain, and then diminished another into a molehill; but he had endeavored to present all blended together, like the colors in the rainbow, as one harmonious and glorious whole. Of course, he did not claim for himself any infallibility as a man, although as an inspired man he was without error in his writings. He had, doubtless, sins to confess in private, and faults to bemoan God. He had, doubtless, sometimes failed to put a truth as clearly as he could have wished, when preaching the Word; he had not always been earnest as he could desire; but at least he could claim this, that he had not wilfully kept back a single part of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, I must bring down the apostle's saying to these modern times; and I take it, if any one of us would clear our conscience by delivering the whole counsel of God, we must take care that we preach in the first place the doctrines of the gospel. We ought to declare the grand doctrine of the Father's love towards his people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, his covenant purposes concerning them, and his immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this the true evangelist must never fail to set forth the beauties of the person of Christ, the glory of his offices, the completeness of his work, and above all, the efficacy of his blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again. That is no gospel which has not Christ in it, and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are Three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that they all have due honor in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification and in perseverance, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without his power our ministry is a dead letter, and we cannot expect his arm to be made bare unless we honor him day-by-day.

Upon all these matters we are agreed, and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute, and consequently more need of honest

avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then: — I question whether we have preached the whole counsel of God, unless predestination with all its solemnity and sureness be continually declared — unless election be boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from this fountain head, to trace all the other streams; dwelling on effectual calling, maintaining justification by faith, insisting upon the certain perseverance of the believer, and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained, and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed. There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held, and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed: that we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines, and bring them down to the tone of the times; that, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion, and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges. Any man who doth this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare the whole counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple, pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of freewill, or a covenant of grace — whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

But beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full, and yet not declare the whole counsel of God. For here comes the labor and the battle; here it is that he who is faithful in these modern days will have to bare the full brunt of war. It is not enough to preach doctrine; we must preach duty, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon practice. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men of perverted intellect who will admire you, but once begin to preach responsibility — say outright, once for all, that if the sinner perish it is his own fault, that if any man sinks to hell, his damnation will lie at his own door, and at once there is a cry of "Inconsistency! How can these two things stand together?" Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole truth, and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who

will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure. But he is not faithful to God — I say it solemnly, I do not believe that any man is even faithful to his own conscience, who can preach simply the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. It shall be said of them as they pass the fiery portal: “Ye would not.” “Ye would have none of my rebukes. Ye were bidden to the supper and ye would not come. I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded. And now, behold, I will mock at your calamities. I will laugh when your fear cometh.” The apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion, and on one hand to preach the duty of man, and on the other the sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching divine sovereignty. God hath absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as he pleases, even as the potter doeth with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for he giveth no account of his matters. But when I preach concerning man, and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low-doctrine man in that, for as an honest messenger of Christ I must use his own language, and cry: “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God.” I do not see that the whole counsel of God is declared, unless those two apparently contradictory points are brought out and plainly taught. To preach the whole counsel of God it is necessary to declare the promise in all its freeness, sureness and richness. When the promise makes the subject of the text the minister should never be afraid of it. If it is an unconditional promise, he should make its unconditionality one of the most prominent features of his discourse; he should go the whole way with whatever God has promised to his people. Should the command be the subject, the minister must not flinch; he must utter the precept as fully and confidently as he would the promise. He must exhort, rebuke, command with all long-suffering. He must ever maintain the fact that the perceptive part of the gospel is as valuable — nay, as invaluable — as the promissory part. He must stand to it, that “By their fruits ye shall know them;” that “Unless the tree bring forth good fruit it is hewn down and cast into the fire.” Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living. Holiness of life must be constantly insisted on, as well as

that simple faith which depends for all on Christ. To declare the whole counsel of God — to gather up ten thousand things into one — I think it is needful that when a minister gets his text, he should say what that text means honestly and uprightly. Too many preachers get a text and kill it. They wring its neck, then stuff it with some empty notions and present it upon the table for an unthinking people to feed upon. That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let God's Word speak for itself in its own pure, simple language. If he finds one day a text like this: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," the faithful minister will go all the lengths of that text. And if on the morrow the Spirit of God lays home to his conscience this: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," or this other: "Whosoever will, let him come," he will be just as honest with his text on that side as he was on the other. He will not shirk the truth. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit, and there say to it: "O Word, speak for thyself, and be thou heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or ministerpret thine own heaven-sent truth." Simple honesty to the pure Word of God is I think requisite to the man who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

Moreover, this is not all, If a man would declare the whole counsel of God, and not shun to do so, he must be very particular upon the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not condemn sin in the mass; he singles out separate sins in his hearers, and without drawing the bow at a venture he puts an arrow on the string and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individuals conscience. He who is true to his God does not look to his congregation as a great mass, but as separate individuals, and he endeavors to adapt his discourse to men's conscience, so that they will perceive he speaks of them. It is said of Rowland Hill, that he was so personal a preacher, that if a man were far away sitting in a window, or in some secret corner, he would nevertheless feel — "That man is speaking to me." And the true preacher who declares the whole counsel of God, so speaks, that his hearers feel that there is something for them; a reproof for their sins, an exhortation which they ought to obey, a something which comes pointedly, pertinently and personally home. Nor do I think any man has declared the whole counsel of God, who does not do this. If there be a vice that you should shun, if there be an error that you should avoid,

if there be a duty that you ought to fulfill, if all these things be not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit, the minister has shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If there be one sin that is rife in the neighborhood, and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God. I do not know how I can describe the man who declares the whole counsel of God better than by referring you to the epistles of St. Paul. There you have the doctrine and the precept, experience and practice. He tells of corruption within and temptation without. The whole divine life is portrayed, and the needed directions given. There you have the solemn rebuke, and the gentle comfort. There you have the words that “drop as the rain, and distil as the dew,” and there you have the sentences that roll like thunders, and flash like lightning. There you see him at one time with his crook in his hand, gently leading his sheep into the pastures; and, anon, you see him with his sword drawn, doing valiant battle against the enemies of Israel. He who would be faithful, and preach the whole counsel of God, must imitate the apostle Paul, and preach as he wrote.

The question, however, is suggested, is there any temptation which arises to the man who endeavors to do this? Is there anything which would tempt him from the straight path and induce him not to preach the whole counsel of God? Ah, my brother, little do you understand the minister’s position, if you have not sometimes trembled for him. Espouse but one phase of the truth, and you shall be cried up to the very heavens. Become such a Calvinist that you shut your eyes to one half the Bible, and cannot see the responsibility of the sinner, and men will clap their hands, and cry Hallelujah! and on the backs of many you shall be hoisted to a throne, and become a very prince in their Israel. On the other hand, begin to preach mere morality, practice without doctrine, and you shall be elevated on other men’s shoulders; you shall, if I may use such a figure, ride upon these asses into Jerusalem; and you shall hear them cry, Hosanna! and see them wave their palm branches before you. But once preach the whole counsel of God, and you shall have both parties down upon you; one crying, “The man is too high,” the other saying, “No, he is too low;” the one will say, “He’s a rank Arminian,” the other, “He’s a vile hyper-Calvinist.” Now, a man does not like to stand between two fires. There is

an inclination to please one or other of the two parties, and so, if not to increase one's adherents, at least to get a more ferociously attached people. Ay, but if we once begin to think of that, if we suffer the cry of either party on either hand to lead us from that narrow path — the path of right and truth and rectitude, it is all over with us then. How many ministers feel the influence of persons of wealth. The minister in his pulpit, perhaps, is inclined to think of the squire in his green pew. Or else he thinks: "What will deacon so-and-so say?" or, "What will the other deacon say, who thinks the very reverse?" or, "What will Mr. A, the editor of such a newspaper, write next Monday?" or, "What will Mrs. B. say next time I meet her?" Yes, all these things cast their little weight into the scale; and they have a tendency, if a man be not kept right by God the Holy Spirit, to make him diverge a little from that narrow path, in which alone he can stand if he would declare the whole counsel of God. Ah, friends, there are honors to be had by the man who will espouse the opinion of a clique; but while there are honors, there are far more dishonors to be gained by him who will stand firm to the unstained banner of truth, singly and alone, and do battle against mischief of every shape, as well in the church as in the world. Therefore, it was no mean testimony that the apostle asked for himself, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

But, then, let me remark further, while there is this temptation not to declare all the counsel of God, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole truth, because it and it alone can meet the wants of man. What evils has this world seen through a distorted, mangled, man-moulded gospel. What mischiefs have been done to the souls of men by men who have preached only one part and not all the counsel of God. My heart bleeds for many a family where Antinomian doctrine has gained the sway. I could tell many a sad story of families dead in sin, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, by the fatal preaching to which they listen. I have known convictions stifled and desires quenched by the soul-destroying system which takes manhood from man and makes him no more responsible than an ox. I cannot imagine a more ready instrument in the hands of Satan for the ruin of souls than a minister who tells sinners that it is not their duty to repent of their sins or to believe in Christ, and who has the arrogance to call himself a gospel minister, while he teaches

that God hates some men infinitely and unchangeably for no reason whatever but simply because he chooses to do so. O my brethren! may the Lord save you from the voice of the charmer, and keep you ever deaf to the voice of error.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted gospel produce! I have seen the young believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career, and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes, and but one doctrine could be seen. Sovereignty was seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated; he who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of good and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love; bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character. I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon any one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent for Christ, laboring to win souls with both hands; and on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole truth, and they have subsided into lethargy. On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of truth, and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality; have talked as if they were to be saved by works, and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. They are like the Galatians; they have been bewitched by what they have heard. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept so by a preaching of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. And as for the salvation of sinners, ah, my hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry for the conversion of sinners unless we preach the gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own the word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistent, that I can dress it up and make it



look finer, I shall find that my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of gospel invitations. They are longing to be saved. They go up to the house of God, crying to be saved; and there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching. It is do! do! do! and nothing but do! and the poor souls come away and say: "Of what use is that to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had a way shown to me available for salvation." Of the apostle Paul we think it may be truly said, that no sinner missed a comfort from his keeping back Christ's cross; that no saint was bewildered in spirit from his denying the bread of heaven and withholding precious truth; that no practical Christian became so practical as to become legal, and no doctrinal Christian became so doctrinal as to become unpractical. His preaching was of so savory and consistent a kind, that they who heard him, being blessed of the Spirit, became Christians indeed, both in life and spirit, reflecting the image of their Master.

I feel I cannot dwell very long upon this text. I have been so extremely unwell for the last two days, that the thoughts which I hoped to present to you in better form, have only come tumbling out of my mouth in far from an orderly manner.

**II.** I must now turn away from the apostle Paul to address you A VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I wish not to say anything in self-commendation and praise; I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness; but I appeal unto you, I take you to witness this day, that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness, and I have far more often gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings, and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls. But there is one charge which my conscience acquits me of this morning, and I think you will acquit me too, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment; I may have been mistaken, but so far as I have learned the truth, I can say that no fear of public

opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the gospel. I have endeavored to the utmost of my ability to preach grace in all its fullness. I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience; God forbid that I should preach any other. If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If from first to last the work of salvation be not in God's hands, none of us can ever see God's face with acceptance. I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity, for if this doctrine be not true, then are we lost souls; your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins, and there we must continue until the end. But, on the other hand, I can say also, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat. I have bidden the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With bowels yearning over perishing sinners, I could not conclude without crying: "Come to Jesus, sinner, come." With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this: — bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have wilfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness; I have not served God as I ought to do; I have not been so earnest with you as I could desire. Now that my three years' ministry here is over, I could have wished that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace. But here, again, I do repeat it, that while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God, I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness, that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

It is easy enough, if one wills to do it, to avoid preaching an objectionable doctrine, by simply passing over the texts which teach it. If an unpleasant truth thrusts itself on you, it is not hard to put it aside, imagining that it

would disturb your previous teaching. Such concealment may, for a while succeed, and possibly your people will not find it out for years. But if I have studied after anything, I have sought always to bring out that truth which I have neglected beforehand; and if there has been any one truth that I have kept back hitherto, it shall be my earnest prayer that from this day forth it may be made more prominent, that so it may be the better understood and seen. Well, I simply ask you this question, and if I indulge in some little egotism, if on this parting day “I am become a fool in glorying;” it is not for the sake of glorying, it is with a better motive — my hearer, I put this question to you. There may come sad disasters to many of you. In a little time some of you may be frequenting places where the gospel is not preached. You may embrace another and a false gospel. I only ask this thing of you: Bear me witness that it was not my fault, — that I have been faithful and have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In a little time some here who have been restrained by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless. Perhaps next Sabbath day you may be sitting at home, lolling about and wasting the day. But there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the house of God again: — Bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back; some of you may go right into the world again; you may become drunkards, swearers and the like. God forbid that it be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desires nothing so much as to see you saved — say, I have been honest with you; that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Oh, my hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your dying-beds. When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament; it is this — the exclusion of the poor minister who stands before you this day from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Oh, have I not cried to you to repent? Have I not bidden you look to it ere death surprised you? Have I not exhorted you, my hearers, to flee for a refuge to the hope set before you? Oh, sinner, when thou art wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as

though I was thy murderer, for in this thing I can say: "I wash my hands in innocency; I am clear of your blood." But the day is coming when we shall all meet again. This great assembly shall be submerged into a greater, as the drop loses itself in the ocean. And I shall stand on that day to take my trial at God's bar. If I have not warned you, I have been an unfaithful watchman, and your blood will be required at my hands; if I have not preached Christ to you, and bidden you flee for refuge, then, though you perish, yet shall your soul be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate his gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood. I see some before me who do not often hear me; and yet I can say concerning them, they have been the subject of my private prayers; and often, too, of my tears, when I see them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing, and as honest men you cannot deny it me. If you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ, at least, amid the thunders of the great day, when I stand for trial at God's bar, acquit me of having destroyed your souls.

What can I say more? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue, and the heart of the Savior, then would I plead; but I cannot say more than I have often done. In God's name I beseech you flee to Christ for refuge. If all hath not sufficed before, let this suffice thee now. Come, guilty soul, and flee away to him whose wide open arms are willing to receive every soul that fleeth to him with penitence and faith. In a little time the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me. He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself. He who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My hearers, shall there be any of you whom I shall see upon my death bed who shall curse me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused, and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to plunge the truth? Shall I lie there, and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me, and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful? God forbid. I trust you will do me this favor: that when I lie a-dying you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all

men, and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I see myself standing at the last great day a prisoner at the bar. What if this shall be read against me: — “Thou hast had many to listen to thee; thousands have crowded to hear the words which fell from my lips; but thou hast misled, thou hast deceived, thou hast wilfully mistaught this people.” Thunders such as have been never heard before must roll over this poor head, and lightnings more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position — if I had but one preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many thousands of times — my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh may God avert that worst of ills — unfaithfulness — from my head. Now, as here I stand, I make this my last appeal: “I pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.” But if ye will not be, I ask you this single favor — and I think you will not deny it me — take the blame of your own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This much by way of calling you to witness. Now, I come to put up a request. I have a favor to ask of all here present. If in aught you have been profited, if in anything you have ever had comfort, if you have found Christ in any way during the preaching of the gospel here, I beg you, even though you should not listen to my words again, I beg you to carry me up in your heart before the throne of God in prayer. It is by the prayers of our people that we live. God’s ministers owe more to the prayers of their people than they ever know. I love my people for their prayerfulness for me. Never minister was so much prayer for as I have been. But will those of you who will be compelled to separate from us by reason of distance, and the like, will you still carry me in your thoughts before God, and let my name be ungraven on your bosoms as often as you present yourselves before the mercy seat. It is a little thing I ask. It is simply that you say: “Lord, help thy servant to win souls to Christ.” Ask that he may be made more useful than he has ever been; that if he is in aught mistaken he may be set right. If he has not comforted you, ask that he may do so in the future; but if he has been honest with you, then pray that your Master may have him in his holy keeping. And while I ask you to put up this request for me, it is for all those that preach the truth in Jesus. Brethren, pray for us. We would labor for you as those that must give account. Ah,

it is no little thing to be a minister if we are true to our calling. As Baxter once said, when someone told him the ministry was easy work: “Sir, I wish you would take my place, if you think so, and try it.” If to agonize with God in prayer, if to wrestle for the souls of men, if to be abused and not to reply, if to suffer all manner of rebukes and slanders, if this be rest, take it, sir, for I shall be glad to get rid of it. I do ask that you would pray for all ministers of Christ, that they may be helped and upheld, maintained and supported, that their strength may be equal to their day.

And, then, having put up this request for myself, and therefore a selfish one, I have an entreaty to put up for others. My hearers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that there are still many of you who have long listened to the Word here, but who have still not given your hearts to Christ. I am glad to see you here, even though it should be for the last time. If you should never tread the hallowed courts of God’s house again, never hear his Word, never listen to hearty invitation or honest warning, I have one entreaty to put up for you. Mark, not a request, but an entreaty; and such a one, that if I were begging for my life I could not be more honest and intensely earnest about it. Poor sinner, stop awhile, and think. If thou hast heard the gospel and been profited by it, what wilt thou think of all thy lost opportunities when thou art on thy dying bed? What wilt thou think when thou art cast into hell, when this thought shall come ringing in thy ears: “Thou didst hear the gospel, but thou didst reject it;” when the devils in hell shall laugh in thy face, and say: “We never rejected Christ, we never despised the Word,” and they shall thrust thee into a deeper hell than ever they themselves experienced. I entreat thee, stop, and think of this. Are the joys that thou hast in this world worth living for? Is not this world a dull and dreary place? Man, turn over a fresh leaf. I tell thee, there is no joy for thee here, and there is none hereafter whilst thou art what thou art. Oh, may God teach thee that the mischief lies in thy sin. Thou hast unforgiven sin about thee. As long as thy sin is unforgiven, thou canst neither be happy here, nor in the world to come. My entreaty is, go to thy chamber; if thou knowest thy self to be guilty, make a full confession there before God; ask him to have mercy upon thee, for Jesus’ sake. And he will not deny thee. Man, he will not dent thee; he will answer thee; he will put all thy sins away; he will accept thee; he will make thee his child. And as thou shalt be more happy here, so shalt thou be blessed in the world to

come. Oh, Christian men and women, I entreat you, implore the Spirit of God to lead many in this crowd to full confession, to real prayer, and humble faith; and if they have never repented before, may they now turn to Christ. Oh, sinner, thy life is short, and death is hastening. Thy sins are many, and if judgment has leaden feet, yet has it a sure and heavy hand. Turn, turn, turn, I beseech thee. May the Holy Spirit turn thee. Lo, Jesus is lifted up before thee now. By his five wounds, I beseech thee, turn. Look thou to him and live. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved, for whosoever believeth on the Son of Man hath everlasting life, and he shall never perish, neither shall the wrath of God rest upon him.

May the Spirit of God now command his own abiding blessing, even life for evermore, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

At the commencement of the Service, Mr. SPURGEON said: — “The service of this morning will partake very much of the character of a farewell discourse and a farewell meeting. However sorrowful it is to me to part with many of you, whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and truth, we are compelled to withdraw from this place, and on next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in Exeter Hall. On two occasions before, as our friends are aware, it was proposed to open this place in the evening, and I was then able to prevent it by the simple declaration, that if so I should withdraw. That declaration suffices not at this time; and you can therefore perceive that I should be a craven to the truth, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that in fact, my name would cease to be SPURGEON, if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right; and in the defense of God's holy Sabbath, the cry of this day is, ‘Arise, let us go hence!’“

# THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

## SERMON NO. 308

*THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER*— “*And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” — Luke 8:4-8

IN OUR country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field, and scatters the seed from his basket along every ridge and furrow; but in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways. You must not imagine these highways to be like our macadamized roads; they are merely paths, trodden tolerably hard. Here and there you notice bye-ways, along which travelers who wish to avoid the public road may journey with a little more safety when the main road is infested with robbers: hasty travelers also strike out short cuts for themselves, and so open fresh tracks for others. When the sower goes forth to sow he finds a plot of round scratched over with the primitive Eastern plough; he aims at scattering his seed there most plentifully; but a path runs through the center of his field, and unless he is willing to leave a broad headland, he must throw a handful upon it. Yonder, a rock crops out in the midst of the ploughed land, and the seed falls on its shallow soil. Here is a corner full of the roots of nettles and thistles, and he flings a little here; the corn and the nettles come up together, and the thorns being the stronger soon choke the seed, so that it brings forth no fruit unto perfection. The recollection that the Bible was written in the East, and that its metaphors and allusions must be explained



to us by Eastern travelers, will often help us to understand a passage far better than if we think of English customs.

The preacher of the gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seed; it is given him by his divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life. The minister goes to his Master in secret, and asks him to teach him his gospel, and thus he fills his basket with the good seed of the kingdom. He then goes forth in his Master's name and scatters precious truth. If he knew where the best soil was to be found, perhaps he might limit himself to that which had been prepared by the plough of conviction; but not knowing men's hearts, it is his business to preach the gospel to every creature — to throw a handful on the hardened heart, and another on the mind which is overgrown with the cares and pleasures of the world. He has to leave the seed in the care of the Lord who gave it to him, for he is not responsible for the harvest, he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work. If no single ear should ever make glad the reaper, the sower will be rewarded by His Master if he had planted the right seed with careful hand. If it were not for this fact with what despairing agony should we utter the cry of Esaias, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Our duty is not measured by the character of our hearers, but by the command of our God. We are bound to preach the gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is ours to sow beside all waters. Let men's hearts be what they may the minister must preach the gospel to them; he must sow the seed on the rock as well as in the furrow, on the highway as well as in the ploughed field. I shall now address myself to the four classes of hearers mentioned in our Lord's parable. We have, first of all, those who are represented by the way-side, those who are "hearers only"; then those represented by the stony-ground; these are transiently impressed, but the word produces no lasting fruit; then, those among thorns, on whom a good impression is produced, but the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of the world choke the seed; and lastly, that small class — God be pleased to multiply it exceedingly — that small class of good-ground hearers, in whom the Word brings forth abundant fruit.

**I.** First of all, I address myself to those hearts which are like the WAY-SIDE — “Some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.” Many of you do not go to the place of worship desiring a blessing. You do not intend to worship God, or to be affected by anything that you hear. You are like the highway, which was never intended to be a cornfield. If a single grain of truth should fall into your heart and grow it would be as great a wonder as for corn to grow up in the street. If the seed shall be dexterously scattered, some of it will fall upon you, and rest for a while upon your thoughts. ‘Tis true you will not understand it; but, nevertheless, if it be placed before you in an interesting style, you will talk about it till some more congenial entertainment shall attract you. Even this slender benefit is brief, for in a little season you will forget all that you have heard. Would to God we could hope that our words would tarry with you, but we cannot hope it, for the soil of your heart is so hard beaten by continual traffic, that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies, and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it, and the feet of greedy mammon tread it till it is hard as adamant. Alas! For the good seed, it finds not a moment’s respite; crowds pass and repass; in fact, your soul is an exchange, across which continually hurry the busy feet of those who make merchandise of the souls of men. You are buying and selling, but you little think that you are selling the truth, and that you are buying your soul’s destruction. You have no time, you say, to think of religion. No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare, that there is no room for the wheat to spring up. If it did begin to germinate, some rough foot would crush the green blade ere it could come to perfection. The seed has occasionally lain long enough to begin to sprout, but just then a new place of amusement has been opened, and you have entered there, and as with an iron heel, the germ of life that was in the seed was crushed out. Corn could not grow in Cornhill or Cheapside, however excellent the seed might be: your heart is just like those crowded thoroughfares; for so many cares and sins throng it, and so many proud, vain, evil, rebellious thoughts against God pass through it, that the seed of truth cannot grow. We have looked at this hard road-side, let us now describe what becomes of the good word, when it falls upon such a heart. It would have grown if it had fallen on right soil, but it has dropped into the wrong place, and it remains as dry as when it fell from

the sower's hand. The word of the gospel lies upon the surface of such a heart, but never enters it. Like the snow, which sometimes falls upon our streets, drops upon the wet pavement, melts, and is gone at once, so is it with this man. The word has not time to quicken in his soul: it lies there an instant, but it never strikes root, or takes the slightest effect. Why do men come to hear if the word never enters their hearts? That has often puzzled us. Some hearers would not be absent on the Sunday on any account; they are delighted to come up with us to worship, but yet the tear never trickles down their cheek, their soul never mounts up to heaven on the wings of praise, nor do they truly join in our confessions of sin. They do not think of the wrath to come, nor of the future state of their souls. Their heart is as iron; the minister might as well speak to a heap of stones as preach to them. What brings these senseless sinners here? Surely we are as hopeful of converting lions and leopards as these untamed, insensible hearts. Oh feeling! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason! Do these people come to our assemblies because it is respectable to attend a place of worship? Or is it that their coming helps to make them comfortable in their sins? If they stopped away conscience would prick them; but they come hither that they may flatter themselves with the notion that they are religious. Oh! My hearers, your case is one that might make an angel weep! How sad to have the sun of the gospel shining on your faces, and yet to have blind eyes that never see the light. The music of heaven is lost upon you, for you have no ears to hear. You can catch the turn of a phrase, you can appreciate the poetry of an illustration, but the hidden meaning, the divine life you do not perceive. You sit at the marriage-feast, but you eat not of the dainties; the bells of heaven ring with joy over ransomed spirits, but you live unransomed, without God, and without Christ. Though we plead with you, and pray for you, and weep over you, you still remain as hardened, as careless, and as thoughtless as ever you were. May God have mercy on you, and break up your hard hearts, that his word may abide in you. We have not, however, completed the picture. The passage tells us that the fowls of the air devoured the seed. Is there here a way-side hearer? Perhaps he did not mean to hear this sermon, and when he has heard it he will be asked by one of the wicked to come into company. He will go with the tempter, and the good seed will be devoured by the fowls of the air. Plenty of evil ones are ready to take away the gospel from the heart. The devil himself, that prince of the air, is

eager at any time to snatch away a good thought. And then the devil is not alone — he has legions of helpers. He can set a man's wife, children, friends, enemies, customers, or creditors, to eat up the good seed, and they will do it effectually. Oh, sorrow upon sorrow, that heavenly seed should become devil's meat; that God's corn should feed foul birds! O my hearers, if you have heard the gospel from your youth, what wagon-loads of sermons have been wasted on you! In your younger days, you heard old Dr. So-and-so, and the dear old man was wont to pray for his hearers till his eyes were red with tears! Do you recollect those many Sundays when you said to yourself, "Let me go to my chamber and fall on my knees and pray"? But you did not: the fowls of the air ate up the seed, and you went on to sin as you had sinned before. Since then, by some strange impulse, you are very rarely absent from God's house; but now the seed of the gospel falls into your soul as if it dropped upon an iron floor, and nothing comes of it. The law may be thundered at you; you do not sneer at it, but it never affects you. Jesus Christ may be lifted up; his dear wounds may be exhibited; his streaming blood may flow before your very eyes, and you may be bidden with all earnestness to look to him and live; but it is as if one should sow the sea-shore. What shall I do for you? Shall I stand here and rain tears upon this hard highway? Alas! My tears will not break it up; it is trodden too hard for that. Shall I bring the gospel plough? Alas! The ploughshare will not enter ground so solid. What shall we do? O God, thou knowest how to melt the hardest heart with the precious blood of Jesus. Do it now, we beseech thee, and thus magnify thy grace, by causing the good seed to live, and to produce a heavenly harvest.

**II.** I shall now turn to the second class of hearers: — "And some fell upon a ROCK; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." You can easily picture to yourselves that piece of rock in the midst of the field thinly veiled with soil; and of course the seed falls there as it does everywhere else. It springs up, it hastens to grow, it withers, it dies. None but those who love the souls of men can tell what hopes, what joys, and what bitter disappointments these stony places have caused us. We have a class of hearers whose hearts are hard, and yet they are apparently the softest and most impressible of men. While other men see nothing in the sermon, these men weep. Whether you preach the terrors of the law or the love of Calvary, they are alike stirred in their

souls, and the liveliest impressions are apparently produced. Such may be listening now. They have resolved, but they have procrastinated. They are not the sturdy enemies of God who clothe themselves in steel, but they seem to bare their breasts, and lay them open to the minister. Rejoiced in heart, we shoot our arrows there, and they appear to penetrate; but, alas, a secret armor blunts every dart, and no wound is felt. The parable speaks of this character thus — “Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.” Or as another passage explains it: “And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.” Have we not thousands of hearers who receive the word with joy? They have no deep convictions, but they leap into Christ on a sudden, and profess an instantaneous faith in him, and that faith has all the appearance of being genuine. When we look at it, the seed has really sprouted. There is a kind of life in it, there is apparently a green blade. We thank God that a sinner is brought back, a soul is born to God. But our joy is premature: they sprang up on a sudden, and received the word with joy, because they had no depth of earth, and the self-same cause which hastened their reception of the seed also causes them, when the sun is risen with his fervent heat, to wither away. These men we see every day in the week. They come to join the church; they tell us a story of how they heard us preach on such-and-such an occasion, and, oh, the word was so blessed to them, they never felt so happy in their lives! “Oh sir, I thought I must leap from my seat when I heard about a precious Christ, and I believed on him there and then; I am sure I did.” We question them as to whether they were ever convinced of sin. They think they were; but one thing they know, they feel a great pleasure in religion. We put it to them, “Do you think you will hold on?” They are confident that they shall. They hate the things they once loved, they are sure they do. Everything has become new to them. And all this is on a sudden. We enquire when the good work began. We find it began when it ended, that is to say, there was no previous work, no ploughing of the soil, but on a sudden they sprang from death to life, as if a field should be covered with wheat by magic. Perhaps we receive them into the church; but in a week or two they are not so

regular as they used to be. We gently reprove them, and they explain that they meet with such opposition in religion, that they are obliged to yield a little. Another month and we lose them altogether. The reason is that they have been laughed at or exposed to a little opposition, and they have gone back. And what, think you, are the feelings of the minister? He is like the husbandman, who sees his field all green and flourishing, but at night a frost nips every shoot, and his hoped-for gains are gone. The minister goes to his chamber, and casts himself on his face before God, and cries, "I have been deceived; my converts are fickle, their religion has withered as the green herb." In the ancient story Orpheus is said to have had such skill upon the lyre, that he made the oaks and stones to dance around him. It is a poetical fiction, and yet hath it sometimes happened to the minister, that not only have the godly rejoiced, but men, like oaks and stones, have danced from their places. Alas! They have been oaks and stones still. Hushed is the lyre. The oak returns to its rooting-place, and the stone casts itself heavily to the earth. The sinner, who, like Saul, was among the prophets, goes back to plan mischief against the Most High. If it is bad to be a wayside hearer, I cannot think it is much better to be like the rock. This second class of hearers certainly gives us more joy than the first. A certain company always comes round a new minister; and I have often thought it is an act of God's kindness that he allows these people to gather at the first, while the minister is young, and has but few to stand by him: these persons are easily moved, and if the minister preaches earnestly they feel it, and they love him, and rally round him, much to his comfort. But time, that proves all things, proves them. They seemed to be made of true metal; but when they are put into the fire to be tested, they are consumed in the furnace. Some of the shallow kind are here now. I have looked at you when I have been preaching, and I have often thought, "That man one of these days will come out from the world, I am sure he will." I have thanked God for him. Alas, he is the same as ever. Years and years have we sowed him in vain, and it is to be feared it will be so to the end, for he is without depth, and without the moisture of the Spirit. Shall it be so? Must I stand over the mouth of your open sepulcher, and thin, "Here lies a shoot which never became an ear, a man in whom grace struggled but never reigned, who gave some hopeful spasms of life and then subsided into eternal death"? God save you! Oh! May the Spirit deal with you

effectually, and may you, even you, yet bring forth fruit unto God, that Jesus may have a reward for his sufferings.

**III.** I shall briefly treat of the third class, and may the Spirit of God assist me to deal faithfully with you. “And some fell among THORNS; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.” Now, this was good soil. The two first characters were bad: the wayside was not the proper place, the rock was not a congenial situation for the growth of any plant; but this is good soil, for it grows thorns. Wherever a thistle will spring up and flourish, there would wheat flourish too. This was fat, fertile soil; it was no marvel therefore that the husbandman dealt largely there, and threw handful after handful upon that corner of the field. See how happy he is when in a month or two he visits the spot. The seed has sprung up. True, there’s a suspicious little plant down there of about the same size as the wheat. “Oh!” he thinks, “that’s not much, the corn will out-grow that. When it is stronger it will choke these few thistles that have unfortunately mixed with it.” Ay, Mr. Husbandman, you do not understand the force of evil, or you would not thus dream! He comes again, and the seed has grown, there is even the corn in the ear; but the thistles, the thorns, and the briars have become intertwined with one another, and the poor wheat can hardly get a ray of sunshine. It is so choked with thorns every way, that it looks quite yellow: the plant is starved. Still it perseveres in growing, and it does seem as if it would bring forth a little fruit. Alas, it never comes to anything. With it the reaper never fills his arm. We have this class very largely among us. These hear the word and understand what they hear. They take the truth home; they think it over; they even go the length of making a profession of religion. The wheat seems to spring and ear; it will soon come to perfection. Be in no hurry, these men and women have a great deal to see after; they have the cares of a large concern; their establishment employs so many hundred hands; do not be deceived as to their godliness — they have no time for it. They will tell you that they must live; that they cannot neglect this world; that they must anyhow look out for the present, and as for the future, they will render it all due attention by-and-by. They continue to attend gospel-preaching, and the poor little stunted blade of religion keeps on growing after a fashion. Meanwhile they have grown rich, they come to the place of worship in a carriage, they have all that heart can wish. Ah! Now the seed will grow,

will it not? No, no. They have no cares now; the shop is given up, they live in the country; they have not to ask, "Where shall the money come from to meet the next bill?" or "how shall they be able to provide for an increasing family." Now they have too much instead of too little, for they have riches, and they are too wealthy to be gracious. "But," says one, "they might spend their riches for God." Certainly they might, but they do not, for riches are deceitful. They have to entertain much company, and chime in with the world, and so Christ and his church are left in the lurch. Yes, but they begin to spend their riches, and they have surely got over that difficulty, for they give largely to the cause of Christ, and they are munificent in charity; the little blade will grow, will it not? No, for now behold the thorns of pleasure. Their liberality to others involves liberality to themselves; their pleasures, amusements, and vanities choke the wheat of true religion: the good grains of gospel truth cannot grow because they have to attend that musical party, that ball, and that soiree, and so they cannot think of the things of God. I know several specimens of this class. I knew one, high in court circles, who has confessed to me that he wished he were poor, for then he might enter the kingdom of heaven. He has said to me, "Ah! Sir, these politics, these politics, I wish I were rid of them, they are eating the life out of my heart; I cannot serve God as I would." I know of another, overloaded with riches, who has said to me, "Ah! Sir, it is an awful thing to be rich; one cannot keep close to the Savior with all this earth about him." Ah! My dear readers, I will not ask for you that God may lay you on a bed of sickness, that he may strip you of all your wealth, and bring you to beggary; but, oh, if he were to do it, and you were to save your souls, it would be the best bargain you could ever make. If those mighty ones who now complain that the thorns choke the seed could give up all their riches and pleasures, if they that fare sumptuously every day could take the place of Lazarus at the gate, it were a happy change for them if their souls might be saved. A man may be honorable and rich, and yet go to heaven; but it will be hard work, for "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." God does make some rich men enter the kingdom of heaven, but hard is their struggle. Steady, young man, steady! Hurry not to climb to wealth! It is a place where many heads are turned. Do not ask God to make you popular; they that have popularity are wearied by it. Cry with Agur — "Give me neither poverty nor riches." God give me to tread the



golden mean, and may I ever have in my heart that good seed, which shall bring forth fruit a hundredfold to his own glory.

**IV.** I now close with the last character, namely, the GOOD GROUND. Of the good soil, as you will mark, we have but one in four. Will one in four of our hearers, with well-prepared heart, receive the Word? The ground is described as “good”: not that it was good by nature, but it had been made good by grace. God had ploughed it; he had stirred it up with the plough of conviction, and there it lay in ridge and furrow as it should lie. When the gospel was preached, the heart received it, for the man said, “That is just the blessing I want. Mercy is what a needy sinner requires.” So that the preaching of the gospel was THE thing to give comfort to this disturbed and ploughed soil. Down fell the seed to take good root. In some cases it produced fervency of love, largeness of heart, devotedness of purpose of a noble kind, like seed which produces a hundredfold. The man became a mighty servant for God, he spent himself and was spent. He took his place in the vanguard of Christ’s army, stood in the hottest of the battle, and did deeds of daring which few could accomplish — the seed produced a hundredfold. It fell into another heart of like character; — the man could not do the most, but still he did much. He gave himself to God, and in his business he had a word to say for his Lord; in his daily walk he quietly adorned the doctrine of God his Savior, — he brought forth sixty-fold. Then it fell on another, whose abilities and talents were but small; he could not be a star, but he would be a glow-worm; he could not do as the greatest, but he was content to do something, however humble. The seed had brought forth in him tenfold, perhaps twentyfold. How many are there of this sort here? Is there one who prays within himself, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? The seed has fallen in the right spot. Soul, thy prayer shall be heard. God never sets a man longing for mercy without intending to give it. Does another whisper, “Oh that I might be saved”? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou, even thou, shalt be saved. Hast thou been the chief of sinners? Trust Christ, and thy enormous sins shall vanish as the millstone sinks beneath the flood. Is there no one here that will trust the Savior? Can it be possible that the Spirit is entirely absent? That he is not moving in one soul? Not begetting life in one spirit? We will pray that he may now descend, that the word may not be in vain.

# CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT

SERMON NO. 329

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19TH, 1860,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” — Matthew 4:17.”*

*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” — Luke 24:47.*

IT SEEMS from these two texts that repentance was the first subject upon which the Redeemer dwelt, and that it was the last, which, with his departing breath, he commended to the earnestness of his disciples. He begins his mission crying, “Repent,” he ends it by saying to his successors the apostles, “Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” This seems to me to be a very interesting fact, and not simply interesting, but instructive. Jesus Christ opens his commission by preaching repentance. What then? Did he not by this act teach us how important repentance was — so important that the very first time he opens his mouth, he shall begin with, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Did he not feel that repentance was necessary to be preached before he preached faith in himself, because the soul must first repent of sin before it will seek a Savior, or even care to know whether there is a Savior at all? And did he not also indicate to us that as repentance was the opening lesson of the divine teaching, so, if we would be his disciples, we must begin by sitting on the stool of repentance, before we can possibly go upward to the higher forms of faith and of full assurance? Jesus at the first begins with repentance, — that repentance may be the Alpha, the first letter of the spiritual alphabet which all believers must learn; and when he concluded his divine commission with repentance, what did he

say to us but this — that repentance was still of the very last importance? He preaches it with his first, he will utter it with his last breath; with this he begins, with this he will conclude. He knew that repentance was, to spiritual life, a sort of Alpha and Omega — it was the duty of the beginning, it was the duty of the end. He seemed to say to us, “Repentance, which I preached to you three years ago, when I first came into the world, as a public teacher, is as binding, as necessary for you who heard me then, and who then obeyed my voice, as it was at the very first instant, and it is equally needful that you who have been with me from the beginning, should not imagine that the theme is exhausted and out of date; you too must begin your ministry and conclude it with the same exhortation, ‘Repent and be converted, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” “It seems to me that nothing could set forth Jesus Christ’s idea of the high value of repentance, more fully and effectually than the fact that he begins with it, and that he concludes with it — that he should say, “Repent,” as the key-note of his ministry, preaching this duty before he fully develops all the mystery of godliness, and that he should close his life-song as a good composer must, with his first key-note, bidding his disciples still cry, “Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Jesus’ name.” I feel then that I need no further apology for introducing to your solemn and serious attention, the subject of saving repentance. And oh! while we are talking of it, may God the Holy Ghost breathe into all our spirits, and may we now repent before him, and now find those blessings which he hath promised to the penitent.

With regard to repentance, these four things: — first, its origin; secondly, its essentials; thirdly, its companions; and fourthly, its excellencies.

## **I.** Repentance — ITS ORIGIN.

When we cry, “Repent and be converted,” there are some foolish men who call us legal. Now we beg to state, at the opening of this first point, that repentance is of gospel parentage. It was not born near Mount Sinai. It never was brought forth anywhere but upon Mount Zion. Of course, repentance is a duty — a natural duty — because, when man hath sinned, who is there brazen enough to say that it is not man’s bounden duty to repent of having done so? It is a duty which even nature itself would teach. But gospel repentance was never yet produced as a matter of duty.

It was never brought forth in the soul by demands of law, nor indeed can the law, except as the instrument in the hand of grace, even assist the soul towards saving repentance. It is a remarkable fact that the law itself makes no provision for repentance. It says, "This do, and thou shalt live; break my command, and thou shalt die." There is nothing said about penitence; there is no offer of pardon made to those that repent. The law pronounces its deadly curse upon the man that sins but once, but it offers no way of escape, no door by which the man may be restored to favor. The barren sides of Sinai have no soil in which to nourish the lovely plant of penitence. Upon Sinai the dew of mercy never fell. Its lightnings and its thunders have frightened away the angel of Mercy once for all, and there Justice sits, with sword of flame, upon its majestic throne of rugged rock, never purposing for a moment to put up its sword into the scabbard, and to forgive the offender. Read attentively the twentieth chapter of Exodus. You have the commandments there all thundered forth with trumpet voice, but there is no pause between where Mercy with her silver voice may step in and say, "But if ye break this law, God will have mercy upon you, and will shew himself gracious if ye repent." No words of repentance, I say, were ever proclaimed by the law; no promise by it made to penitents; and no assistance is by the law ever offered to those who desire to be forgiven. Repentance is a gospel grace. Christ preached it, but not Moses. Moses neither can nor will assist a soul to repent, only Jesus can use the law as a means of conviction and an argument for repentance. Jesus gives pardon to those who seek it with weeping and with tears; but Moses knows of no such thing. If repentance is ever obtained by the poor sinner, it must be found at the foot of the cross, and not where the ten commandments lie shivered at Sinai's base.

And as repentance is of gospel parentage, I make a second remark, it is also of gracious origin. Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened, — as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain, as expect the sinner to make any confession, or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God, unless grace shall first renew the heart. Go and loose the bands of everlasting winter in the frozen north with your own feeble breath, and then hope to make tears of penitence

bedew the cheek of the hardened sinner. Go ye and divide the earth, and pierce its bowels with an infant's finger, and then hope that your eloquent appeal, unassisted by divine grace, shall be able to penetrate the adamantine heart of man. Man can sin, and he can continue in it, but to leave the hateful element is a work for which he needs a power divine. As the river rushes downward with increasing fury, leaping from crag to crag in ponderous cataracts of power, so is the sinner in his sin; onward and downward, onward, yet more swiftly, more mightily, more irresistibly, in his hellish course. Nothing but divine grace can bid that cataract leap upward, or make the floods retrace the pathway which they have worn for themselves down the rocks. Nothing, I say, but the power which made the world, and digged the foundations of the great deep, can ever make the heart of man a fountain of life from which the floods of repentance may gush forth. So then, soul, if thou shalt ever repent, it must be a repentance, not of nature, but of grace. Nature can imitate repentance; it can produce remorse; it can generate the feeble resolve; it can even lead to a partial, practical reform; but unaided nature cannot touch the vitals and new-create the soul. Nature may make the eyes weep, but it cannot make the heart bleed. Nature can bid you amend your ways, but it cannot renew your heart. No, you must look upward, sinner; you must look upward to him who is able to save unto the uttermost. You must at his hands receive the meek and tender spirit; from his finger must come the touch that shall dissolve the rock; and from his eye must dart the flash of love and light that can scatter the darkness of your impenitence. Remember, then, at the outset, that true repentance is of gospel origin, and is not the work of the law; and on the other hand, it is of gracious origin, and is not the work of the creature.

**II.** But to pass forward from this first point to our second head, let us notice the ESSENTIALS of true repentance. The old divines adopted various methods of explaining penitence. Some of them said it was a precious medicine, compounded of six things; but in looking over their divisions, I have felt that I might with equal success divide repentance into four different ingredients. This precious box of ointment which must be broken over the Savior's head before the sweet perfume of peace can ever be smelt in the soul — this precious ointment is compounded of four most rare, most costly things. God give them to us and then give us the

compound itself mixed by the Master's hand. True repentance consists of illumination, humiliation, detestation, and transformation.

To take them one by one. The first part of true repentance consists of illumination. Man by nature is impenitent, because he does not know himself to be guilty. There are many acts which he commits in which he sees no sin, and even in great and egregious faults, he often knows that he is not right, but he does not perceive the depth, the horrible enormity of the sin which is involved in them. Eye-salve is one of the first medicines which the Lord uses with the soul. Jesus touches the eye of the understanding, and the man becomes guilty in his own sight, as he always was guilty in the sight of God. Crimes long forgotten start up from the grave where his forgetfulness had buried them; sins, which he thought were no sins, suddenly rise up on their true character, and acts, which he thought were perfect, now discover themselves to have been so mixed with evil motive that they were far from being acceptable with God. The eye is no more blind, and therefore the heart is no more proud, for the seeing eye will make a humble heart. If I must paint a picture of penitence in this first stage, I should portray a man with his eyes bandaged walking through a path infested with the most venomous vipers; vipers which have formed a horrible girdle about his loins, and are hanging like bracelets from his wrists. The man is so blind that he knows not where he is, nor what it is which he fancies to be a jewelled belt upon his arm. I would then in the picture touch his eyes and bid you see his horror, and his astonishment, when he discovers where he is and what he is. He looks behind him, and he sees through what broods of vipers he has walked; he looks before him, and he sees how thickly his future path is strewed with these venomous beasts. He looks about him, and in his living bosom looking out from his guilty heart, he sees the head of a vile serpent, which has twisted its coils into his very vitals. I would try, if I could, to throw into that face, horror, dismay, dread, and sorrow, a longing to escape, an anxious desire to get rid of all these things which must destroy him unless he should escape from them. And now, my dear hearers, have you ever been the subject of this divine illumination? Has God, who said to an unformed world, "Let there be light," has he said, "Let there be light" in your poor benighted soul? Have you learned that your best deeds have been vile, and that as for your sinful acts they are ten thousand times more wicked than ever you

believed them to be? I will not believe that you have ever repented unless you have first received divine illumination. I cannot expect a blind eye to see the filth upon a black hand, nor can I ever believe that the understanding which has never been enlightened can detect the sin which has stained your daily life.

Next to illumination, comes humiliation. The soul having seen itself, bows before God, strips itself of all its vain boasting, and lays itself flat on its face before the throne of mercy. It could talk proudly once of merit, but now it dares not pronounce the word. Once it could boast itself before God, with “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are”; but now it stands in the distance, and smites upon its breast, crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Now the haughty eye, the proud look, which God abhorreth, are cast away, and the eye, instead thereof, becomes a channel of tears — its floods are perpetual, it mourneth, it weepeth, and the soul crieth out both day and night before God, for it is vexed with itself, because it has vexed the Holy Spirit, and is grieved within itself because it hath grieved the Most High. Here if I had to depict penitence, I should borrow the picture of the men of Calais before our conquering king. There they kneel, with ropes about their necks, clad in garments of sackcloth, and ashes cast about their heads, confessing that they deserve to die; but stretching out their hands they implore mercy; and one who seems the personification of the angel of mercy — or rather, of Christ Jesus, the God of mercy — stands pleading with the king to spare their lives. Sinner, thou hast never repented unless that rope has been about thy neck after a spiritual fashion, if thou hast not felt that hell is thy just desert, and that if God banish thee for ever from himself, to the place where hope and peace can never come, he has only done with thee what thou hast richly earned. If thou hast not felt that the flames of hell are the ripe harvest which thy sins have sown, thou hast never yet repented at all. We must acknowledge the justice of the penalty as well as the guilt of the sin, or else it is but a mock repentance which we pretend to possess. Down on thy face, sinner, down on thy face; put away thine ornaments from thee, that he may know what to do with thee. No more anoint thine head and wash thy face, but fast and bow thy head and mourn. Thou hast made heaven mourn, thou hast made earth sad, thou hast digged hell for thyself. Confess thine iniquity with shame, and with confusion of face; bow down before the

God of mercy and acknowledge that if he spare thee it will be his free mercy that shall do it; but if he destroy thee, thou shalt not have one word to say against the justice of the solemn sentence. Such a stripping does the Holy Spirit give, when he works this repentance, that men sometimes under it sink so low as even to long for death in order to escape from the burden which soul-humiliation has cast upon them. I do not desire that you should have that terror, but I do pray that you may have no boasting left, that you may stop your mouth and feel that if now the judgment hour were set, and the judgment day were come, you must stand speechless, even though God should say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell." Without this I say there is no genuine evangelical repentance.

The third ingredient is detestation. The soul must go a step further than mere sorrow; it must come to hate sin, to hate the very shadow of it, to hate the house where once sin and it were boon companions, to hate the bed of pleasure and all its glittering tapestries, yea, to hate the very garments spotted with the flesh. There is no repentance where a man can talk lightly of sin, much less where he can speak tenderly and lovingly of it. When sin cometh to thee delicately, like Agag, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," if thou hast true repentance it will rise like Samuel and hew thy Agag in pieces before the Lord. As long as thou harbourst one idol in thy heart, God will never dwell there. Thou must break not only the images of wood and of stone, but of silver and of gold; yea, the golden calf itself, which has been thy chief idolatry, must be ground in powder and mingled in the bitter water of penitence, and thou must be made to drink thereof. There is such a loathing of sin in the soul of the true penitent that he cannot bear its name. If you were to compel him to enter its palaces he would be wretched. A penitent cannot bear himself in the house of the profane. He feels as if the house must fall upon him. In the assembly of the wicked he would be like a dove in the midst of ravenous kites. As well may the sheep lick blood with the wolf, as well may the dove be comrade at the vulture's feast of carrion, as a penitent sinner revel in sin. Through infirmity he may slide into it, but through grace he will rise out of it and abhor even his clothes in which he has fallen into the ditch (Job 9:31). The sinner unrepentant, like the sow, wallows in the mire; but the penitent sinner, like the swallow, may sometimes dip his wings in the limpid pool of iniquity, but he is aloft again, twittering forth



with the chattering of the swallow most pitiful words of penitence, for he grieves that he should have so debased himself and sinned against his God. My hearer, if thou dost not so hate thy sins as to be ready to give them all up — if thou art not willing now to hang them on Haman's gallows a hundred and twenty cubits high — if thou canst not shake them off from thee as Paul did the viper from his hand, and shake it into the fire with detestation, then, I say, thou knowest not the grace of God in truth; for if thou lovest sin thou lovest neither God nor thyself, but thou chooseth thine own damnation. Thou art in friendship with death and in league with hell; God deliver thee from this wretched state of heart, and bring thee to detest thy sin.

There lacks one more ingredient yet. We have had illumination, humiliation, and detestation. There must be another thing, namely, a thorough transformation, for —

*“Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more.”*

The penitent man reforms his outward life. The reform is not partial, but in heart, it is universal and complete. Infirmity may mar it, but grace will always be striving against human infirmity, and the man will hate and abandon every false way. Tell me not, deceptive tradesman, that you have repented of your sin while lying placards are still upon your goods. Tell me not, thou who wast once a drunkard, that thou hast turned to God while yet the cup is dear to thee, and thou canst still wallow in it by excess. Come not to me and say I have repented, thou avaricious wretch, whilst thou art yet grinding thine almost cent, per cent, out of some helpless tradesman whom thou hast taken like a spider in thy net. Come not to me and say thou are forgiven, when thou still harboureth revenge and malice against thy brother, and speaketh against thine own mother's son. Thou liest to thine own confusion. Thy face is as the whore's forehead that is brazen, if thou darest to say “I have repented,” when thine arms are up to the elbow in the filth of thine iniquity. Nay, man, God will not forgive your lusts while you are still revelling in the bed of your uncleanness. And do you imagine he will forgive your drunken feasts while you are still sitting at the glutton's table! Shall he forgive your profanity

when your tongue is still quivering with an oath? Think you that God shall forgive your daily transgressions when you repeat them again, and again, and again, wilfully plunging into the mire? He will wash thee, man, but he will not wash thee for the sake of permitting thee to plunge in again and defile thyself once more. "Well," do I hear you say, "I do feel that such a change as that has taken place in me." I am glad to hear it, my dear sir; but I must ask you a further question. Divine transformation is not merely in act but in the very soul; the new man not only does not sin as he used to do, but he does not want to sin as he used to do. The flesh-pots of Egypt sometimes send up a sweet smell in his nostrils, and when he passes by another man's house, where the leek, and garlic, and onion are steaming in the air, he half wishes to go back again to his Egyptian bondage, but in a moment he checks himself, saying, "No, no; the heavenly manna is better than this; the water out of the rock is sweeter than the waters of the Nile, and I cannot return to my old slavery under my old tyrant." There may be insinuations of Satan, but his soul rejects them, and agonizes to cast them out. His very heart longs to be free from every sin, and if he could be perfect he would. There is not one sin he would spare. If you want to give him pleasure, you need not ask him to go to your haunt of debauchery; it would be the greatest pain to him you could imagine. It is not only his customs and manners, but his nature that is changed. You have not put new leaves on the tree, but there is a new root to it. It is not merely new branches, but there is a new trunk altogether, and new sap, and there will be new fruit as the result of this newness. A glorious transformation is wrought by a gracious God. His penitence has become so real and so complete that the man is not the man he used to be. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you are renewed by grace, and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company. "No," say you, "no, sir, I cannot accompany you." "Why, you used to swear!" "I cannot now." "Well, but," says he, "you and I are very near companions." "Yes, I know we are, and I wish we were not. You are a deal of trouble to me every day. I wish I could be rid of you for ever." "But," says Old Self, "you used to drink very well." "Yes, I know it. I know thou didst, indeed, Old Self. Thou couldst sing a song as merrily as any one. Thou wast ringleader in all sorts of vice, but I am no relation of thine now. Thou art of the old Adam, and I of the new Adam. Thou art of thine old father, the devil; but I have another — my Father, who is in heaven." I tell you,

brethren, there is no man in the world you will hate so much as your old self, and there will be nothing you will so much long to get rid of as that old man who once was dragging you down to hell, and who will try his hand at it over and over again every day you live, and who will accomplish it yet, unless that divine grace which has made you a new man shall keep you a new man even to the end.

Good Rowland Hill, in his “Village Dialogues,” gives the Christian, whom he describes in the first part of the book, the name of Thomas Newman. Ah! and everyman who goes to heaven must have the name of new-man. We must not expect to enter there unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. I have thus, as best I could, feeling many and very sad distractions in my own mind, endeavored to explain the essentials of true repentance — illumination, humiliation, detestation, transformation. The endings of the words, though they are long words may commend them to your attention and assist you to retain them.

**III.** And now, with all brevity, let me notice, in the third place, the COMPANIONS of true repentance.

Her first companion is faith. There was a question once asked by the old Puritan divines — Which was first in the soul, Faith or Repentance? Some said that a man could not truly repent of sin until he believed in God, and had some sense of a Savior’s love. Others said a man could not have faith till he had repented of sin; for he must hate sin before he could trust Christ. So a good old minister who was present made the following remark: “Brethren,” said he, “I don’t think you can ever settle this question. It would be something like asking whether, when an infant is born, the circulation of the blood, or the beating of the pulse can be first observed”? Said he, “It seems to me that faith and repentance are simultaneous. They come at the same moment. There could be no true repentance without faith. There never was yet true faith without sincere repentance.” We endorse that opinion. I believe they are like the Siamese twins; they are born together, and they could not live asunder, but must die if you attempt to separate them. Faith always walks side by side with his weeping sister, true Repentance. They are born in the same house at the same hour, and they will live in the same heart every day, and on your

dying bed, while you will have faith on the one hand to draw the curtain of the next world, you will have repentance, with its tears, as it lets fall the curtain upon the world from which you are departing. You will have at the last moment to weep over your own sins, and yet you shall see through that tear the place where tears are washed away. Some say there is no faith in heaven. Perhaps there is not. If there be none, then there will be no repentance, but if there be faith there will be repentance, for where faith lives, repentance must live with it. They are so united, so married and allied together, that they never can be parted, in time or in eternity. Hast thou, then, faith in Jesus? Does thy soul look up and trust thyself in his hands? If so, then hast thou the repentance that needeth not to be repented of.

There is another sweet thing which always goes with repentance, just as Aaron went with Moses, to be spokesman for him, for you must know that Moses was slow of speech, and so is repentance. Repentance has fine eyes, but stammering lips. In fact, it usually happens that repentance speaks through her eyes and cannot speak with her lips at all, except her friend — who is a good spokesman — is near; he is called, Mr. Confession. This man is noted for his open breastedness. He knows something of himself, and he tells all that he knows before the throne of God. Confession keeps back no secrets. Repentance sighs over the sin — confession tells it out. Repentance feels the sin to be heavy within — confession plucks it forth and indicts it before the throne of God. Repentance is the soul in travail — confession delivers it. My heart is ready to burst, and there is a fire in my bones through repentance — confession gives the heavenly fire a vent, and my soul flames upward before God. Repentance, alone, hath groanings which cannot be uttered — confession is the voice which expresses the groans. Now then, hast thou made confession of thy sin — not to man, but to God? If thou hast, then believe that thy repentance cometh from him, and it is a godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of.

Holiness is evermore the bosom friend of penitence. Fair angel, clad in pure white linen, she loves good company and will never stay in a heart where repentance is a stranger. Repentance must dig the foundations, but holiness shall erect the structure, and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin;

holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated.

Yet once more — wherever repentance is, there cometh also with it, peace. As Jesus walked upon the waters of Galilee, and said, “Peace, be still,” so peace walks over the waters of repentance, and brings quiet and calm into the soul. If thou wouldst shake the thirst of thy soul, repentance must be the cup out of which thou shalt drink, and then sweet peace shall be the blessed effect. Sin is such a troublesome companion that it will always give thee the heartache till thou hast turned it out by repentance, and then thy heart shall rest and be still. Sin is the rough wind that tears through the forest, and sways every branch of the trees to and fro; but after penitence hath come into the soul the wind is hushed, and all is still, and the birds sing in the branches of the trees which just now creaked in the storm. Sweet peace repentance ever yields to the man who is the possessor of it. And now what sayest thou my hearer — to put each point personally to thee — hast thou had peace with God? If not, never rest till thou hast had it, and never believe thyself to be saved till thou feelest thyself to be reconciled. Be not content with the mere profession of the head, but ask that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

**IV.** And now I come to my fourth and last point, namely, the EXCELLENCIES of repentance.

I shall somewhat surprise you, perhaps, if I say that one of the excellencies of repentance lies in its pleasantness. “Oh”! you say, “but it is bitter”! Nay, say I, it is sweet. At least, it is bitter when it is alone, like the waters of Marah; but there is a tree called the cross, which if thou canst put into it, it will be sweet, and thou wilt love to drink of it. At a school of mutes who were both deaf and dumb, the teacher put the following question to her pupils: — “What is the sweetest emotion”? As soon as the children comprehended the question, they took their slates and wrote their answers. One girl in a moment wrote down “Joy.” As soon as the teacher saw it, she expected that all would write the same, but another girl, more thoughtful, put her hand to her brow, and she wrote “Hope.” Verily, the girl was not far from the mark. But the next one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Gratitude,” and this child was not

wrong. Another one, when she brought up her slate, had written “Love,” and I am sure she was right. But there was one other who had written in large characters, — and as she brought up her slate the tear was in her eye, showing she had written what she felt, — “Repentance is the sweetest emotion.” And I think she was right. Verily, in my own case, after that long drought, perhaps longer than Elisha’s three years in which the heavens poured forth no rain, when I saw but one tear of penitence coming from my hard, hard soul — it was such a joy! There have been times when you know you have done wrong, but when you could cry over it you have felt happy. As one weeps for his firstborn, so have you wept over your sin, and in that very weeping you have had your peace and your joy restored. I am a living witness that repentance is exceeding sweet when mixed with divine hope, but repentance without hope is hell. It is hell to grieve for sin with the pangs of bitter remorse, and yet to know that pardon can never come, and mercy never be vouchsafed. Repentance, with the cross before its eyes, is heaven itself; at least, if not heaven, it is so next door to it, that standing on the wet threshold I may see within the pearly portals, and sing the song of the angels who rejoice within. Repentance, then, has this excellency, that it is very sweet to the soul which is made to lie beneath its shadow.

Besides this excellency, it is specially sweet to God as well as to men. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” When St. Augustine lay a-dying, he had this verse always fixed upon the curtains, so that as often as he awoke, he might read it — “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” When you despise yourselves, God honors you; but as long as you honor yourselves, God despises you. A whole heart is a scentless thing; but when it is broken and bruised, it is like that precious spice which was burned as holy incense in the ancient tabernacle. When the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on them, even the songs of the angels, and the vials full of odours sweet that smoke before the throne of the Most High, are not more agreeable to God than the sighs, and groans, and tears of the brokenhearted soul. So, then, if thou wouldest be pleasing with God, come before him with many and many a tear:

*“To humble souls and broken hearts  
 God with his grace is ever nigh;  
 Pardon and hope his love imparts,  
 When men in deep contrition lie.  
 He tells their tears, he counts their groans,  
 His Son redeems their souls from death;  
 His Spirit heals their broken bones,  
 They in his praise employ their breath.”*

John Bunyan, in his “Siege of Mansoul,” when the defeated townsmen were seeking pardon, names Mr. Wet-eyes as the intercessor with the king. Mr. Wet-eyes — good Saxon word! I hope we know Mr. Wet-eyes, and have had him many times in our house, for if he cannot intercede with God, yet Mr. Wet-eyes is a great friend with the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ will undertake his case, and then we shall prevail. So have I set forth, then, some, but very few, of the excellencies of repentance. And now, my dear hearers, have you repented of Sin? Oh, impenitent soul, if thou dost not weep now, thou wilt have to weep for ever. The heart that is not broken now, must be broken for ever upon the wheel of divine vengeance. Thou must now repent, or else for ever smart for it. Turn or burn — it is the Bible’s only alternative. If thou repentest, the gate of mercy stands wide open. Only the Spirit of God bring thee on thy knees in self-abasement, for Christ’s cross stands before thee, and he who bled upon it bids thee look at him. Oh, sinner, obey the divine bidding. But, if your heart be hard, like that of the stubborn Jews in the days of Moses, take heed, lest, —

*“The Lord in vengeance dressed,  
 Shall lift his head and swear, —  
 You that despised my promised rest,  
 Shall have no portion there.”*

At any rate, sinner, if thou wilt not repent, there is one here who will, and that is myself. I repent that I could not preach to you with more earnestness this morning, and throw my whole soul more thoroughly into my pleading with you. the Lord God, whom I serve, is my constant witness that there is nothing I desire so much as to see your hearts broken on account of sin; and nothing has gladdened my heart so much as the many instances lately vouchsafed of the wonders God is doing in this place. There have been men who have stepped into this Hall, who had never entered a place of worship for a score years, and here the Lord has

met with them, and I believe, if I could speak the word, there are hundreds who would stand up now, and say, “‘Twas here the Lord met with me. I was the chief of sinners; the hammer struck my heart and broke it, and now it has been bound up again by the finger of divine mercy, and I tell it unto sinners, and tell it to this assembled congregation, there have been depths of mercy found that have been deeper than the depths of my iniquity.” This day there will be a soul delivered; this morning there will be, I do not doubt, despite my weakness, a display of the energy of God, and the power of the Spirit; some drunkard shall be turned from the error of his ways; some soul, who was trembling on the very jaws of hell, shall look to him who is the sinner’s hope, and find peace and pardon — ay, at this very hour. So be it, O Lord, and thine shall be the glory, world without end.



# THE SONS OF GOD

## SERMON NO. 339

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1860,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” —  
Romans 8:16, 17.*

MY brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm; in heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam's fall; there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown; he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer. Well said our poet just now,

*“It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made.”*

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below; you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest, to permit you to hope for an abiding city below the skies. I say, it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition; but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now; there are divine joys which even this day you may taste. The wilderness has its manna; the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God hath not forsaken us; the tokens of his goodness

are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, a special privilege; second, a special proof of it, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; then thirdly, a special privilege, that of heirship; and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon and the conclusion shall be a special manner of life demanded of such persons.

**I.** First, then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. “We are the children of God.” And here I am met upon the very threshold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body — the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being to his people a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our new philosophers as old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away — a proposition which will never be carried out, while the earth remaineth, or while God endureth. But, at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood. We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when he cast them into the lake of fire, and send upon them all the plagues that are written in his book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance in the judge of all the earth, and successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father. It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at; when everybody is become so tender-hearted that there is no need for the sword to be held “in terrorum” over mortals; but that everything is to be conducted now in a

new and refined manner; God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons. Now I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the lightest shadow of a pretense of being proved by the Word of God. Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being “the children of God,” and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class me as having a claim to be God’s children. Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans 8:14. —

“As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

Surely no one is so daring as to say, that all men are led by the Spirit of God; yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God. A passage from Galatians 3:26. —

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,”

declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God’s sons, and that any pretense which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption. And hear ye this, John 1:12. —

“To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become  
the sons of God.”

How could they have been the sons of God before, for “to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born not of blood,” — then they were not make the sons of God by mere creation — “nor of the will of the flesh,” that is to say, not by any efforts of their own “but of God.” If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that

believers are the sons of God and none besides. But listen to another word of the Lord in the first epistle of John, 3:1 —

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God. Hear another, 2 Corinthians, 6:17.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Is not that “coming out” necessary to sonship, and were they his sons, were they his daughters, had they any claim or right to call him Father, until they came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why doth God promise them what they have already. But again, Matthew 5:9. —

“Blessed are the peacemakers:  
for they shall be called the children of God.”

A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God. Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans 9:8. —

“The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.”

What then is to be said to this, “These are not the children of God.” If any man will contradict that flatly — well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness. Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, “Behold what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on him. As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet — “As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no contention; but the word there used for “offspring,” expresses no idea of Fatherhood in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son. I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this corner-stone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God. The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will:” Ephesians 1:5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside.

Having thus, as far as I can, established my point, that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmistakable grace. No man has any right to be a son of God. If we are born into his family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us. If thou art this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, thou wast once the slave of hell. Once thou didst wallow in the mire, and if thou shouldst adopt a swine to be thy child, thou couldst not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted thee. And if an angel could exalt a

gnat to equal dignity with himself, yet would not the boon be such-an-one as that which God hath conferred on thee. He hath taken thee from the dunghill, and he hath set thee among princes. Thou hast lain among the pots, but he hat made thee as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and parentage, — look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if thou art in the true olive. Thou art not there, because of thine original, thou art a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit hath changed thy nature, for thou wast once nothing but a branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow thee to the very earth while thine adoption lifts thee up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God hath conferred upon you — even upon you in making you his son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God’s Son, he is one of the most favored of his servants, but not his child. I tell thee, thou poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about thee that even angels may well envy. Thou in thy poverty art as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. Thou in the midst of thy sickness and infirmity art girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe. Thou movest about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in thy veins; thou art one of the blood royal of eternity — a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry — thou hast more than heraldry could ever give thee, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

**II.** And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high — this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF — “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court — two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is our spirit; the second witness is The Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit. It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He standeth up and beareth his own faithful testimony; but some great one of the land — some nobleman who lives near — rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the

humble-minded Christian cries, "I am God's child." The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that our spirit is able to bear witness; and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God; for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, when it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before his throne we can boldly say "Abba Father." — "Thou art my father," then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, "I feel to thee as a child feelth to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son — if I were not a child thou wouldst never have given to me that filial affection which no dares to call thee "Father."

Sometimes, too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, "The time is in my Father's hands; I cannot murmur; I would not repine; I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer." He surely doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of man for nought; and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father's face, and have said, "Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee; thy blows shall not drive thee from me; they shall but make me say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin."'" Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy." You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God. My God, thou art my all in all — the circle where my passions move, the center of my soul. Now these longings — these pantings for something more than this world can give you — were but the evidences of a child-like spirit, which was panting after its Father's presence. You feel you must

have your Father, or else the gifts of his providence are nothing to you. That is, your spirit beareth witness that you are the child of God. But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God's child as he is sure that he is his own father's son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, "If thou be the son of God." But he says, "Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God." A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this. God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescendeth to say "Amen" to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God. Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says, that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and his ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine. Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this — the Holy Spirit has written this book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings; turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded; and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God. Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; that faith has produced love to Christ; that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ; you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers; and then you say, "Good Lord, I am thy son, because



what I feel is what thou has said by the lips of thy servant must be felt by those who are thy children.” So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you — sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit; when at any period he instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before; when at some special period he inspires you with an unwonted affection, an unusual faith in Christ; when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit. Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God; and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, he doth by that very working give his own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child he would have left you where you were in your natural state; but inasmuch as he hath wrought in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he that put his stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High. But I think must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth. I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvelous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. he assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit’s witness through his Word, and through his works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by his divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God’s children? Say not, “In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God.” There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them. Every one knows that it is a disgrace to a

matchless prayer-book, that such words should be permitted to stand there-words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infants's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God. But I ask you, does your spirit say to-day "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan — their character how different — their end, how strangely divided! But let me say again to thee, hast thou ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with thy spirit in his word, and in his work, in thee; and in that secret whisper has he ever said to thee, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." I conjure thee, give no sleep to thine eyes, no slumber to thine eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, thou art new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

**III.** I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness — the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God, — that we are God's children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. "HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ." It does not always follow in human reasoning "if children, then heirs," because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family — may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much his heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into his glory. In heaven's logic it is true, "if children, then heirs."

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first — heirs of God — heirs not of God's gifts, and God's works, but heirs of God himself. It was said of king

Cyrus, that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, “King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself.” This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers. But our God doeth more than this, he doth not send merely bread from his table, as in the day when man did eat angel’s food; he doth not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined — the rich wines of heaven — but he gives himself himself to us. And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God’s works, not simply of God’s gifts, but of God himself. Talk we of his omnipotence? — his Allmightiness is ours. Speak we of his omniscience? — all his wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that he is love? — that love belongs to us. Can we glory that he is full of immutability, and changes not? — that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defense of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God’s children — their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, he himself is ours. Oh what riches! If we could say this morning, that all the stars belong to us; if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession, so natural to man, “That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me doth not a dog move his tongue.” If we could then sweep the telescope along the milky way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, “All these are mine,” yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives himself up to the inheritance of his people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship, — we are joint heirs with Christ. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is he not very God of very God, Jehovah’s only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though he bowed himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn his glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of his possessions, of his riches, — the unsearchable riches of God

in Christ Jesus. But, beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man doth marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse; and when Christ took his Church unto himself he endowed her with all his goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us his raiments, and thus we stand arrayed. His righteousness becomes our beauty. He gave to us his person, it has become our meat and our drink; we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He gave to us his inmost heart; he loved us even to the death. He gave to us his crown; he gave to us his throne; for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down with my Father upon his throne." He gave to us his heaven, for "where I am, there shall my people be." He gave to us the fullness of his joy, for "my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full." I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto himself, "for all things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice, that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. "Oh," say you, "we never shall." Stay, stay, brother; I have known you do so already, for when all that is Christ's belongs to you, do ye forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that he has, you must bear the thorny crown too? Have you forgotten that he had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that he conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world? Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, "Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men." Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with him, not only in his glories but in his sufferings. So it must be, "If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified together." Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to enter? If so, methinks your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with him to the garden of his agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as he was, and have false witness born against you? And would you blush to sit side-by-side with him, and be

made nothing of as he was? Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you, and say, "Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy? Did he not say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ; methinks, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, "That the hypocrite loves persecution;" no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer; he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ's sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ to-day in the battle, and then divide this spoil with him? Come, will you wade with him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided; if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Come, men, put your face against all weathers; be ready to come up hill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash over head, and the snow becomes knee-deep; nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with him, and perish, if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God; he would not have it altered, even if he might.

**IV.** And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God. In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God; shall such a man as I yield to sin?" I have been astonished in looking though old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valor which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men

than some who profess Christianity. And I think I may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler far. Look ye, sirs, at Brutus; he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat; his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country? He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down at his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourgeth them. "Complete the sentence, lictors;" and their heads are smitten off in the father's presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside. Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins. When you have been sitting on the judgment bench; there has been some favorite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished to spare it, it was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, "If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God." Brutus slays his sons; but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scaevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death, because he is the enemy of his country; he slays the wrong man; Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent; Scaevola puts out his right hand and holds it; it crackles in the flame; the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. "There are 400 youths," says he, "in Rome as brave as I am, and that will bear fire as well; and tyrant," he says "you will surely die." Yet here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ's sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter — tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation — they would turn the conversation, that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for 400 Scaevolans, 400 men who for Christ's sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ's name might be glorified, and sin might be stabbed to the heart. Or, read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the

Forum, perhaps caused by an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armor, mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valor, and patriotism, were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft. Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time; if there were something honorable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks ye would do it; but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ's sake — Oh! heroism, where is it fled — whither has it gone. Thou Church of God, surely it must survive in thee; for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God. Look ye again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell upon the city. They surrounded it; they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out; let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile. Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the Church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities. Or look you at Cincinnatus. He is chosen Dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake; and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money. Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian. Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it; to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world; to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can

you not do it? Then again I say to you, "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in Askelon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus. One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general; he was taken prisoner by Carthagenians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him, however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent. Regulus returns to Rome; he stands up in the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but of his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course they tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children seek to persuade him; they attend him to the waters' edge; he sails for Carthage; his death was too horrible to be described. Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian man break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I used this argument; I thought it might be a new one; I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine, surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse his children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, ye sons of God, that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God; they are like their Father; they honor his name; they are indeed filled with his grace, for their every word is as true as his oath; their every act is sincere and upright; their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle; they are firm but yet they are generous; they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls; they are men who, like God, are full of love; but like him are severely just. They are sternly holy; they are, like him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence." God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to him, be convinced and converted



by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can have your prayer fulfilled: —

*“With them numbered may we be,  
Now and through eternity.”*

# NONE BUT JESUS

## SERMON NO. 361

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 17TH, 1861

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“He that believeth on him is not condemned” — John 3:18*

THE way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest terms, and yet, perhaps, there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered, than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience, that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries — mysteries, not so much in themselves, but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture, that one would have said, “He that runs may read”; but so dim is man’s eye, and so marred is his understanding, that the very simplest truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents. And indeed, my brethren, even those who know what faith is, personally and experimentally, do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark, and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another, and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into a worse error. So that I think I may say that, while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance, our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it, and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God’s help, to put together sundry thoughts upon faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times, but which have not been collected into one sermon before, and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points; first, the object of faith, to what it looks;

next, the reason of faith, whence it comes; thirdly, the ground of faith, or what it wears when it comes; fourthly, the warrant of faith, or why it dares to come to Christ; and fifthly, the result of faith, or, how it speeds when it doth come to Christ.

**I.** First, then, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe — What am I to believe? I am bidden to look — to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on God the Father! Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son. Many men say, “I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect.” This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father’s work to elect; you cannot come directly to him, therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach to the Father and know your election. Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God the Holy Spirit. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them their faith is strong, but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a sinner’s faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption, but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea. Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner’s business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus, and to him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner’s justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh, and offering atonement for sinners. Hast thou the eye of faith? Then, soul, look thou to Christ as God. If thou wouldst be saved, believe him to be God over all, blessed for ever. Bow before him, and accept him as being “Very God of very God,” for if thou do not, thou hast no part in him. When thou hast this believed, believe in him as man. Believe the wondrous story of his incarnation; rely upon the testimony of the evangelists, who

declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal; that he who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of his incarnation, for unless thou believe this, thou canst not be saved thereby. Then, specially, if thou wouldst be saved, let thy faith behold Christ in his perfect righteousness. See him keeping the law without blemish, obeying his Father without error; preserving his integrity without flaw. All this thou art to consider as being done on thy behalf. Thou couldst not keep the law; he kept it for thee. Thou couldst not obey God perfectly — lo! his obedience standeth in the stead of thy obedience — by it, thou art saved. But take care that thy faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ as dying and as dead. View the Lamb of God as dumb before his shearers; view him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; go thou with him to Gethsemane, and behold him sweating drops of blood. Mark, thy faith has nothing to do with anything within thyself; the object of thy faith is nothing within thee, but a something without thee. Believe on him, then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out his life for sinners. There is the object of thy faith for justification; not in thyself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in thee, or anything he has promised to do for thee; but thou art to look to Christ and to Christ alone. Then let thy faith behold Christ as rising from the dead. See him — he has borne the curse, and now he receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt; he rises that he may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross. See him ascending up on high, and behold him this day pleading before the Father's throne. He is there pleading for his people, offering up to-day his authoritative petition for all that come to God by him. And he, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above, — he, and he alone, is to be the object of thy faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must thou trust; he is to be the only prop and pillar of thy confidence; and all thou addest thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care if your faith save you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view him as being a substitute. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is just, he must punish sin; God is merciful, he wills to pardon

those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can he be just and exact the penalty, — merciful, and accept the sinner? He doeth it thus: he taketh the sins of his people and actually lifteth them up from off his people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon by God as though he had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one. The sin of his people was taken from their persons, and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with his fiery sword to meet the sinner and to punish him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner himself; but the sins of his people were all imputed to him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though he had been the sinner — punished Christ for his people's sins — punished him as far as its rights could go, — exacted from him the last atom of the penalty, and left not a dreg in the cup. And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law. Soul, when thou seest Christ obeying the law — thy faith is to say, "He obeys that for his people." When thou seest him dying, thou art to count the purple drops, and say, "Thus he took my sins away." When thou seest him rising from the dead, thou art to say — "He rises as the head and representative of all his elect"; and when thou seest him sitting at the right hand of God, thou art to view him there as the pledge that all for whom he died shall most surely sit at the Father's right hand. Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight as though he were the sinner. "In him was no sin." He was "the just," but he suffered for the unjust. He was the righteous, but he stood in the place of the unrighteous; and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once for all, and put away their sins for ever by the sacrifice of himself. Now this is the great object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in his life, and death, and sufferings, and resurrection, the substitute for all whom his Father gave him, — the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying — "Oh, I should believe and I would be saved if" — If what? If Christ had died? "Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ." I thought so. Then

what is the doubt? “Why, I should believe if I felt this, or if I had done that.” Just so; but I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself, and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings, and confidence in your doings, and that is just the clear contrary of confidence in Christ. Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved, but to say in the teeth, and despite of the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve his wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin; and though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I do believe that “he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work; to trust to a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy; but to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom — to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine — that is faith. And so, when sin gets the mastery of thee, when thou feelest that the law condemns thee, then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ, this is the most daring feat in all the world; and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho, the faith which raised the dead, the faith which stopped the mouths of lions, was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, soul, then thou are saved, whosoever thou mayest be. The object of faith, then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus only must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

**II.** And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why doth any man believe, and whence doth his faith come?

“Faith cometh by hearing.” Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, doth any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of a sense of need. He feels himself needing a Savior; he finds Christ to be just such a Savior as he wants, and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ

or else perish, and therefore he doth it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner, and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another; for he feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own, and he cometh to Christ and humbleth himself, because he cannot do without Christ, and must perish unless he lay hold of him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that he, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How doth he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is, this is the gift of God; this is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we never would take Christ to be our all in all, if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all, and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But, then, the question goes further back still; how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need, and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord hath "hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes." According to the way in which Christ put it — "My sheep, hear my voice"; "ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Some divines would like to read that — "Ye are not my sheep, because ye do not believe." As if believing made us the sheep of Christ; but the text puts it — "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given; for those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen of God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son — these are led by the Spirit, through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ. No man yet ever did, or ever will believe in Christ, unless he feels his need of him. No

man ever did, or will feel his need of Christ, unless the Spirit makes him feel, and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly, unless it be so written in that eternal book, in which God hath surely engraved the names of his chosen. So, then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point, that the reason of faith, or why men believe, is God's electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

**III.** But now I shall want your careful attention, while I come to another point, upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself, and that is, THE GROUND OF THE SINNER'S FAITH, or on what ground he dares to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus, unless he feels his need of him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of him; my reason for believing in Christ, is not that I feel my need of him, but that I have a need of him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus, is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened; but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to thee because I am an awakened sinner, save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, if you feel your need of Christ, if you have repented so much, if you have been harrowed by the law to such-and-such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false. No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner; he must come to him as a sinner. When I come to Jesus, I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of his cross to be washed because I have repented; I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in him whether I have good feelings or not.



*“Just as I am without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God I come.”*

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavel, and several excellent divines, in the Puritanic age, and especially Richard Baxter, used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, another of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them — “I dare to say it, that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it; they come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever.” The gate of Mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Between that word “save” and the next word “sinners,” there is no adjective. It does not say, “penitent sinners,” “awakened sinners,” “sensible sinners,” “grieving sinners,” or “alarmed sinners.” No, it only says, “sinners,” and I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ to-day, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ to-day as it was to come ten years ago, — when I come to him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect: the old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, “I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come; I say, ‘Lord,

*‘Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, look to thee for dress;  
Helpless, come to thee for grace; Black’ —*

*[“Black enough,” said the old man]  
‘I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.’“*

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, “if you feel your need, you may come to Christ.” “But,” say they, “I do not feel my need enough; I am sure I do not.” Many a score letters have

I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, “I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience; if I had a soft heart — but oh my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus.” Oh! down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ; it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart, and come to him with nothing about you but sin. The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black; that he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead; that he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper’s about being insensible as steel —

*“If aught is felt ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.”*

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. Now when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most, think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all, for we are no judges of our feelings, and hence the gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge; it is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners. “Well,” says one, “but it says, ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest’ — then we must be weary and heavy-laden.” Just so; so it is in the text, but then there is another. “Whosoever will let him come”; and that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.” Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them as weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them as coming to Christ. They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were, and he saved them, not

because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden, but he saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in his blood and made clean. My dear hearer, do let me put this truth home to thee. If thou wilt come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, he will not cast thee out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, “I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if he does not receive thee, then he is not true to his word, for he says, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’” “If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art, and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath: who is fit to be washed? A man’s blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be. When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, ‘I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief.’ Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All he asks is, that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing in your hand. Take him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved — as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.

**IV.** But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him, and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit for a man to give the lie to all his sins, and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true, and believe in the virtue of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ I will ask you now. “Well,” saith one man, “I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me.” You do not believe in Christ at all. “Well,” says another, “I thought that I had a right to

believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat.” You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warranty as that. What is a man’s warrant then for believing in Christ. Here it is. Christ tells him to do it, that is his warrant. Christ’s word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ — not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not, but that Christ has told him to do it. The Gospel runs thus: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.” Faith in Christ then is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege, and what a mercy it is that it is a duty; because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty. Now on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe; I am one of the every creatures, and that gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God. Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. This is your warrant, sinner, and a blessed warrant it is, for it is one which hell cannot gainsay, and which heaven cannot withdraw. You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience, you need not be looking to your works, and to your feelings, to get some dull and insufficient warrants for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because he tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on, and one which admits of no doubt. I will suppose that we are all starving; that the city has been besieged and shut up, and there has been a long, long famine, and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink; but we have grown foolish, and will not accept the invitation. Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us, and we prefer to die, and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king’s herald should say, “Come and feast, poor hungry souls, and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not my warriors shall be upon you; they shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords.” I think my dear friends, we should say, “We bless the great man for that threatening because now we need not say, ‘I may not come,’ while the fact is we may not stop away. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am commanded to come, and I am threatened if I do not come; and I will even go.” That awful sentence — “He that believeth not shall be

damned,” was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness, and that we should refuse our own mercies unless he thundered at us to make us come to the feast, “Compel them to come in”; this was the Word of the Master of old, and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, “Compel them to come in.” Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust him, ay, and lost for not trusting him. I put it boldly now — sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open; why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse his voice and perish in your sins? Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God’s door, nor Christ’s door, but at your own. He can say of you, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Oh! poor trembler, if thou be willing to come, there is nothing in God’s Word to keep thee from coming, but there are both threatenings to drive thee, and powers to draw thee. Still I hear you say, “I must not trust Christ.” You may, I say, for every creature under heaven is commanded to do it, and what you are commanded to do, you may do. “Ah! well,” saith one, “still I do not feel that I may.” There you are again; you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid feelings of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you feel anything, but simply because you are a sinner. Now you know you are a sinner. “I am,” says one, “and that is my sorrow.” Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. “Ay,” saith one, “but I do not feel enough, and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should.” Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner, and “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “Oh, but I am such an old sinner; I have been sixty years in sin.” Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred — ay, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “Whosoever will let him come.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” “Yes,” says one, “but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane.” Then you are a sinner, you have not gone further than the uttermost, and he is able to save you still. “Ay,” saith another, “but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated.” That only proves you to be a sinner, and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. “Ay,” cries yet another,

“but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ.” Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. “You do not know how hard my heart is.” Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner, and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. “Oh, but, sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me.” The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to. Christ came to save that which was lost, and all you have said only proves that you are lost, and therefore he came to save you. Do trust him; do trust him. “But if I am saved,” saith one, “I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved.” Then the greater music in heaven when you get there; the more glory to Christ, for the bigger the sinner the more honor to Christ when at last he shall be brought home. “Ay, but my sin has abounded.” His grace shall much more abound. “But my sin has reached even to heaven.” Yes, but his mercy reaches above the heavens. “Oh! but my guilt is as broad as the world.” Yes, but his righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. “Ay, but my sin is scarlet.” Yes, but his blood is more scarlet than your sins, and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. “Ay! but I deserve to be lost, and death and hell cry for my damnation.” Yes, and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or hell; and it cries to-day, “Father, let the sinner live.” Oh! I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth, and get it into your heads, that when God saves you, it is not because of anything in you, it is because of something in himself. God’s love has no reason except in his own bowels; God’s reason for pardoning a sinner is found in his own heart, and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why he should have mercy on you, but there is no reason wanted, for the reason lies in God and in God alone.

**V.** And now I come to the conclusion, and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one, and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ — **THE RESULT OF FAITH**, or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, “He that believeth is not condemned.” There is a man there who has just this moment believed; he is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin, and has plunged into all manner of vice; his sins, which

are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus' blood, that "he that believeth is not condemned." Does this relate to what is to happen at the day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text, and you will find it does not say, "He that believeth shall not be condemned," but he is not; he is not now. And if he is not now, then it follows that he never shall be; for having believed in Christ that promise still stands, "He that believeth is not condemned." I believe to-day I am not condemned; in fifty years' time that promise will be just the same — "He that believeth is not condemned." So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ, he is freed from all condemnation — past, present, and to come; and from that day he stands in God's sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "But he sins," you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old, and God can never charge the offense on two — first on Christ, and then on the sinner. "Ay, but he often falls into sin." That may be possible; though if the Spirit of God be in him he sinneth not as he was wont to do. He sins by reason of infirmity, not by reason of his love to sin, for now he hateth it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will, and I will answer, "Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him, and put on Christ, — positively, literally, and actually lifted off from him, and put upon Jesus Christ." Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out; the high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat's head. The sin is all gone from the people, and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there be, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be here and there too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too. "No," say you, "Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin; there was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin. And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does he not? If he does not, then it is of no use our believing in him; but if he doth really take away our sin, then our sin cannot be on him and on us too; if it be on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified, and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith. As soon as a man believeth in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him, and gone away for ever. They are blotted out now. What if a man owe a

hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free; it is blotted out; there is an erasure made in the book, and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin, yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the law of God. Doth not Scripture say, that God has cast his people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on his people too. Blessed be his name, in the day when he casts our sins into the depth of the sea, he views us as pure in his sight, and we stand accepted in the beloved. Then he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if thou believest in Christ, thou art no more in the sight of God a sinner; thou art accepted as though thou wert perfect, as though thou hadst kept the law, — for Christ has kept it, and his righteousness is thine. You have broken it, but your sin is his, and he has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer; you are no more what you were; when you believe, you stand in Christ's stead, even as Christ of old stood in your stead. The transformation is complete, the exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even his Eternal Son is accepted; and they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness; but they abide under the law, and still shall they be under the curse. Now, ye that believe in Jesus, walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great truth. You are sinners in yourselves, but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down — how clear! how white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone — as black as hell — but the blooddrop falls on him, and he is as white — "whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from heaven, look on them and say, "Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, he hath given me his righteousness so completely, that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God." Oh! for faith to lay hold on this. Oh! for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears, and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Go home, ye that believe in Christ, and go to your beds this night, and say, "If I die in my bed I cannot be condemned." Should you wake the next morning, go



into the world and say, "I am not condemned." When the devil howls at you, tell him, "Ah! you may accuse, but I am not condemned." And if sometimes your sins rise — say, "Ah, I know you, but you are all gone for ever; I am not condemned." And when your turn shall come to die shut your eyes in peace.

***"Bold shall you stand in that great day,  
For who aught to your charge can lay?"***

Fully absolved by grace you shall be found at last and all sin's tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done. I pray you do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the substitution and the sacrifice. Be you what Christ was in his Father's sight, and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been, that he has suffered all your penalty; and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for his sake. Amen.

# NONE BUT JESUS

— SECOND PART

SERMON NO. 362

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 17TH, 1861

AT NEW PARK STREET, SOUTHWARK.

*“He that believeth on him is not condemned” — John 3:18*

ON THE morning sermon, our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith — what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to — the privilege of justification, which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention to-night. The text says, “He that believeth on him — [that is on Christ Jesus] — is not condemned.”

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first, the satisfactory declaration here made; then, secondly, we shall endeavor to correct certain misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which the Christian is often cast down; and we shall close with some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes, and what it excludes.

**I.** First of all, then, WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION! — “He that believeth on him is not condemned.”

You are aware that in our courts of law, a verdict of “not guilty,” amounts to an acquittal, and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the gospel; a sentence of “not condemned,” implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives now a present justification. Faith does not produce its fruits by-and-by, but now. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified to-night? — so are

we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing his praises above. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus, who was just then, hanging by his side: and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are to-day accepted in the Beloved, to-day absolved from sin, to-day innocent in the sight of God. Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to heaven; but this is one of the first ripe clusters and may be plucked and eaten here. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, and part too of our daily raiment, with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are now — even now pardoned; even now are our sins put away; even now we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty; innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity, ere he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree; pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of his people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth.

But to pass on, the text evidently means not simply present, but continual justification. In the moment when you and I believed, it was said of us, “He is not condemned.” Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen; but it is as true of us to-night, “He is not condemned.” The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be — how long ere we shall fulfill the hireling’s time, and like a shadow flee away. But this we know, since every word of God is assured, and the gifts of God are without repentance, though we should live another fifty years, yet would it still be written here, “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” Nay, if by some mysterious dealing in providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man, and we should come to the eight or nine hundred years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same — “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” “The just shall live by faith.” “He that believeth on him shall never

be confounded.” All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one, which will last as long as we shall live. And, remember, it will last in eternity as well as in time. We shall not in heaven wear any other dress but that which we wear here. Today the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh beloved! we entertain no fear about that. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall fret it; no thief shall steal it; no weeping hand of lamentation shall rend it in twain. It is, it must be eternal, even as Christ himself, Jehovah our righteousness. Because he is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end, and whose strength faileth not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end; and of its perfection, and of its beauty there shall never be any termination. The text, I think, very clearly teaches us, that he who believeth on Christ has received for ever a continual justification.

Again, think for a moment; the justification which is spoken of here is complete. “He that believeth on him is not condemned,” — that is to say, not in any measure or in any degree. I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned and half-accepted. So far as we are sinners so far condemned; and so far as we are righteous so far accepted. Oh beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture. It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the gospel. If it be of works, it is no more of grace; and if it be of grace, it is no more of works. Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water; it is either one or the other, it cannot be both; the two can never be allied. There can be no admixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He that believeth is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame; and though the devil bring an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It does not say, “Who shall prove it?” but “Who shall lay it to their charge?” They are so completely freed from condemnation, that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found; not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them. They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so; not only as half-

washed, but as whiter than snow. Their sins are not simply erased, they are blotted out; not simply put out of sight, but cast into the depths of the sea; not merely gone, and gone as far as the east is from the west, but gone for ever, once for all. You know, beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification, never had his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect. The next day's sins needed a new lamb, and the next year's iniquity needed a new victim for an atonement. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God." No more burnt-offerings are needed, no more washing, no more blood, no more atonement, no more sacrifice. "It is finished!" hear the dying Savior cry. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread; it is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition; it can never suffer any diminution. Oh, Christian, do lay hold of this precious thought; I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons, and to make him sing though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is not partial, it does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered; from condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free.

Once more. The non-condemnation is effectual. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions, obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon — then a young man — learned from the governor of the gaol that the reprieve had not been received; and the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning, had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber, and received from the monarch's own hand a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer. "I charge you, Doctor," said his majesty, "to make good speed." "Trust me, Sire, for that," responded your old pastor, and he returned to London in time, just in

time, and only just in time, for the prisoner was being marched with many others on to the scaffold. Ay, that pardon might have been given, and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been effectually carried out. But blessed be God our non-condemnation is an effectual thing. It is not a matter of letter, it is a matter of fact. Ah, poor souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls, and were brought under the heavy hand of the law, we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real; we felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at; a real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ; you are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus. Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they are gone. Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted; you are accepted. It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned. You do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that; do not doubt then that when you believe your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood, which was drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

Come, my soul, think thou of this. Thou art actually and effectually cleared from guilt. Thou art led out of thy prison. Thou art no more in fetters as a bond-slave. Thou art delivered now from the bondage of the Law. Thou art freed from sin and thou canst walk at large as a freeman. Thy Savior's blood has procured thy full discharge. Come, my soul, — thou hast a right now to come to thy Father's feet. No flames of vengeance are there to scare thee now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent. Come, my soul, thy disabilities are taken away. Thou wast unable once to see thy Father's face; thou canst see it now. Thou couldst not speak with him, nor he with thee; but now thou hast access with boldness to this grace wherein we stand. Once there was a fear of hell upon thee; there is no hell for thee now. How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He that believeth is guiltless, is not condemned, and cannot be punished. No frowns of an avenging God now. If God be viewed as a

judge, how should he frown upon the guiltless? How should the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges thou mightest have enjoyed if thou hadst never sinned, are thine now that thou art justified. All the blessings which thou couldst have had if thou hadst kept the law and more, are thine to-night because Christ has kept it for thee. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained of God, belong to thee, because Christ was perfectly obedient on thy behalf, and hath imputed all his merits to thy account that thou mightest be exceeding rich, through him who for thy sake became exceeding poor.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts, that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect; it is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the Law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience, and puts us actually high above where we should have been had we never sinned. It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish. We are rather, where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the garden for seven years, and said, "If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over, and I will reward you." The children of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation; in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is saved already; his sins are washed away; his righteousness is complete: and if that righteousness could endure a million years' probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God, and must do so for ever and ever.

## **II.** Let me now endeavor to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS, BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again; we fancy that the battle is all fought; that we have got into a fair field, with no more war to wage; that

in fact we have got the victory, and have only just to stand up and wave the palm branch; that all is over, that God has only got to call us up to himself and we shall enter into heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth. Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind. Observe that although it does assert "He that believeth is not condemned"; yet it does not say that he that believeth shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all. God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it; so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles, and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it. When thou hast faith in Christ it is a great privilege; but recollect that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night; did you consider that you asked for great troubles too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Greatheart in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim* was a very strong man, but then what strong work he had to do. He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the celestial city and back again; he had to fight all the giants, and drive back all the lions; to slay the giant Slaygood, and knock down the Castle of Despair. If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all. You will never have a single scrap to spare, you will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable, even though you be a wise virgin, you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh no, believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation; there are many trials, but still we are justified; we may often be buffeted, but we are never accursed; we may oftentimes be cast down, but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart. Yea, more; not only may our faith be exercised, but our faith may come to a very low ebb, and still we may not be condemned. When thy faith gets so small that thou canst not see it, even then still thou art not condemned. If thou hast ever believed in Jesus, thy faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore, and leaves a vast track of mud, and some might say the sea was gone or dried up. But you are not condemned when your faith is most dried up. Ay! and I dare to say it, — when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more



accepted then, than when your faith is at the lowest ebb; for your acceptance does not depend upon the quantity of your faith, it only depends upon its reality. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark, and a thousand devils may try to quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned — you shall stand accepted in Christ. Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay. Though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer, though faith is like the mercury in the bulb, all weathers change it, — yet God’s love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time. Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing — a football to be kicked about by the feet of fiends — your acceptance with God can never change. You are, you must be, perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father’s countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, “He that believeth shall not lose the light of God’s countenance”; he may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ, very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you, the Bible may afford you but little comfort; and when you turn your eye to heaven you may only have to feel the more the smarting that is caused by your Father’s rod; you may have vexed and grieved his Spirit, and he may have turned away his face from you. But you are not condemned for all that. Mark the testimony, “He that believeth is not condemned.” Even when your Father smites you and leaves a wale at every stroke, and brings the blood at every blow, there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke. Not in his anger, but in his dear covenant love he smites you. There is as unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father’s hand as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ’s lips. Oh! believe this; it will tend to lift up thy heart, it will cheer thee when neither sun nor moon appear. It will honor thy God, it will show thee where thy acceptance really lies. When his face is turned away, believe him still, and say, “He abideth faithful though he hide his face from me.” I will go a little further still. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan, that he may be well nigh given up to despair, and yet he is not condemned. The devils may beat the great

hell-drum in his ear, till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of perdition. He may read the Bible, and think that every threatening is against him, and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him; and he may at last despond, and despond, and despond, till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow. He may say, "The Lord hath forsaken me quite, my God will be gracious no more"; but it is not true. Yea, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that his faithfulness will fail for evermore; but it is not true, it is not true. A thousand liars swearing to a falsehood could not make it true, and our doubts and fears are all of them liars. And if there were ten thousand of them, and they all professed the same, it is a falsehood that God ever did forsake his people, or that he ever cast from him an innocent man; and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus. "But," say you, "I am full of sin." "Ay," say I, "but that sin has been laid on Christ." "Oh," say you, "but I sin daily." "Ay," say I, "but that sin was laid on him before you committed it, years ago. It is not yours; Christ has taken it away once for all. You are a righteous man by faith, and God will not forsake the righteous, nor will he cast away the innocent." I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at a low ebb; he may lose the light of his Father's countenance, and he may even get into thorough despair; but yet all these cannot disprove my text — "He that believeth is not condemned."

"But what," say you, "if the child of God should sin?" It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold here. I would not mince God's truth lest any should make a bad use of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Their condemnation is just. I cannot help the perversion of truth. There be always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison, and make the best of truth into a lie, and so be damning their own souls. You ask, "What if a child of God should fall into sin?" I answer, the child of God does fall into sin; every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sins, he is not condemned for all that — not by one of them, or by all of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon the perfect righteousness of Christ; and that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his. He is perfect in Christ; and until Christ is

imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification of the believer in the sight of God. But oh! if he fall into some glaring sin, — O God, keep us from it! — if he fall into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach heaven for all that. Though, in order to try him and let him see his vileness, he be suffered to go far astray, yet he that bought him will not lose him; he that chose him will not cast him away; he will say unto him, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” David may go never so far away, but David is not lost. He comes back and he cries, “Have mercy upon me, O God!” And so shall it be with every believing soul — Christ shall bring him back. Though he slip, he shall be kept, and all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne. If it were not for this last truth — though some may stick at it — what would become of some of God’s people? They would be given up to despair. If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, “Poor backslider! thy Father’s bowels yearn over thee; he has not erased thy name out of the registry. Come back, come back now to him and say, ‘Receive me graciously, and love me freely’; and he will say, ‘I will put you among the children.’ He will pass by your backsliding and will heal your iniquities; and you shall yet stand once more in his favor, and know yourself to be still accepted in the Redeemer’s righteousness and saved by his blood.” This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even sometimes fall under the trial; but it does mean this, once for all: He that believeth on Christ is not condemned. At no time, by no means, is he under the sentence of condemnation, but is evermore justified in the sight of God.

**III.** Now dear brethren, but little time remains for the closing points, therefore, in a hurried manner, let me notice **WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES**; and may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” If we are not condemned, then at no time does God ever look upon his children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty. Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again; from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty; for he never looks upon you apart from Christ. You often look upon yourself as guilty, and you fall upon your knees as

you should do, and you weep and lament; but even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, he is still saying out of heaven, “So far as your justification is concerned, thou art all fair and lovely.” You are black as the tents of Kedar — that is yourself by nature; you are fair as the curtains of Solomon — that is yourself in Christ. You are black — that is yourself in Adam; but comely, that is yourself in the second Adam. Oh, think of that! — that you are always in God’s sight comely, always in God’s sight lovely, always in God’s sight as though you were perfect. For ye are complete in Christ Jesus, and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the apostle puts it in another place. Always do you stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ. Remember this; for it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this; you are never liable as a believer to punishment for your sins. You will be chastised on account of them, as a father chastises his child; that is a part of the Gospel dispensation; but you will not be smitten for your sins as the lawgiver smites the criminal. Your Father may often punish you as he punisheth the wicked. But, never for the same reason. The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits; their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts. But your sorrows do not come to you as a matter of desert; they come to you as a matter of love. God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege that you may account of them as a boon you do not deserve. I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, “You deserved the trouble.” Yes, my dear brethren, but there is not enough merit in all the Christians put together, to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father. Perhaps you cannot see that; you cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the covenant. But I know that the rod of the covenant is as much the gift of grace as the blood of the covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit; it is given to us because we need it. But I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it. We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a providence as this covenant blessing — the rod of our chastening God. Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ you are out of the law’s jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives under the protection of his own

Emperor. You are not under the law, but you are under grace. The law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia. You are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid, you are the son of Sarah, and are come to Jerusalem and are free. You are out of Arabia, and are come to God's own happy land. You are not under Hagar, but under Sarah; under God's covenant of grace. You are a child of promise, and you shall have God's own inheritance. Believe this, that never shall a law-stroke fall on you; never shall God's anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke, not as the result of sin, but rather as the result of his own rich grace, that would get the sin out of you, that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**IV.** I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me; therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying **WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES.**

What does it exclude! Well, I am sure it excludes boasting. "He that believeth is not condemned." Ah! if it said, "He that worketh is not condemned," then you and I might boast in any quantity. But when it says, "He that believeth," — why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self. No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is thy free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit to-night. When I am on my knees, and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting we are sinning, and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them. Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again, and our best performances are so stained with sin, that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works. So far as they are our own, they are bad, and so far as they are the works of the Spirit they are good. But then the goodness is not ours, it is the Spirit's, and only the evil remains to us. Ah, then, we cannot boast! Begone, pride! begone! The Christian must be a humble man. If he lift up his head to say something, then he is nothing indeed. He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast, as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting, Christian. Live humbly before thy God, and never let a word of self-congratulation escape

thy lips. Sacrifice self, and let thy song be before the throne — “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory forever.”

What next does the text exclude? Methinks it ought to exclude — now I am about to smite myself — it ought to exclude doubts and fears. “He that believeth is not condemned.” How dare you and I draw such long faces, and go about as we do sometimes as though we had a world of cares upon our backs? What would I have given ten or eleven years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me, that I was not condemned. Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven, and had to live on bread and water, and be locked up in a dungeon, and every day be flogged with a cat-o’-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it, if I could have once felt my sins forgiven. Now you are a forgiven man, and yet you are cast down! Oh! shame on you. No condemnation! and yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get thee up and wipe the tears from your eyes. Oh! if there be a person lying in gaol now, to be executed next week, if you could go to him and say, “You are pardoned,” would he not spring up with delight from his seat; and although he might have lost his goods, and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things, yet, so long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing. Now, Christian, you are pardoned, your sins are all forgiven. Christ has said to you, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee” — and art thou yet miserable? Well, if we must be so sometimes, let us make it as short as we can. If we must be sometimes cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again. I am afraid some of us get into bad habits, and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind, Christian, mind, it will grow upon you — that peevish spirit — if you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt. When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred; for one great doubt will breed a thousand, and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood. Therefore, look with all thy eyes against the first doubt, lest thou shouldest become confirmed in thy despondency, and grow into sad despair. “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts too.

Once more. “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against thee so many times, and

yet hast thou freely forgiven me all? What stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is licentious doctrine. A thousand devils rolled into one, must the man be who can find any licentiousness here. What! go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt and suffered in my room and stead? Human nature is bad enough, but methinks this is the very worst state of human nature, when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God. It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ, and against a sense of pardon, than it is against the terrors of the law and the fear of hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a sense of his love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous! to read your title clear, and sin? Oh, vile reprobate! you are on the borders of the deepest hell. But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear, and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus,

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

Yes, and I must, and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus' sake. O may my soul be found in him, perfect in his righteousness! This will make you live near to him: this will make you like unto him. Do not think that this doctrine by dwelling on it will make you think lightly of sin. It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death; as an awful load that could never be lifted from you except by the eternal arm of God; and then you will come to hate it with all your soul, because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God, and you shall by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners too. Sinner, I would that thou didst say so. If you know this, that he that believeth is not condemned, then, sinner if thou believest, thou wilt not be condemned; and may all I have said to-night help you to this belief in thy soul. Oh, but sayest thou, “May I trust

Christ?" As I said this morning, it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are commanded. The Scripture commands the gospel to be preached to every creature, and the gospel is — "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I know you will be too proud to do it, unless God by his grace should humble you. But if ye feel to-night that you are nothing and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your all-in-all. If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster, —

*"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,"  
You may go on and say with him, this night,  
"But Jesus Christ is my all in all."*

God grant that it may be so, for his name's sake. Amen.



# EXPOSITION OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

SERMON NOS. 385-88.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11TH, 1861.

EDITOR'S NOTE: These messages are part of the inaugural ceremonies held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, when it first opened. Spurgeon had already preached the first sermons there, beginning March 25, while the building was not yet quite finished. This, however, was the official opening ceremony, and Spurgeon presided, choosing several fellow pastors to expound the doctrines of Calvinism. This guide is offered the reader wishing to follow the familiar TULIP acronym:

**Total depravity** — “*Human Depravity*,” by Evan Probert (message 2).

**Unconditional Election** — “*Election*”, by John Bloomfield (message 1).

**Limited Atonement** — “*Particular Redemption*,” by J. A. Spurgeon (message 3).

**Irresistible Grace** — “*Effectual Calling*,” by James Smith (message 4).

**Perseverance Of The Saints** — “*The final Perseverance of Believers in Christ Jesus*,” by William O'Neill (message 5).

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON took the chair at 3 o'clock.

THE proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st Hymn —

*Saved from the damning power of sin,  
The law's tremendous curse,  
We'll now the sacred song begin  
Where God began with us.*

*We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace  
Which, from the days of old,  
Did all his chosen sons embrace,  
As sheep within the fold.*

*The basis of eternal love  
Shall mercy's frame sustain;  
Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move  
Shall all conspire in vain.*

*Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood,  
Hail the Great Three in One;  
Tell how secure the cov'nant stood.  
Ere time its race begun.*

*Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,  
Nor sweets of pard'ning love,  
Unless your worthless names had been  
Enroll'd to life above.*

*O what a sweet exalted son  
Shall rend the vaulted skies,  
When, shouting, grace, the blood-wash'd throng  
Shall see the Top Stone rise.*

The Rev. George Wyard, of Deptford, offered prayer.

he REV. C. H. Spurgeon in opening the proceedings said, we have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those truths in which consists the peculiarity of this Church. Last evening we endeavored to show to the world, that we heartily recognised the essential union of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intencion, through the lips of our brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us, and especially those great points which have been so often attacked, but which are still upheld and maintained, — truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and truth. My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the brethren who shall address you, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system of theology. Between the Protestant and the Papist

there is a controversy of such a character, that he who is saved on the one side by faith in Jesus, dare not allow that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a Church either stands or falls. The controversy again between the believer in Christ and the Socinian, is one which affects a vital point. If the Socinian be right, we are most frightfully in error; we are, in fact, idolaters, and how dwelleth eternal life in us? and if we be right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core, and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But, I think we are free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism, and on the other hand, George Whitfield with equal fervor fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other. We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the gross mistakes of our opponents, and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men, if we could admit that they are right in all things and ourselves right too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that “yes” and “no” can both subsist at the same hour and both be true. I cannot say, “It is,” and my brother point blank say, “It is not,” and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit, in fact, we dare not do otherwise, that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future of even the present state of any man; but still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views, we advance with all courage and fervency if spirit, believing that we are doing God’s work and upholding most important truth. It may not be misunderstood, we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin’s having taught these doctrines.

We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body, hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic Churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system. There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist Churches, who, in most points perfectly agree with us, and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions, and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology. For instance, Mr. Wesley's hymn-book, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it upon some topics higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself. I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace, far more so than the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians.

**HYMN 131, VERSES 1, 2, 3.**

*“Lord, I despair myself to heal:  
I see my sin, but cannot feel;  
I cannot, till thy Spirit blow,  
And bid the obedient waters flow.*

*‘Tis thine a heart of flesh to give;  
Thy gifts I only can receive:  
Here, then, to thee I all resign;  
To draw, redeem, and seal, — is thine.*

*With simple faith on thee I call,  
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all:  
I wait the moving of the pool;  
I wait the word that speaks me whole.”*

**HYMN 133, VERSE 4.**

*“Thy golden scepter from above  
Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow;  
Say to my soul, Thou art my love;  
My chosen midst ten thousand, thou.”  
This is very like election.*

**HYMN 136, VERSES 8, 9, 10.**

*“I cannot rest, till in thy blood  
I full redemption have:  
But thou, through whom I come to God,  
Canst to the utmost save.*

*From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,  
Thou wilt redeem my soul:  
Lord, I believe, and not in vain;  
My faith shall make me whole.*

*I too, with thee, shall walk in white;  
With all thy saints shall prove,  
What is the length, and breadth, and height,  
And depth of perfect love.”*

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? and what is meant by the next quotation, if people of God can perish at all?

**HYMN 138, VERSES 6, 7.**

*“Who, who shall in thy presence stand,  
And match Omnipotence?  
Ungrasp the hold of thy right hand,  
Or pluck the sinner thence?*

*Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;  
Nearer to save thou art:  
Stronger than all the powers of hell,  
And greater than my heart.”*

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression “force.” I give it in full: —

**HYMN 158**

*“O my God, what must I do?  
Thou alone the way canst show;  
Thou canst save me in this hour;  
I have neither will nor power:*

*God, if over all thou art,  
Greater than my sinful heart,  
All thy power on me be shown,  
Take away the heart of stone.*

*Take away my darling sin,  
Make me willing to be clean;  
Make me willing to receive  
All thy goodness waits to give.*

*Force me, Lord, with all to part;  
Tear these idols from my heart;  
Now thy love almighty show,  
Make even me a creature new.*

*Jesus, mighty to renew,  
Work in me to will and do;  
Turn my nature’s rapid tide,  
Stem the torrent of my pride;*

*Stop the whirlwind of my will;  
Speak, and bid the sun stand still;  
Now thy love almighty show,  
Make even me a creature new.*

*Arm of God, thy strength put on;  
Bow the heavens, and come down;  
All my unbelief o’erthrow;  
Lay th’ aspiring mountain low:*

*Conquer thy worst foe in me,  
Get thyself the victory;  
Save the vilest of the race;  
Force me to be saved by grace.”*

**HYMN 206, VERSES 1, 2.**

*“What am I, O thou glorious God!  
And what my father’s house to thee,  
That thou such mercies hast bestow’d  
On me, the vilest reptile, me!*

*I take the blessing from above,  
And wonder at the boundless love.  
Me in my blood the love pass'd by,  
And stopp'd, my ruin to retrieve;*

*Wept o'er my soul thy pitying eye;  
Thy bowels yearn'd, and sounded, "Live!"  
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,  
And pardon in thy mercy found."*

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound, and they constrain me to say, that in attacking Arminianism we have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error, and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometime, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin, and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw — shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down? Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but little, and, therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few

exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," doth daily and constantly receive into his loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus:

*"Millions of infant souls compose  
The family above."*

"Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," says he, "on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of all departed infants are with God in glory; that in the decree of predestination to life, God hath included all whom he decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them." Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a new principle of election; and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee,) also a Calvinist, maintains the same views; and when it is considered that nearly one-half of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven."

A more common charge, brought by more decent people, — for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons, — a more common charge is, that we hold clear fatalism. Now, there may be



Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of his foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of Divine foreknowledge. We believe that God hath predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestination of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, "It is because it is to be." Between the predestination of Scripture and the fate of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be, but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it; not because of any necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God, and the next to that the good of his creatures. But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of sovereign and unmerited reprobation. "Oh," say they, "you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and that they go to hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny." Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender, let them defend themselves as best they can; I hold God's election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin; and this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as "The Westminster Assembly's Catechism," and to all our Confession, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin, and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves. I am speaking personally — and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brethren — I do know that the appointment of God extendeth to all things; but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon

himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of man; but, if he be saved, still salvation is all of God. To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine:

“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are nonelected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not wonderful that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an AntiPredestinarian. But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism, that God creates all for his own glory; that he is infinitely righteous and benignant, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come; whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only. “As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a righteous judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.” The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, “God according to his Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favor as he pleaseth) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.” Again, “the end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient.” This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge — that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin which destroys, is permitted to enter the world, that

is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he; nay, the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God — in his righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God's providence extendeth itself even to the first fall, and other sins of angels and men, etc.; "yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject; and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? "Every soul departs (at death) to that place which it has prepared for itself while in this world."

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy, and righteous, and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin; and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?

A yet further charge against us is, that we dare not preach the gospel to the unregenerate, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books. Did not Bunyan plead with sinners, and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinist? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonise for souls, and what were they but Calvinist? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters. The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list,

time should fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitfield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his bowels move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony; our bowels are not withdrawn the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellowmen; we can hold all our views firmly, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed. Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes, and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in this speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was the great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines, and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet, at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical, and Luther, "On the bondage of the will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner; but that he foresees, proposes, and acts, from his eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will."

Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Farrel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart, and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of. And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share; but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Palagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost alone? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement; for instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe; yet, the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation. And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood, that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards, and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland — what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound to-day, yet God owned their word, and multitudes were saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this Church to sleep, but ever while they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonised for the souls of men, and the 1600 or more of whom I have myself baptized, upon

profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset; I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favor, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so exceedingly simple and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged an high philosophic grounds by such men as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton, and yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant. And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another — that when it is preached there is a something in it which excites thought. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard. Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks, and full often the word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do, in an age given to slumber, and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the truth over and over again, and at last the truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also — it is so coherent in all its parts. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with

salvation must come from God alone, and if from him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then he has a right to give or withhold his mercy as he wills; you are this forced upon election, and when you have gotten that you have all: the others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic I take it requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole; the doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue; a weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant, and well annealed, a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant. And then, I add, — but this is the point my brethren will take up — it has this excellency, that it is scriptural, and that it is consistent with the experience of believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right. As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks. And then, I add — and, in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged, — this glorious truth has this excellency, that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals, and say, to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncanonized by Rome, rank first in the book of life. The names of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed, and well it might for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er, and say, “Here was something done by

a man who believed in God's decrees; and, inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth."

The better way, however of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument, is an argument which tells upon every man; we cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass, that our Church and its sentiments too shall come forth "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

## ELECTION

**BY THE REV. JOHN BLOOMFIELD,  
OF MEARD'S COURT, SOHO.**

My dear Christian friends, those who best know my cast of mind and ministry will readily believe me when I say I would rather have spoken on the majesty and mystery of the person of Christ, or I would rather have spoken on the perfection and intrinsic worth of the mediation of Christ, or on the great attraction of Christ as a gracious and omnipotent Savior, than on the subject that has been assigned to me. The subject that has been given me is that of the doctrine of eternal and personal election; I have to prove that the doctrine of election is a scriptural truth; and, at the commencement of my few remarks on this profound subject, allow me to say that I hold and firmly believe the Bible to be revelation from God, that the revelations of God's mind are essentially and infallibly true, that its ancient historical records are of the greatest value, that its prophecies are to be studied and to be venerated, that the doctrines of the Bible are in harmony with the majesty, wisdom, holiness and goodness of their Author. Now it should not be a point with us whether a doctrine is like or disliked, whether it is believed or disbelieved, but whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, whether it is the doctrine of the Word of God. Truth has never been popular in this world: Jesus Christ when on earth was by no means popular. Truth never will be popular in this world while



men are influenced by sin, and enmity against God. Perhaps no doctrine has met with such bitter opposition as the doctrine on which I have to speak. It has been fearfully misunderstood for a want of prayerful and independent study of the Holy Scriptures, or perhaps from the miserable misrepresentations that have been given of it by some public men. It is a truth which has been bitterly opposed; we may oppose a doctrine which we cannot with all our puny efforts depose. We may dispute in our blindness and enmity a doctrine which we cannot refute. We believe firmly that the doctrine of election to salvation in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the Scriptures. We believe in sovereign love, but not in sovereign hatred. We believe in salvation by the grace of God without works, but not in damnation without sin. We believe firmly in election to salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we discard from our creed the miserable, wretched doctrine of reprobation without sin. Is the doctrine of election a Scriptural doctrine? Can we prove it from the word of God? It is one thing to believe it to be a doctrine of Divine revelation, and it is another thing to have the sanctifying grace and power of it in our hearts. The election we read of in the Scriptures is inseparably connected with holiness, and we believe in no election to salvation without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has appointed salvation as an end has appointed the methods by which that end shall be accomplished. Perhaps no man possessed of his reasoning powers questions the truth that God has predestinated harvest as long as this world shall continue. But without sowing of seed, without the agricultural labor that is given to the land, we should have no harvest, because he who predestinated harvest predestinated the sowing of the seed as much. And God has appointed us not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. I shall endeavor now to prove, from the quotation of a few Scriptures, that the doctrine of eternal and personal election is a Scriptural and Divine truth. Jesus Christ himself was said to be "chosen of God and precious." He is God's elect, for Jehovah himself says, "Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Angels that continue in their unfallen dignity and felicity are termed elect angels. Elect angels are employed as ministering spirits to those that shall be heirs of salvation. Elect angels will be employed in the gathering of God's elect into the heavenly world. The Jewish nation was a chosen nation, and as such they were privileged with the oracles of God, and stood as a representative people. They were chosen not because of their

personal worth, they were chosen not because of their goodness, but they were chosen to be a separated people, a people that should be God's peculiar treasure, and should be holiness unto the Lord; of them it was said, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God — the Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Jesus Christ himself, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, speaks of certain days being shortened because of God's elect. The Psalmist craved to be remembered with the favor that God was pleased to bear towards his people, that he might see the good of his chosen. And Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples, "Ye have not chose me, but I have chosen you." And the Apostle Paul very often in his writings has brought out this great and profound doctrine. He says, "There is a remnant according to the election of grace." He speaks to the Ephesian Church, and says, "Ye are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that ye may be holy, and that ye may stand before God without blame in love." God hath in the exercise of his sovereignty chosen a people in Christ to salvation before time began — it was before the foundation of the world, here is its antiquity — it is in Christ according to the riches of God's grace, and it is to holiness and salvation. He, in his addresses to the Church at Thessalonica, said he could but thank God "that they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." Peter speaks of the people of God as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He wrote to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. More Scriptures might be given upon this subject, but I think they would be unnecessary. If we would only give our attention to the simple teachings of the Spirit of God by the prophets, by the Psalmist, by Christ, and by the Apostles, we could not have one moment's doubt as to the doctrine of Divine election being a Scriptural truth.

My second point is to show that God has chosen his people to the highest possible relation to himself, and to the enjoyment of the most precious blessings in Christ. All spiritual relations stand in Christ; all spiritual relations originated in God's grace; and all spiritual relations are standing manifestations of the sovereignty of God's favor and of the immutability of God's love. If we are the sons of God, what has constituted us the sons of God? We are sons of God by God's sovereign love; it is by an act of

adoption, it is by an act of Jehovah's will, that we are constituted his sons and his daughters. Adoption is relation established to which we have no natural right; adoption is one thing, and the spirit of adoption is another. Now Christ is God's first-born, and all the family are chose in him; Christ is the glorious Head of the Church, and all the family of God are chosen members in him; Christ is the everlasting Priest of his Church, and he represents all the family, just as the Jewish priest represented by his breast-plate and in the fulfillment of his office the whole of the Jewish nation. All relation to God then stands in Christ, originated in the sovereignty of Jehovah's will, and is expressive of the infinite love of Jehovah's heart. We are chose to salvation — that is the end; the means by which that end is accomplished is by the "sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth." We are chose to usefulness; every Christian should seek to be useful; every Christian in his right mind is a witness for God; every Christian, as he is influenced by Christian principles, bears testimony to the dignity of the relation that God has established, and bears testimony to the holiness of the principles by which his heart is influenced; every Christian should be a living gospel, his life should bear testimony to the holiness of that Christianity that he studies and is influenced by. We are chosen to eternal life, but it is eternal life through Christ. Without faith there is no evidence of interest in Christ, without faith there is no enjoyment of salvation by Christ. Without faith, a man has no evidence of interest in the Lamb's Book of Life; but he who believes in Christ, however weak and trembling his faith has evidence in his own heart that his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; and his conduct corresponding with the holiness of the gospel, he carries in his life a witness to his interest in all the purposes of heaven, and in all the redemptive excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great evidence of interest in election is holiness. A man to talk of believing in election, and going to heaven, because he is one of God's elect, and yet living in sin, and in enmity to God, this can never, never be. We are chosen unto salvation, it is said, "through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth;" and, without this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, there is no holiness; and, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord." Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in heaven; without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Jesus Christ there; without holiness, no man can serve God with power

and success here; without holiness, no man can have fellowship with God, and so have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. It is only by practical life of consistency with faith in Christ Jesus, that we have evidence of our interest in election. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be holy; we are chosen, not because we are good, but that by the principles of the everlasting Gospel, we might become so; we are chosen, not because we are saved, but that we may be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hold, dear friends, that the great doctrine of election should be preached. It should be preached, because it is part of a grand system of truth. Truth is not one doctrine, but it is a grand system, and you cannot leave out one part without impairing its beauty, nor leave out one part of this system without weakening its strength. The beauty of truth lies in its perfection, and in that harmony of its connection; the strength of truth lies in the unity of its parts, and it is like gold dust — it is all precious. If Election be not a truth inspired by the Spirit of the living God — if it be not a truth proclaimed by the prophets that were inspired — if it be not a truth published by the Apostles — if it be not a truth found in the teachings of the word of God, let us never say one word about it; but if it was truth in the days of the Apostles, then it is no less a truth now. What the Apostles preached, I hold, we ought to preach in the spirit of love, in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of meekness, entirely depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us success in the conversion of immortal souls. One moment longer, and I have done. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that is discouraging to a penitent, seeking sinner. There is everything in the Gospel to welcome the returning prodigal to his Father's house; there is everything to meet the necessities of an awakened conscience; there is everything in the Gospel to satisfy the longing of a penitent soul. I know some may say, "I fear, Sir, I shall not be saved because I am not one of God's elect." Art thou a sinner? art thou a penitent sinner? art thou a seeking sinner? If thou art a seeking, penitent sinner, you cannot imagine how welcome you are to the provisions of infinite love. Every truth in the Gospel is open to you; every promise in the Gospel is open to you; every invitation in Scripture speaks to you. If thou art a sinner seeking mercy, let this cheer thy heart — that God delighteth in mercy. If thou art seeking salvation, Jesus is a willing and an able Savior, and he has said, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to

me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” There is nothing, dear friends, in the doctrine of election as it stands in the Scriptures that should discourage any penitent in seeking after mercy through Jesus Christ. I know, in the miserable misrepresentation of this great and glorious truth, men might well be discouraged from seeking mercy through the Savior. But see it in its Scriptural connection; see it in the simplicity of it as it is put before us by the great Apostles; see it in the teachings of the Savior himself, and there is nothing in it but that which welcomes a penitent sinner. It is a great encouragement to a seeking soul. Does the farmer who sows his seed sow that seed with less or more encouragement because he knows that God has ordained that harvest shall be? He sows his seed with a heart brimfull with hope, because God has promised that a harvest shall be as long as the world continues. Only let the means be used according to the Holy Scriptures; only let the poor awakened, penitent sinner renounce everything but Christ and him crucified, mercy will roll into his troubled heart and fill his spirit with peace, and he shall come off more than conqueror, shouting, Victory through the blood of the Lamb — Victory, victory through Jesus Christ.

## HUMAN DEPRAVITY

**BY THE REV. EVAN PROBERT,**

**OF BRISTOL.**

My Christian friends, you are quite aware that the subject which is to engage our further attention this afternoon, is HUMAN DEPRAVITY — a subject about which there are different opinions, which I shall not attempt to examine at the present time, but I shall confine myself to the teachings of God’s word, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and from which we learn what man was when he came from the hands of his Maker, and what he is now as a fallen creature. It is explicitly declared by the sacred writers, that God made man upright, and therefore his condition was one of perfect innocence and high moral excellence. There was no tendency to evil in any part of his nature, nothing that deviated in the least from the rule of moral rectitude. Whatever his duty was, it was to him his

invariable and delightful employment. But, alas! man in honor did not long continue. Through the insinuating wiles of the devil, our first parents were induced to violate the positive command of their Maker, the observance of which was the condition of their happiness, and, as punishment for their transgression, they were driven out of Paradise, and became liable to be cut off by the sentence of death, and consigned to everlasting misery; and, in consequence of our connection with Adam, as our federal head and representative, we became subject to the dreadful consequences of his fall. This is evident from the testimony of the Apostle Paul, in the fifth Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. There we read, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” And, again, “By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners.” It is evident from these passages that God viewed Adam in the covenant of works as the head and representative of his natural posterity, and consequently, when he fell we fell in him, and became subject to the tremendous consequences of his fall. Here it may be asked, what are the consequences of his fall? what were they to him, and what are they to us? To answer this question, we must ascertain what the Apostle means when he uses the words death, judgment, and condemnation. I think that he uses these words in opposition to the grace of God, to justification of life, and to the reign of the redeemed in life by Jesus Christ. These are the benefits which result from the grace of God through Christ, and which stand opposed to the evils which sin has introduced into our world; and, as it cannot be supposed that these benefits relate to temporal life, or solely to the resurrection of the body, it cannot be that the evils involved in the words, death, judgment, and condemnation, relate simply to temporal death, but they must be considered as including temporal, legal, and spiritual death.

From the very hour that Adam transgressed, he became mortal, — the sentence of death was pronounced upon him, and the seeds of depravity were sown in his system; thus the fair and beautiful and glorious creature began to fade, wither, and die, and all his posterity became mortal in him, and have from that day to this come into the world dying. Whatever the case of man might have been if he had not sinned we cannot say. This however we know, that he would not have died; for death is the result of

the federal failure of the father of our race. “Dust thou are,” God said to him, “and unto dust shalt thou return.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “In Adam all died.” So that it may be said to every one of Adam’s sons and daughters, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

But Adam by his transgression not only brought temporal death upon himself and his posterity, he also brought legal death. Having violated the law that was given him to observe, he became under the curse of that law, which involved not only temporal death and expulsion from Paradise, but an exposure to suffer the just demerits of his transgression; and, in consequence of our connection with him as our federal head, we are under the curse of the same law — “By one man’s disobedience judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” and further, “By the offense of one many were made sinners.” The very moment our progenitor transgressed, all his descendants became subject to the curse. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race; the curse of his holy and righteous law has ever rested upon that race; judgment has been given and recorded against us as a fallen world, in the court of Heaven, and unless it is reversed it must fall upon us with all its tremendous consequences.

We are also, in consequence of Adam’s transgression, become the subjects of spiritual death, which consists not merely in the deprivation of the principle of life; but in having become depraved creatures, all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies are depraved, so that it may be said of us, as the prophet says of the Jewish nation, “The head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness.” What! no soundness in any part? nothing good in any part? nothing spiritually good? nothing if cherished and fostered that will not lead to God, to Heaven, and to happiness? Nothing whatever. Let no one mistake me. I do not mean to say for a single moment, that sin has destroyed any of the faculties of man’s soul, for they are all there. They all exist as they did when they were produced; but I mean to say, that sin has deprived man of the principle of spiritual life, and made him a depraved and debased creature; and we believe that we can prove this from the word of God, as well as from observation.

**FIRST**, — From the conduct of little children. Children begin to sin very early in life. If there were any good in us, it would show itself in infancy, before good habits became corrupted, and evil principles were produced by our connection with the world. But do little children prefer good? Are they inclined to the good and the excellent? Do you see from the earliest period of their existence that they are desirous of good? On the contrary, I say, as soon as they begin to act, they prove by their action, that in them there is a depraved nature, from which they act. “Madness,” says a wise man, “is bound up in the heart of a child,” they go astray from the womb telling lies. But it may be said, in the way of objection, that this may arise from the unfavorable circumstance in which some children are placed. No doubt, unfavorable circumstances have a bad influence upon the minds of children; but it is not so with the whole race. Point out to me, one child who is disposed from infancy to seek that which is good, that which is holy. And surely, if the tendency of infants from their earliest history is to evil, it is a proof that it must arise from the evil propensities within them, which grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength.

**SECONDLY**, — We have further proof of human depravity from the aversion of sinners to come to Christ. They are invited to come, persuaded to come, and are assured that they shall find pardon, acceptance, and salvation. But they cannot be induced to come to him; and why will they not come? Is it because he is not willing to receive them, or because there is anything in him to prevent them? No, but it is because of the deep-rooted depravity in their hearts. The heart is averse to all that is good, and therefore rejects the Savior and turns away from him. Hence he complained when in our world, “How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” What more needed to be added? Man turns away in proud disdain from all the blessings of the gospel, and the glories of heaven brought before him, and rushes on with steady purpose to damnation. “Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Oh, to how many in this land may it be said, “They hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof.”



**THIRDLY**, — We have further evidence of native depravity from the testimony of Scripture. In the first place, let me refer you to the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, and the third verse. There we read, that Adam, after he had lived one hundred and thirty years, begat a son in his own likeness after his image. Mind, the image in which Adam was created was the image of God, but that image he had lost before he begat Seth; therefore, the image in which Seth was born must have been the image of his progenitor, as a fallen and depraved creature. Let me refer you, in the second place, to the third chapter of the Gospel of John. “He that is born of the flesh,” said the Savior to Nicodemus, “is flesh, and he that is born of the Spirit is spirit.” To be born of the flesh, according to the wisest interpretation of that passage, is to be born of a depraved nature; to be born of the Spirit is to be born of the Holy Spirit of God — which birth, the Savior told Nicodemus he must experience before he could see the kingdom of God. And again, we have several passages in proof of this point. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse of that chapter, the Apostle says,

“When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin by the law which worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death.”

“When we were in the flesh,” means this — when we were in an unrenewed depraved state. In the same chapter he says, at the 14th verse, “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;” as if he had said, “I am as a sinner, a depraved creature.” In accordance with this the Apostle says, at the 18th verse of the same chapter, “In me — that is, in my flesh — there dwelleth no good thing.” No love to God, no holy aspirations! No, none whatever. At the beginning of the eighth chapter the same Epistle, we find the terms “flesh” and “Spirit” placed in opposition to each other, “Who walk not after the flesh,” says the Apostle, describing Christians, “but after the Spirit.” To be in the flesh is to be in a depraved state, to be in the Spirit is to be a partaker of his grace; to walk after the flesh is to walk after the dictates of corrupt principles and propensities, to walk after the Spirit is to be governed by spiritual principles and by the Holy Spirit of God; and the Apostle, in writing to the Galatians, says to them, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” These passages, I think, prove beyond all contradiction, that man as a fallen creature, is a depraved creature, destitute of any good.

There are many other passages of Scripture that confirm this doctrine, such as the following, “Who can bring a clean thing out of a unclean.” Not one. What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he should be just. “Behold,” says a Psalmist, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Read the account of man before the deluge, and there we find that every imagination and the thought of his heart were only evil, and that continually. The same account is given of him after the flood. The deluge could not wipe away the stains of moral pollution, could not destroy in man the deep-rooted depravity of his heart. “The heart,” says Jeremiah, “is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.” I think that what our blessed Lord said to the Jews of old, is applicable to every unconverted man under heaven — “But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you.” Some of you may be more humane than others, more benevolent than other, more compassionate than other, as men, and as women, but one has as much of the love of God in him as others. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” against the being of God, against the government of God, against the gospel of God, against the purposes of God. The enmity of the human heart is unconquerable by any human agency whatever. It is mortal enmity, it strikes at the being of God, and, therefore, as President Edwards, of America, justly observes, “that when it found God in our nature, in our world, it put him to death on the accursed tree.” Such, my brethren, is the enmity of the heart of man, such is its deeprooted depravity, that in him there is no good thing. We can never speak too bad of what sin has done for us, and we can never speak too much, or too well, of what God has done for us, in the person of his Son, and in us, by the agency of his Holy Spirit.

**FOURTHLY** — The doctrine of human depravity may be proved from those passages which assert the universal necessity of redemption by Jesus Christ. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus,” said the angel, “because he shall save his people from their sins,” “In him we have redemption through his blood,” says St. Paul, “even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of his grace.” Now, the work of redemption pre-supposes the sinful state of man, and implies a deliverance from that state and from the punishment to which man is exposed. Hence it is said of Christ, that he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost, and that he died — the just for the unjust — that he might bring us to

God. Now, if redemption by Christ is necessary, it is evident that man is a sinner; and, if man is a sinner, it is evident that man has a depraved nature. You cannot make anything else of it. Say what you like about man and about his excellencies, you must come to this conclusion, that he is a condemned and a depraved creature, or else he would not need redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**FIFTHLY**, — The passages that assert the universal necessity of the new birth prove this very truth — “Except a man be born of water,” said the Savior, “and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.” But if a man has some good in him, and if that good could be cherished, and be increased, and worked up so as to make men fit for heaven, what need of the new birth? what need of the Spirit of all grace to renew him in the spirit of his mind? Whenever, my brethren, you pray to God for the Spirit to change the human heart, whether you believe the doctrine or not, you imply it in your petition before the mercy-seat. They are represented by the sacred writers as having been called from darkness into light, as having an unction from the Holy One whereby they know all things, and those of them who have been called readily acknowledge that they were once foolish, once deceived and deceiving, once depraved — very depraved; and not only so, but the very best of Christians in the world confess with humility the depravity of their hearts, and I believe that the man who knows himself best is the man who is most ready to confess this and to humble himself before God — “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And while Christians feel this, their language is, “Create within me a clean heart, oh God! and renew a right spirit within me; purge me with hysop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” Apply the blood of sprinkling to my guilty conscience, and let the Spirit of all grace work in my polluted and depraved heart, and form me to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and meeten my immortal spirit for the inheritance of the saints in light, and of angels in glory. My dear friends, I need not say more. I should not think there is an individual here this afternoon who is not disposed to agree with me, when I say that man is fallen creature, is a depraved creature, is a condemned creature: he is under the curse of God’s righteous law, and at the same time the subject of the reigning power of depravity, the subject of the effects of sin throughout

his whole nature; and that, as a sinner, let it be recorded in high heaven there is no good in man's nature until God puts it there, and you will never be brought, by beloved hearers, into a right state of mind before God, until you are brought to feel that you have nothing, and that you must have all in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh! Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" But here are blessed tidings, "But in me is their help found." Does not this subject, my hearers, teach us, in the first place, the amazing long suffering of God towards our race. God might, as soon as man sinned, without the least imputation of injustice to his character, have cut him down, because the fall was the result of his criminal choice, and attended by the most aggravating circumstances; but God has borne with us, and is bearing still, which shows that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, oh! house of Israel?" And does not the subject teach us also the helplessness of man as a sinner? He is unable to atone for his sins or to renew his heart. Many attempts have been made to atone for human transgression, and to cleanse and purify the human heart, but they have all failed, not one has succeeded. No sacrifice, short of an infinite one, could satisfy Divine justice and magnify the broken law. No power, short of the omnipotent energy of the Eternal Spirit, can renew the human heart. But, while man is a helpless creature he is not a hopeless creature. We do not say to him there is no hope. Oh, no! I rejoice in that thought at this very moment. God has remembered us in our lowest state, he has laid help upon one that is mighty, one who, by his passive and active obedience, has magnified the law and made it honorable, satisfied the claims of Divine justice, so that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ; and while he made atonement for our transgressions, he has procured for us the Spirit of all grace to renew our nature, to transform us into the likeness of himself, and to prepare us in the use of means for the inheritance of the saints in light. Those of us who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and, I trust, most of us are — would to God that I could believe that we all are — let us pray for a larger measure of the Spirit, upon ourselves, individually, and upon the world around us. Surely, my hearers, my dear brother who has to occupy this platform, and who has to unfurl to you the banner of the cross, will need a large measure of the Holy Spirit. May He come upon his head, and upon his heart; and may he never ascend this platform but in His strength, and

under His guidance, and in His light; may he never preach a sermon without its being blessed to the conversion of souls, and the building up of the Church; and may you, as a Christian Church, continue earnest in prayer for the Spirit to come, and it is the Spirit will reconcile us to each other, the Spirit will remove differences between Arminians and Calvinists, the Spirit will bring us to see, by-and-by, eye to eye, and this world will be filled with the glory of God. May the Lord command his blessing upon these remarks, for his name's sake. Amen.

*The Meeting then adjourned till half-past six. After the friends had assembled —*

THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON said, I wish to make one or two observations before I introduce to you the speakers of this evening. Controversy is never a very happy element for the child of God: he would far rather be in communion than engaged in defense of the faith or in attack upon error. But the soldier of Christ knows no choice in his Master's commands. He may feel it to be better for him to lie upon the bed of rest than to stand covered with the sweat and dust of battle; but as a soldier he has learned to obey, and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort but his Lord's absolute command. The servant of God must endeavor to maintain all the truth which his Master has revealed to him, because, as a Christian soldier, this is part of his duty. But while he does so, he accords to others the liberty which he enjoys himself. In his own house of prayer he must and will maintain that which he believes to be true. He does not feel himself at all out of temper or angry when he hears that in other places there are some holding different views of what the truth is, who as honestly, and perhaps as forcibly, endeavor to maintain their views. To our own Master we stand or fall; we have no absolute judge of right or wrong incarnate in the flesh on earth to-day. Nor is even the human judgment itself an infallible evidence of our being, for since the fall, no powers of mortals are free from imperfection. Our judgment is not necessarily a fully enlightened one, and we ourselves therefore let another man's judgment also be his guide unto God; but we must not forget that every man is responsible to the Most High for the use of that judgment, for the use of that mental power which God has given him, by which he is to weigh and balance the arguments of either side. I have found commonly that, with regard to the doctrine of grace which we preach, there are a great

many objections raised. One of the simplest trades in the world is the raising of objections. You never need, if you wish to set up in that line of business, to look abroad for capital or resources; however poor and penniless a man may be, even in wits, he can easily manufacture difficulties. It is said "that a fool may raise objections which a thousand wise men could not answer." I would not hesitate to say that I could bring objections to your existence to-night, which you could not disprove. I could sophisticate and mystify until I brought out the conclusion that you were blind, and deaf, and dumb, and I am not sure that by any process of logic you would be able to prove that you were not so. It might be clear enough to you that you could both speak, and see, and hear. The only evidence, however, I suppose that you could give, would be by speaking, and seeing, and hearing, which might be conclusive enough; but if it were left to be a mere matter of word-fighting for schoolmen, I question whether the caviller might not cavil against you to the judgment-day in order to dispute you out of the evidence of your very senses. The raising of difficulties is the easiest trade in all the world, and, permit me to add, it is not one of the most honorable. The raising of objections has been espoused, you know, by that great and mighty master of falsehood in the olden times, and it has been carried on full often by those whose doubts about the truth sprung rather from their hearts than from their heads. Some difficulties, however, ought to be met, and let me now remove one or two of them. There are some who say, "Provided the doctrines of grace be true, what is the use of our preaching?" Of course I can hardly resist a smile while I put this splendid difficulty — it is so huge a one. If there are so many who are to be saved, then why preach? You cannot diminish, you cannot increase the number, why preach the Gospel? Now, I thought my friend Mr. Bloomfield anticipated this difficulty well enough. There must be a harvest, — why sow, why plough? Simply because the harvest is ordained in the use of the means. The reason why we preach at all is because God has ordained to save some. If he had not, we could not see the good of preaching at all. Why! we should come indeed on a fool's errand if we came here without the Master's orders at our back. His elect shall be saved — every one of them, — and if not by my instrumentality or that of any brother here present, if not by any instrumentality, then would God sooner call them by his Holy Spirit, without the voice of the minister, than that they should perish. But this is the very reason why we

preach, because we wish to have the honor of being the means, in the hand of God, of calling these elect ones to himself. The certainty of the result quickens us in our work, and surely it would stay none but a fool in his labor. Because God ordains that his word shall not return unto him void, therefore, we preach that word, because, “as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud, even so doth the word of the Lord accomplish his purpose;” therefore, we would have our doctrine to drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb. But, there are some again who say, “To what purpose after all, is your inviting any to come, when the Spirit of God alone constrains them to come; and why, especially, preach to those whom believe to be so depraved that they cannot and will not come?” Ay, just so, this is a serious difficulty to everything except faith. Do you see Ezekiel yonder; he is about to preach a sermon. By his leave, we will stop him. “Ezekiel, where are you about to preach?” “I am about,” saith he, “to preach to a strange congregation — dead, dry bones, lying in a mass in a valley.” “But, Ezekiel, they have no power to live.” “I know that,” saith he. “To what purpose, then, is your preaching to them? If they have no power, and if the breath must come from the four winds, and they have no life in themselves, to what purpose do you preach?” “I am ordered to preach,” saith he, “commanded;” and he does so. He prophesies, and afterward mounting to a yet higher stage of faith, he cries, “Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” And the wind comes, and the effect of his ministry is seen in their life. So preach we to dead sinners; so pray we for the living Spirit. So, by faith, do we expect his Divine influence, and it comes, — cometh not from man, nor of man, nor by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, but from the sovereign will of God. But notwithstanding it comes instrumentally through the faith of the preacher while he pleads with man, “as though God did beseech them by us, we pray them in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God.” But if ten thousand other objections were raised, my simple reply would be just this, “We can raise more objections against your theory, than you can against ours.” We do not believe that our scheme is free from difficulties; it were uncandid if we were to say so. But we believe that we have not the tithes of the difficulties to contend with that they have on the opposite side of the question. It is not hard to find in those texts which

appear to be most against us, a key, by which they are to be harmonized; and we believe it to be utterly impossible, without wresting Scripture, to turn those texts which teach our doctrine, to teach any other thing whatsoever. They are plain, pointed, pertinent. If the Calvinistic scheme were the whole sum and substance of all truth, why then surely, if it held everything within some five or six doctrines, you might begin to think that man were God, and that God's theology were less than infinite in its sweep. What are we, that we should grasp the infinite? We shall never measure the marches of eternity. Who shall compass with a span the Eternal God, and who shall think out anew his infinite thoughts? We pretend not that Calvinism is a plumb-line to fathom the deeps; but we do say, that it is a ship which can sail safely over its surface, and that every wave shall speed it onwards towards its destined haven. To fathom and to comprehend is neither your business nor mine, but to learn, and then, having learned, to teach to others, is the business of each Christian man; and thus would be do, God being our helper. One friend kindly suggests a difficulty to me, which, having just spoken of, I shall sit down. That amazing difficulty has to do with the next speaker's topic, and, therefore, I touch it. It says in the Scriptures, that Paul would not have us destroy him with our meat for whom Christ died. Therefore, the inference is — only mark, we don't endorse the logic — the inference is, that you may destroy some with your meat for whom Christ died. That inference I utterly deny. But then, let me put it thus. Do you know, that a man may be guilty of a sin which he cannot commit. Does that startle you? Every man is guilty of putting God out of existence, if he says in his heart, "No God." But he cannot put God out of existence; and yet, the guilt is there, because he would if he could. There be some who crucify the Son of God afresh. They cannot, — he is in heaven, he is beyond their reach. And yet, because their deeds would do that, unless some power restrained, they are guilty of doing what they can never do, because the end and aim of their doings would be to destroy Christ, if he were here. Now, then, it is quite consistent with the doctrine that no man can destroy any for whom Christ died, still to insist upon it that a man may be guilty of the blood of souls. He may do that which, unless God prevented it, — and that is no credit to him, — unless God prevented it, would destroy souls for whom Jesus Christ died. But, again I say, I have not come here to-night to anticipate and to answer all objections; I have only done that, that some troubled



conscience might find peace. This was not a meeting of discussion, but for the explaining of our views, and the teaching them simply to the people. I now shall call upon my beloved brother to take up the point of particular redemption.

## PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

**BY THE REV. J. A. SPURGEON,**

**OF SOUTHAMPTON.**

I think it is well that the death of Christ and its consequent blessings should occupy one place in our discussion here to-night; for not only is it the central truth in the Calvinistic theory, but the death of Christ is the center point of all history and of all time. The devout of all ages have stood and gazed with anxious glance into these deep mysteries, searching what, or what manner of things the Holy Spirit did by them testify and reveal; and we know that hereafter, in yon world of glory, the redeemed shall sing of these things for ever, and shall find in the Redeemer and in his work, fresh matter for love and for praise as eternity shall roll on. We take our stand between the two, and I think the language of our hearts to-night is akin to all ages of the Church of Christ, — “God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the grand result of the death of our Lord — though not the only result — the grand result of that death, so far as man is concerned, is the redemption which it ultimately achieves; and, with regard to the extent of that redemption, we believe the Scriptures are plain and speak most clearly, when they tell of a final day of manifestation, when the redeemed from amongst men shall take their stand before the Redeemer, to sing of him who, as the good shepherd, hath laid down his life for his sheep, and has purchased unto himself a peculiar people — his body, the Church. Now, we believe that, in reaching that grand and final result there are many steps that must be taken, and we think that, from these preliminary steps, there are multitudes that gain rich handfuls of blessings who shall not however reap the full harvest of glory. We believe that the whole world is flooded with blessings, and that the stream rolls broad and clear from the

hill-foot of Calvary, and laves the feet alike of the godly and of the ungodly, the thankful and the thankless. But from the riven side of Christ there comes forth one stream — the river of life, whose banks are trodden only by the feet of the multitude of believers, who wash and are clean, who drink and liver for evermore. We speak to-night of Christ's death in its various relations, so as to touch upon and include sundry things which cannot be properly classed under the title of particular redemption; but we feel we are driven to this course, so as to be able to do justice to ourselves and to our leading theme.

Now, we have three sets of truths before us, and these three sets of truths we must deal with.

**(1.)** We have, first of all, a God holy and righteous, loving and gracious, a God who has been most grievously wronged and injured, and a God who must be honored alike by the giving him all the glory of which he has been robbed, and by the bearing of his just expression of holy indignation at the wrong that has been done unto him. We have a God jealous in the extreme, and yet, strange enough, declaring that he passes by iniquity and forgiveth transgression and sin. We have a God truthful, who has sworn “that the soul that sinneth it shall die,” and who yet speaks to those souls, and says, “Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die.” A God whom we know must be just, and must execute upon the ungodly that which they have justly merited, and who yet strangely says, “Come and let us plead together, and though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool, and though they be like crimson I will make them white as snow.” That is one set of truths — strange, and apparently contradictory. Then we have another.

**(2.)** We have a world lost, and yet swathed in an atmosphere of mercy. We have a world dark with the darkness of death, and yet everywhere we find it more or less under the influence of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which came a light unto darkness, that did not and could not comprehend it. And we have, moreover, a world rebellious, and serving another master than the right one, and yet nevertheless beneath the feet of him who has been made Head over all things for his body's sake, which is the Church.

**(3.)** And then, once more, we have a Church peculiar in its unmerited privileges, chose from before all time to inherit the kingdom given to it before the world began — a kingdom that can never be trodden upon save by the spotless and the deathless; and yet the inheritors are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins — lost, ruined — without a God and without a hope in the world. How are all those strange and apparently contradictory things to be solved? One clue, we find, is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work involves its ultimate end, which is redemption, and of that work we are about to speak here to-night.

We speak first of those blessings which come from the death of Christ, and are for all men; the whole world is under a mediatorial government, the whole spirit of which is a government of long-suffering, graciousness, tenderness, and mercy, such as could not have been exercised had Christ never died. A government there might have been, but it must be, we think, a government akin to that which is found in the place where those are found who make their bed in hell. We find, moreover, that the direct and indirect influences of the Cross of Christ have pervaded the whole world, and none can tell how full oft its gentle spirit has come like oil upon the troubled waters; or what man, with his wild passions, would have been without the ameliorating influence of the Cross. We possibly may be able to tell, when we look across the impassable gulf into a Gehenna beneath, and see sin unchecked working out its dire results; and, we believe that whatever comes short of that darkness, whose very light is darkness, is due to that light which radiates from the Cross of Christ, and whatever is short of hell streams from Calvary. And then, further still, we have a Bible, a revelation filled with the love and mercy of God to man — a Bible in which our Lord himself could show, beginning at Moses, and in all the prophets, that which did testify concerning himself; and, apart from Jesus Christ and his death, there could have been no such revelation of God's character unto the human race. A revelation there might have been, but it would have been a revelation of Sinai's horrors and terrors, without even the spark of hope which comes forth from that dispensation there set forth. There might have been a revelation, I say, but it would have been a revelation that would not have wound up as this does with a blessing. It would have ended like the Old Testament with a curse; it would have begun with the same. It would have been worse than Ezekiel's roll of woes

which is filled all over with terrible lamentation, and with awful sorrow and woe. And again, there is a positive overture of mercy, a true and faithful declaration of good tidings unto every creature, and we do believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature; and the Gospel runs thus — “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” That overture we hold to be no mockery, but made in good faith; and that overture is not the overture of a shadow, but the presentation of solid, substantial blessings; and for the rejection of that, not God, but man is answerable, and for the rejection of that he will be lost. “For this the condemnation, that they have not believed on him whom God hath sent.” And, then, lastly, we find that as the purchase of the death of Christ there is a Church, and that Church is sent forth into the world with orders to bless it and to do good unto all men. It is bidden to go forth as a light in the midst of darkness; it is bidden so to live as to be the salt of the whole earth. Now, we say that each one of these blessings is no small gift from God to man — no mean result of the death of our Master; and, combined, we think they would form a boon worthy of a God; and, as we put our hand upon it, we think we can give a full and true expression, and with an emphasis surpassed by none, to that glorious text — “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” And we think, upon our system, and upon ours alone, we can give full truthfulness and emphasis to the remainder — “That whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life.” Now, upon redemption proper, the latter part of our theme, we will pass on to speak. And, first, what do we mean by redemption? Most certainly we do not mean the POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION, for we have learned to distinguish between the possibility of a thing and a thing itself. We feel this, that we do not preach and cannot preach, gathering our teaching from the Bible, a possibility of redemption. We proclaim a redemption. Nor do we mean by redemption a contingency of redemption, which, again, is contingent upon a third thing. We have learned to distinguish between a contingency and a certainty. We proclaim a certain redemption, and we speak of that which is not possible but positive, not contingent but certain. Neither do we mean by redemption such an outgrowth of the man’s own power or goodness as shall enable him to burst his way through every bondage and to get forth free; such an elevation of human nature, whether by the education of others, or by his

own works, as to enable him at last to stand free. If we meant that, we should use the word escape, but not the word redemption. And again, if we meant, as some, alas! have seemed to mean, God's foregoing his claim upon man; God's waiving man's liabilities, and God's giving up that which we believe, as a holy God, he cannot surrender; if we meant that, we should speak of emancipation — of pure pardon and forgiveness. But we do not. We mean redemption. And then, again, we do not mean by redemption the meeting of the debts, either in prospective or in the present. We do not mean that the man shall, either in the present or in the future, bear any part of the penalty; and, by some goodness, either in the present or foreseen, satisfy God's claim upon him. If we meant that, I think we should use altogether another word than the word redemption. What do we mean by redemption? We mean, by redemption, the work of one being which is done for another, but generally a helpless one, in order to give him a perfect freedom. And when we speak of redemption, mark you, we speak of a thing that is the result of that work. We distinguish between redemption and redemption work. What we mean, by redemption, is just this — the grand result and end of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we could as well speak of redemption apart from the redeemed, as we could speak of life apart from a living creature. Life and living creatures are co-extensive, and so is redemption and the redeemed. If you take down any book that will give you an explanation of the word "redemption," I think you will find three things put therein. It is a ransom, a rescue, and a release. Now, I take the whole three words to be the fullness of the meaning of one word. It is such a ransom, and such a rescue, as result in a complete and full release. Whatever stops short of that thing, is, of course, not the thing itself; the thing itself that we mean, is the positively being redeemed and made free. Now, just by way of simplifying the subject, let me speak of the Redeemer, and of the redemption work, and of those who are redeemed.

First, the Redeemer, who is he? We believe him to be the Word that was with God, equal unto God, and was God, — who became flesh and dwelt among us. At the same time, the flesh did not become, in any sense, Deity, neither did the Deity, in any sense, become carnal. They formed another person, and that person the God-man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Now, what is he? And here I just ask that question, in order to meet some

objections, and, if I can, to put on one side two or three theories that seem to fight against ours. I hear a voice, saying, in reply to that question, what is he? Why, he is God's idea of humanity; he is God, who has taken up humanity from its fallen state, raised it up not only to the place where he first put it, but, beyond, even to the height to which he hoped it would ascend, or possibly something beyond it. And, now, from henceforth, such is the union betwixt common humanity, that the lost, in their degradation, have but to look to their common humanity exalted, realize their identity with it, and to feel themselves, by that deed, raised to the same standard, and redeemed, and free for evermore. To which, we reply, there is enough of truth in that lie to keep it alive, and that is all. We do believe that our Master did lay hold of humanity; we do believe that he has honored and dignified the human race, by taking that upon him, and by becoming flesh like unto ourselves. But we cannot see how that the gazing upon that can open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, give life to the dead, and procure the discharge of our sins, any more than we can see how that the gazing upon an Olympic game would give to the physically lame, physical strength, or could give to those who were physically dead, life from their physical death.

And, again, I hear other voices replying to that question. They say, "he is the great example of self-denial, and of the submission of the human will to the Divine. And what redemption is, is this — that man now can look to that great display of selfdenial, can catch of its spirit, and can imitate it, and by that deed of subjection, making the will to succumb to the will of the Divine, they may, at least, emancipate themselves, and go forth free." To which we reply, once more, there is enough of truth in that just to cement the error together, and to give it a plausible appearance to the sons of men, but there is nothing more. It is true that our Savior was the Sent One of the Father. It is true, he came, saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will." He declares he was not doing his own will, but the will of him that sent him. And he winds up by saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." But, after all, we cannot, and dare not accept that submission of Christ's will to the Father, as being a satisfaction for sin; neither can we see, how, by the imitation of that, we can, in any sense, wipe away the sins of the past, or free ourselves from the penalty that is yet to come.

But now to answer for ourselves. What is our Lord Jesus Christ? And we say, that in life he is the great example and copy; in death, he is the substitute; and in both, the federal head — the elder brother and kinsman of his Church.

But now time warns me that I must pass on to the second thought — the work of redemption. First of all, we gaze at that part of the work which is Godward, and that we call atonement; and, when you ask me — What is the character of the atonement? I reply — It has a twofold nature, to correspond with the twofold character of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and a consequent insult to him who is the lawmaker. But it is something more than that: the power by which he has transgressed has been perverted; it was given to him to obey the law that he might glorify God. And to make, therefore, a satisfaction for sin, there must be a bringing to the law obedience; there must be the bearing of the sanction because of the disobedience; there must be the rendering to God the glory due to him; and there must be the bearing of his just displeasure and the expression of his holy wrath and indignation. That Christ has done: he came, and his whole life was obedience to the law, for he was obedient even unto death; and in that death he bore the sanction of the law — for he was made a curse, it being written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” His whole life was spent to glorify God, and at its close he could say, “I have glorified thee, and I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do:” and his death was the bearing of the just displeasure of God towards the sinner, and in the agony of his heart he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In these things we behold, therefore, the presentation of the obedience due, the giving to God the glory due, the bearing of God’s displeasure, and the enduring of the curse of the law. And now the question would be put to me as to the value of atonement. We believe that its value depends not so much upon the Being appeased, nor upon the beings to be atoned for, as upon the Being who makes the atonement. The value of Christ’s atonement is the value of himself. He gave himself for us. If he had stood as the surety for the whole world, he could not be more. He gave himself; what more could he bestow? The value of the atonement is the value of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his flesh he can take man’s place, and by his Divinity he can give, and must give anyhow, an infinite value to the work that he, in mortal flesh, performs.

For one soul, therefore, it must be infinite — for more or less it cannot be. Infinite it is, and infinite it must be, and we have no part or parcel with those who would say, that if Judas was to have been saved, Judas' amount of penalty would have had to have been paid, in addition to what has been borne and paid by Christ. He took the place, the room, and stead of the church, and then all that he was worth went in that church's place and stead. More he could not do, if he had taken the place of the whole world. But, you ask me, is there any limit to the atonement at all? I say I think there is; and the limit seems to be, not in the value, but in the purpose. The limit seems to be this theory — for whom did he die? in whose place and stead did he stand? If he stood in the place and stead of the whole world, then he made atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the whole world will be saved. If he stood in the place and stead of his Church, then he made atonement for his Church, and the whole Church will be saved. We believe that Christ took the place and stead of every believer, that the believer's sin was put on him, and thus the ex-sinner can go forth free. But I hear a voice saying, "I challenge substitution, and I object to that." So be it. I ask you, did Christ die for sin at all? It must be answered, — Yes. Then for whose sin did he die? If his own, then he suffered righteously. Did he die for the sins of the whole world? then justice cannot demand this again. Did he die for part of the sins of the whole world? then the rest of the sins will still condemn the world; then must have Christ died in vain. We believe that he took all the sins of some men. It was not a fictitious condemnation; it was not a fancy sin made for the occasion; it was a positive sin that had been committed by God's people, and is transferred from them to him who laid down his life for his sheep; loving us, and giving himself for and in the stead or in the place of his people.

But, then, we say this work of redemption comprised something more than thus paying down the ransom, and the bearing of the penalty. It is, moreover, a rescue; for sin has not only made men this to have insulted God and broken God's law, it has transferred them unto bondage under the allegiance of one — "the strong man armed." They must be freed from that. Christ came, has destroyed death, and through death him also who has the power of death, even the devil; making an open show of them upon his cross, ascending up on high a victor, leading captivity captive.



And then, I think, there is yet something further. Sin has affected the man himself, made him to need in his own person a releasing from the dominion, power, and corruption of sin. This Christ has secured by his covenant with the Father. But that which I take to comprise effectual calling and final perseverance, I shall leave to my brethren who shall speak afterwards. And now as to the persons redeemed — who are they? The Church, we say, whether you look at the Church as elect from all eternity, or the Church believing in time, or the Church as glorified hereafter. We look at them all as one, and we say these are the redeemed, these are they for whom redemption has been procured. We cannot add to their number, we cannot diminish them; for we believe that those whom God foreknew, he did predestinate; that those whom he did predestinate, he also called: for whom he calls he justifies, for whom he justifies he also glorifies; the whole are one, — and for these redemption has been made.

Now, if I may be permitted the time, I will just touch upon one or two, objections, and then I will conclude. I hear some one saying, “But by that, sir, you surely must limit God’s love.” I reply, is God loving when he punishes any and doth not save all? Then is he loving also when he purposes to do that, for whatever justifies the deed justifies the purpose which gives the morality to the deed. And then I hear another objection — “How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?” You have heard that answered — we have got the order; but, I reply yet further: I could not go and preach the Gospel upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool’s errand of preaching a redemption that might not redeem, and declaring a salvation that might not save. I could not go and say to a man, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And he would answer me, “Do you think you are going to heaven?” “Yes.” “Why?” “Because Christ died for me.” “But he died for us all, and my chances therefore are as good as yours.” And he might reply to me after he had accepted my declaration, and after he had believed, and begun to rejoice, after all he might say, “Is there any real reason why I should rejoice, some for whom Christ died are in hell, and I may also go there. I cannot begin to rejoice in your news till I feel myself in glory. It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive; it is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me.” Now, what we preach, is the Gospel to every creature, and that we take to be this — If you believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved; if you do not, you will be lost, and lost for ever. You are not redeemed — you are not saved, — there is not, in another word, salvation and redemption for those who are lost for ever. But we add, “We are what we are by Divine grace; we have believed; if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be as we are — will be able to boast as we do, humbly in the Lord our God;” or in other words — If you believe, and are baptized, you will be saved; if you do not believe, you will be lost, and lost for ever.

## EFFECTUAL CALLING

**BY THE REV. JAMES SMITH**

**OF CHELTENHAM.**

My Christian friends, our minds have been occupied to-day with some of the loftiest subjects that can engage the thoughts of man. Our attention has been directed to the infinitely wise and true God, and we have been endeavoring to conceive of him as the great, the infinite, the eternal; the great, the infinite, the eternal intellect, who, of himself, conceiveth the grandest schemes, and infallibly provides for their accomplishment, so that there can be no mistake, no failure. We know that every wise intellect forms its plan before it provides its mean, or attempts to carry out the idea conceived in the mind.

And the great doctrine of election, to which our attention was directed this afternoon, answers to the formation of the plan in the infinite mind of God. He foresaw, clearly, that the whole human race, represented by the first man, would fall into sin, and left to themselves, would certainly perish. To prevent a catastrophe so fearful, he determined in his infinite mind, to have a people for himself, a people that would comprise the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world. They were all present before his mind; their names were registered in his book, which book was delivered into the hands of the Lamb, the Son of God, who accepted the book at the hands of his Father, and, as it were, signed it with his own name, so that it has been designated, “The Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And Jesus looked upon this act as the

committing of the people to himself, on purpose that he might take the charge of them, on purpose that he might carry out the Father's will respecting them, and gain eternal laurels and honors to himself, by placing them in splendor, majesty, and glory before his Father's face for ever. We therefore find him frequently when speaking with his Father, and referring to this act in the eternal counsels, saying, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Keep those whom thou hast given me by thine own name, that they may be one as we are." But election interferes not with man as standing in Adam, but with man as under sin the result of Adam's fall. It ensured their restoration, but it did not interfere with their fall, and consequently the elect, with the rest, all fell in the first man. The entire mass of human nature became depraved, polluted, rotten to the heart's core; so depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God. There is that in depravity in every form, that defies the touch of any one but the Infinite; that refuses to succumb to anything but to Omnipotence itself. The heart of man is foul as the heart of Satan; the nature of man is foul as the nature of Satan; and the sin of man is worse than the sin of Satan. Satan, the great archangel, that fell from heaven, did a tremendous deed when he set mind in opposition to Deity; but man set not merely mind, but matter with mind, in opposition to the eternal God. God could once look upon the world and say, "Though mind is in rebellion, matter is not in opposition;" but after the fall of man, mind and matter alike were corrupt, were depraved, were in opposition to the Eternal. Every man's heart steams with enmity against God; every man's spirit rises in rebellion against God; and, as you have heard tonight, the verdict of every man's conscience in its fallen state is, "No God, no God;" and if the Eternal could be voted out of existence by the suffrages of his fallen creatures, every hand would be up, every heart would give its verdict, and every voice would vote for the annihilation of the Most High. The will of man strong, the will of man stern, the will of man determined, and opposed to the will of God, will yield to nothing but that which is superior to itself; it laughs at authority, it turns with disgust from holiness, it refuses to listen to invitation, and, in this state, man — universal man, is found. In this state, man, the entire mass of man, with the exception of those who had been saved on credit, and had been changed by the sacred influences of the Spirit — in this state man was found when Christ came into our world. He came and, as ye have

heard, assumed humanity, and united it with Deity. The two natures constituted the one person of the glorious Mediator; that glorious Mediator stood the representative of his people; that Mediator stood the Surety of his family; that Mediator stood the Substitute of the multitude of his fallen ones. That Mediator came to be the sacrifice to which sin was to be transferred, by which sin was to expiated and removed out of the way, that God's mercy might freely flow, and from the sinner's conscience, that he might have peace and joy.

But as the election of the Father did not interfere with the falling of man's nature, so the redemption of the Son did not change the nature that had fallen. It was therefore necessary, that as the Father sent the Son, the Son should send the Comforter; and as it required an infinite victim to atone for man's guilt, it required an infinite agent to change man's fallen nature. As to the Father, the atonement must be made as the moral governor, as the maintainer of the rights of the eternal throne; so from the Father, through the Son, must the Holy Spirit descend to renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of Deity, and to render to God the homage due unto his name. And this just brings me to my point — EFFECTUAL CALLING. This implies, that there is a calling that may not be effectual. Yes, there is a call that extends to the whole human family. As it is written, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men." There is a call that refers to humanity as sinful, and to sinners as such, however fallen and depraved they may be. Repentance or a change of mind, repentance and remission of sins, are to be preached amongst all nations, and the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem; and, beginning at Jerusalem the slaughter-house of the Son of God, and the slaughter-house of the prophets, and of the saints, — beginning there, they said, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." But the people were like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer — charm he never so wisely. The Baptist had come and cried, "Repent," and sternly, and impressively he preached, but they paid little regard, — at least, little regard that tended to life. And the Son of God, with all that was soft, and winning, and captivating, came and preached; but they turned away, and he said, "To whom shall I like the men of this generation — they are like unto children sitting in the markets,

and calling to their fellows — We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced, and we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented.” Now, this call must be given, because God commands it; this call must be given, because God works by it. In giving the general, the universal call to all that hear the gospel, we obey the high mandate of the Eternal God; we do honor and homage to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we employ an instrument — a weapon, if you please — by which the Spirit of God operates upon the human mind; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, and the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. The general call leads to the special, to the particular, or what we designate, the “effectual call.” We speak to men as men, and we reason with them; we speak to sinners as sinners, and we expostulate with them; but while we reason, and while we expostulate, we have the promise of the presence of the Master — “I am with you;” we have the promised presence of the Eternal Paraclete, who was sent to empower, sent to accompany, and sent to work by the Lord’s servants; and, while we speak and give the call as we are commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works — the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact, — direct, immediate contact, with the mind of man. There is a power that goes with the word — distinct from the word — when it is accompanied by the energy of the Eternal Spirit; and that power produces in the heart, life — a spiritual, a Divine, an immortal life — a life that man dead in sin had not; a life which a man once having loseth not, for it is eternal; a life that was given us in Christ before the world was; a life preserved for us by Christ all through the past ages that have rolled away; a life that is communicated from the loving heart of Him who is the great depository of grace, and conducted by the Holy Ghost into the heart that is called by grace. Has the Spirit accompanying the word produced life? From that life springs conviction: not the cold conviction awakened occasionally in the mind of man, by the reasoning of man, by reflecting upon his past misconduct, or by the flashing of the forked lightnings of the law; but a conviction that is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing the law into contact with the conscience — the Gospel into contact with the heart. In the sinner’s conscience God erects a tribunal, in the sinner’s conscience God sits as judge, and to the tribunal, before the just judge, man is

summoned to appear; and in the heart, in the soul, in the nature of man, there is a miniature of the judgment that is to take place at the completion and winding up of the present dispensation. The man is arraigned as a sinner, the man is convicted as a culprit, the man is condemned as a criminal; he stands before God, and he has nothing to say; every excuse has withered like the leaves of autumn, every excuse is carried away like the chaff from the summer's threshing-floor, every rag that the man boasted of is torn from him, and he stands, a naked sinner, before a heart-searching God. The penetrating eye of the Omniscient darts into the innermost recesses of his soul, and the gentle fingers of the Spirit turns over one fold of the heart after the other; the process may be long, or the operation may be quick, but sooner or later the man is brought to this. — "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He had once started at the Scriptural representation of man's fallen and depraved nature; he had once wondered that from the lip of truth had proceeded the startling words, "From within, out of the heart, proceed murders, adulteries, blasphemies, false witnesses, and abominable idolatries." He never could have thought that evil so dreadful, he never could have thought that sins so fearful, he never could have thought that principles so diabolical, could have been found in a nature like his; but there they are, and he has nothing to object — but, under the power of the deep conviction that is produced, he is filled with terrible alarm. If he casts his eye back, there are the crimes of his life; if he casts his eye forward, there is the tremendous judgment; if he lifts up his eyes to Heaven, there is the pure and holy God that he has insulted; and if he turns his eyes within, all is dark and vain and wild. He is filled with alarm — alarm that perhaps keeps him awake by night, and haunts and harasses him by day, until he is prepared to do anything, prepared to go anywhere, if he may but escape the just judgment of his God. He is by this discipline prepared to submit to God's method of salvation; he is prepared to give up proposing conditions according to which he would be saved; he no longer goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, but he is ready to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Being, therefore, conscious of his criminality, burdened with his guilt, trembling at the prospect of his destiny, he falls prostrate before the high throne of the Eternal, smites upon his breast, and cries "God be merciful to me a sinner," as if no such a sinner had ever appealed to God's mercy, as if no such culprit had ever stood before

God's throne; before God he says, "If there can be mercy in thy heart sufficient to reach a case so dismal and so desperate, God be merciful to me;" and after having pleaded with earnestness, after having supplicated with intense emotion, and after having, perhaps, become a little bold, he is startled at his own temerity, and receding, as it were, from the position that he had taken, he cries —

*“Depth of mercy, can there be  
Mercy in thy heart for me,  
O God of spotless purity?”*

And, perhaps, like David, he groans in his heart, and mourns in his soul, until his bones wax old, through his roaring all the day long. But, no relief, no help is found, until, at length, he begins to make confession of his sin, and, as he confesses, the Spirit of God unveils and unfolds the gospel mystery, and, as in the days of the law, when the victim was brought to the Priest, and the man placed his hand upon its head, between its horns, and pressed with his might and confessed over it all his transgressions, all his iniquities, and all his sins, so the man lays his hand of faith upon the victim's head, and there confesses his sin. As he confesses, a change takes place in his feelings, the burden begins to disperse, a little bright light in the cloud attracts his attention, and, as he looks upward, he seems to catch the loving Father's eye, and feels an encouragement within him to approach unto God; and, as he approaches, still confessing, still pleading, still deploring, still resting his hand upon the victim's head, and trusting in the atonement you have heard of, and on that alone, he seems to hear strange music, delightful melody, and that music is the commencement of the sound of the trump of the Jubilee, when the oppressed one is to go free, and as he listens to the sound the chains drop from his hands, and the burden from his shoulders, the trouble is removed from his heart, and he lifts up his eyes, streaming perhaps with tears, to heaven, and says, "Oh Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me:" and looking around, on those about him, in the language of wonder, astonishment, and gratitude, he says, "Behold, behold a mystery, behold a miracle, behold one of the greatest wonders of the universe; behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid, for Jah Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation." He has now peace flowing into his heart like a river, he has

now a consciousness that God has accepted him in the beloved, and he now experimentally knows the truth, tastes the sweetness, and feels the power of the apostolic testimony, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvelous light, from bondage into glorious liberty; out of prison the man comes to reign; from the dunghill he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God's people. And, now, as I must conclude, just observe, the origin of this call is the free, the sovereign, the distinguishing grace of God. It originates, not in man's will, nor in man's disposition, nor in man's station in society, but of His will, and of His will alone, who is the great sovereign ruler of the universe, is this change effected; of man it cannot be, for it includes a new creation; a resurrection; and the inhabitants of God. Generally speaking, the instrumentality by which God works is the gospel, but in every instance the agent that produces the change is the holy and eternal Spirit of God. He quickens the soul dead in trespasses and sins, he enlightens the understanding that was in the midnight darkness of nature, he disposes the will which before ran counter to the will of God; he teaches the understanding that was once averse to everything pure and holy, and then gently, and lovingly, and sweetly he leads the soul to the Cross to gaze upon the wondrous Sufferer, he then leads the soul to the Church to confess Christ and him crucified, and then leads it in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake. The calling is high, for it is from the High and Holy One; it is heavenly, in contrast with the earthly calling of the descendants of Abraham of old; it is an evidence of distinguishing love; and thanks, eternal thanks to God, it is irreversible; for the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance. From death to life we pass; from darkness into light we come; out of bondage into liberty we spring; from sin to the knowledge and enjoyment of holiness we are introduced; then at last from earth to heaven. Into the grace of Christ we are called, and we stand in his favor. Into the fellowship of Christ we are called, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. The Father draws; the Spirit quickens; the Son receives; and when locked in the arms of the Son of God, our effectual calling is realized and enjoyed. Its author, is God; its subjects, are the elect; its nature, is holy; and its end, is glorious. Thus,



you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which thought sprung into a perfect plan, to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus, whether you think of election, whether you think of redemption, or whether you think of effectual calling,

*“Give all the glory to his holy name,  
For to him all the glory belongs;  
Be your's the high joy still to sound forth his praise  
And crown him in each of your songs.”*

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON. — I think it was John Newton, who, speaking about good Calvinistic doctrine compared it to lumps of sugar; but he said, he did not so much give to his people the lumps of sugar, as diffuse the whole of it throughout his sermons; just as people do not eat sugar, but put it in their tea. Now, some of you have not yet grown patient enough to listen, I think, to a doctrine, however fully it may be brought out. Our people want anecdotes, illustrations, parables, and metaphors; even the best and sublimest things keep our minds on such a stretch when we listen to them, that there is good need that illustrations should yield us some relief. To-day was set apart that these doctrines might be fully brought out; this has been done, and there remains but one, and that my friend Mr O'Neil is to take, namely the final perseverance of the saints. Before he speaks, just one or two words. Has it never struck you that the scheme of doctrine which is called Calvinistic has much to say concerning God? It commences and ends with the Divine One. The angel of that system stands like Uriel in the sun; it dwells with God; he begins, he carries on, he perfects; it is for his glory and for his honor. Father, Son, and Spirit co-working, the whole Gospel scheme is carried out. Perhaps there may be this defect in our theology; we may perhaps too much forget man. I think that is a very small fault, compared with the fault of the opposite system, which begins with man, and all but ends with him. Man is a creature; how ought God to deal with him? That is the question some theologians seem to answer. The way we put it is — God is the Creator, he has a right to do as he wills; he is Sovereign, there is no law above him, he has a right to make and to unmake, and when man hath sinned, he has a right to save or to destroy. If he can save, and yet not impair his justice, heaven shall ring with songs; if he destroy, and yet his goodness be not marred, then hell itself with its deep bass of misery, shall swell the mighty rollings of his

glorious praise. We hold that God should be most prominent in all our teachings; and we hold this to be a gauge by which to test the soundness of ministers. If they exalt God and sink the sinner to the very dust, it is all well; but if they lower the prerogatives of Deity, if he be less sovereign, less just, or less loving than the Scripture reveals him to be, and if man be puffed up with that fond notion that he is anything better than an unclean thing, then such theology is utterly unsound. Salvation is of the Lord, and let the Lord alone be glorified.

## THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST JESUS;

**BY THE REV. WILLIAM O'NEILL,**

**MINISTER OF NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON.**

My dear Brethren and Friends.

Most unexpectedly did the kind invitation of my esteemed brother, Mr Spurgeon, come to me, to take part in the present service of this beautiful house. And after I had engaged to come I sincerely wished that I had not. I felt, however, that it would not be proper to retire from the engagement, but seek to meet in a becoming spirit, both towards God's truth and God's people. I will now try to do this. I utter here, of course, my own sentiments. As I am not responsible for anything that has been or may be said by another speaker, so I alone am responsible for what I shall say. But though I am not the delegate or representative of any church, denomination, or community, I doubt not that my declaration of faith on the matter at hand will be, in all substantial points, that of a very large number who love Jesus and are living in His service. That I desire to believe what the Bible teaches, and that I am sincere in my convictions, I know to be true: but that there are thousands of excellent Christians on the other side admits of no doubt, and should not be questioned by any one. Of their deep sincerity, love to God and his Gospel, zeal and devotedness in holy things, self-denying labors in the Divine service, and the cultivation and manifestation of Christian graces, I would and do speak with the most earnest approval. I give them as much credit for sincerity as I claim for

myself; and I do this not as a favor, but as a piece of simple justice. Yet we differ — differ as to what the Sacred Oracles teach on the doctrine now before us; and it is competent and right for all men to examine, each one for himself, which of our opinions is that which is taught in the Bible, for certainly both are not taught there.

The question — Is it possible for sincere Christians, truly regenerated persons, to be finally separated from Jesus, to lose the favor of God their Father, and be eternally shut out from His smile and Home? — is one of no small moment. It involves issues of the most momentous nature, and cannot but be unspeakably interesting to every believer in Christ. We say, with unfaltering tongue, that of all the dead, every one who was ever renewed in heart is now in heaven; and that reconciliation with God on earth, through Christ Jesus, will, in every case, end in the everlasting salvation of the soul. Did God, then, tell us that all who are here now are His regenerated people, (would that they were!) we should believe that when the roll of the finally saved shall be called, every one of them would answer to that call by saying, “Here am I, Lord: Thy right arm, and the effectual operation of Thy Spirit and grace has done it all, and now I am to be for ever happy, for ever sinless, for ever safe.” It is hardly necessary to say, that we believe this view of the case to be in entire harmony with the teaching of God’s Book. To the law and to the testimony, if we, or others, speak not on this and on all other matters according to that Word, it is because there is no light in us or in them. (Isaiah 8:20.)

Having called public attention to this doctrine lately in a small book,\* in which I have sought to obey the Master’s command, — “Search the scriptures,” — I will now, with your kind permission, direct attention to a few portions of the Divine Word that, we believe, fully establish the doctrine of the saints’ final preservation and perseverance. On each of those texts my words must be few, as the time allotted to me is short.

Hear then the Holy Spirit’s teaching when speaking by the prophet Samuel: —

“For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.”  
(1 Samuel 12:22)

This, we think, is conclusive. What Christian does not know, and knowing, does not mourn over, the untrustworthiness of his own heart? And feeling fully assured that it is impossible for him to vanquish “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” how welcome to his heart is the declaration, “The LORD will not forsake His people.” No; He thought proper to renew their hearts, to quicken them into spiritual life, and He will mercifully continue to carry on His good work in their souls till it be perfected in glory. The reason why “He will not forsake His people” is stated here most explicitly; just as much so as is the declaration of His unchangeable love. It is not that they were less sinful by nature or practice than others; or because of any moral qualities that were found in them; but “because it pleased the Lord to make them His people.” Hear another portion: God, speaking by his prophet Isaiah, says, —

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” (Isaiah 59:15, 16.)

This we regard as a most interesting, as well as a most consolatory portion of Scripture. “Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” This was not only an error in creed, — it was also a dishonorable estimate of the Divine character, and to it the Gracious One replies in these words: — “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.” The affection of a right-minded mother for her tender and helpless offspring is one of the strongest that is experienced by human beings. But, though strong, very strong, it may, alas! give way. It is, at best, only a creature’s love, and therefore changeable; while that love which is exercised by God towards His believing children is, like Himself, unchangeable. These words prove, and were designed to prove, most conclusively, that the love of the Divine Father towards His adopted sons and daughters is not a fluctuating or changing thing. What other, or what lower interpretation can we put upon the words, “YET WILL NOT I FORGET THEE?” And not forgetting them is, in this case, equivalent to His continuing to care for, to keep, and tenderly regard them.

Hear God again speaking by the same prophet: — “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” These words deserve to hold a prominent place among those which God has spoken for the comfort and joy of His people. Their obvious design is — to sustain believers under the chastening hand of God, and to do this by considerations drawn from His own character, and not from anything in themselves. Vain, brethren, is it to trust, or put confidence in our own false hearts. They are weak as helpless infancy. To lean on them will only be evidence of our folly and of our sin. We are not to find consolation in our gifts, in our graces, in our labors, in our resolutions, or in our experience, nor by the grace of God will we do so. But when chastised by the everloving and good Father, — when smarting under his parental and deserved stripes, — we may feast our souls on His blessed words — words that fire those souls with confidence, hope, and love. — “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” Such, brethren, are GOD’S utterances! These are the words of One who is unchangeable in affection; of One who says, — Oh! blessed be his adorable name for that saying, —

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6.)

I name another passage: —

“For there shall arise,” says Jesus, “false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24.)

The plain and obvious meaning of this latter clause is, that it is not possible to deceive, or allure to their final ruin, the adopted sons and daughters of God, those whom He has chosen to be His. Nothing less, we believe, was intended by the Gracious Speaker, and we see not how any other meaning can be consistently given to the language which He here uses. The words, “If it were possible,” only say, in another form, “It is not possible.”

I now name such texts as connect faith, or believing in Christ, with salvation, of which the following are a few: —

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.” “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (John 2:16, 5:24, 6:47, 50, 51, 57; Romans 1:16.)

The plain teaching of these, and many similar passages, is, that every believer in Jesus hath everlasting life. They teach this or they teach nothing. Is this be not their meaning, what is? But, can that which is everlasting cease to be? Can it come to an end? No words can more plainly assert than these do, that whosoever believeth in Jesus SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; that all believers in him shall enjoy “everlasting life.” We take these gracious assurances as proving, to the fullest extent, the doctrine for which we plead. If the belief of the Gospel be not followed, in every instance, by eternal blessedness, what did Paul mean when he said,

“The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?” (Romans 1:16.)

If, at the last day, a single one be unsaved of those who had believed the Gospel, who had been united to Christ by faith in His name — the

apostle's words must needs be falsified — his teaching is not true. This, at least, is our opinion. No amount of adverse criticism can set aside the evidence that such verses as these furnish in support of the blessed doctrine which we now defend.

Hear Christ again: — “My sheep,” he says, “hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.” We regard this entire passage as one of the most delightful and consoling in the Scriptures. It teaches most unequivocally, — in the plainest, strongest, and most conclusive terms, — that Christ's believing ones “SHALL NEVER PERISH;” that no enemy, human or hellish, shall be able to wrench them out of His or His Father's covenanted and secure grasp. Infinite power, no less than infinite love — both existing in their God and Savior — stand guarantee for their security! Neither men nor demons shall be able to defeat or overturn the purpose of Divine grace concerning them! Difficulties, many and sharp, may surround them; and temptations, fierce and fiery, may assault their souls; but Divine love, wisdom, grace, and power shall be ever on their side. Jesus, the “faithful and true witness,” says, “THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.” Elsewhere He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” (John 14:17) The spiritual life of believers is in HIS keeping, and He here declares that it is as secure as His own. If He dies, and continues not to be their “Advocate with the Father,” (1 John 2:1) their Intercessor “at the right hand of God,” (Romans 8:34) then may they die also, but not otherwise. In perfect keeping with his Lord's words are those which Paul uses, when referring to the same subject. “For if,” he says, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10) That is, we shall be preserved in that state of reconciliation by Christ's intercessory life at God's right hand in heaven. He, the God-man, lives there as Mediator, for them: He holds and exercises “all power in heaven and on earth” for the welfare and safety of His church. And they cannot die while He lives. The power that is to destroy the spiritual life of the weakest saint must first destroy the life of that saint's Head. “Their life,” as the Holy Spirit by Paul elsewhere teaches, “is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Where, brethren, could it be safer, or as safe? In whose care or keeping could it be so secure? It is “hid with Christ in God.” Not only so, but the Apostle goes on to say, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him IN GLORY.” This, to say the least of it, is a glorious statement and declaration. Can language, we ask, go beyond that which is used in these texts to guarantee the eternal salvation of every believer in Jesus? The Head and members shall never be separated. They are bound up in an inseparable and an unchanging union.

Hear a Divine lesson given in another place: —

“Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

When it is said, “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called,” we must interpret the word “called” to mean very much more than invited; for the Apostle goes on to say, “Whom He called, them He also justified.” We know that this is only true of those who believe in Jesus — who are effectually called or drawn, by the combined operations of the Word and Spirit of God, into the blessed fellowship and joys of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:9). That those, and only those, who believe in Christ are justified, is the uniform lesson of the Divine Word (John 3:16, 36; Acts 13:39, 40; Romans 1:16, 3:22, 28). Let it be noted that Paul affirms three things here. The first is — “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” The second is — “Whom He called, them He also justified.” And the third is — “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” What, then, does he mean by the expression “glorified?” Does he, or can he mean anything less than the enjoyment of everlasting life? We say, then, that were only a single individual out of the whole number of those who have been, or shall be “justified” by faith in Jesus, to come short of heaven, the declaration would not be true that “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

Hear another Divine proclamation relative to the security of God’s people:

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height, nor



depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

These, brethren, are notes of the most triumphant character, relative to the ultimate blessedness of believers in Jesus. The terms which are here used are such as leave no doubt as to what the Holy Spirit, speaking by Paul, meant to teach. We deliberately affirm that language has no power to assert the doctrine for which we contend more conclusively than is here done. Words have no meaning, nor are they of any use in communicating thought, if these words were not used by a man who believed as we do on the matter in hand. And we are entirely willing to believe or disbelieve with the Apostle Paul, neither more nor less.

I quote him again. Hear what he wrote to the Church at Philippi: —  
 “Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I well remember how greatly this strengthened my own soul when, in the morning of my religious life, I was passing through much mental conflict. And are not these words well calculated to comfort the hearts of those who, through grace, have believed in the Savior? Is there any room for objecting criticism here, or is there any ambiguity in the language employed? No, there is none whatever: the Apostle was “confident of this very thing.” What “very thing?” Why, that wherever the Divine Spirit had commenced this “good work” of grace in the soul, He would complete it. No other power could have begun it, and no other power is competent to carry it forward to completion. That He who commences that “good work” is able to finish it, no professing Christian will deny: that He will finish it, this verse most clearly teaches. The Apostle Paul was “confident of THIS VERY THING;” and so are we.

Let us give attention to other words of the same sacred penman. Addressing one of the primitive Churches, he says: —

“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

This is a most important portion of Scripture in relation to the question — What is the end of election? In what does it, or is it to terminate? What does it secure? Are its subjects merely chosen to enjoy the light of the gospel, the means of grace, and no more? Or, are they chosen to enjoy, in its full measure, everlasting life; the priceless favor and blissful fellowship of God here and for ever? This question is definitely settled by the language of inspiration employed here. The Apostle declares that the choice is “to salvation;” or, in other words, which he also uses in this place, “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This means, of course, eternal life in heaven, as well as all that precedes and prepares for it on earth. But how can this be realized? How can it be said, they were “chosen to salvation,” if they may all apostatize finally from Jesus, fall out of the Divine favor, and be for ever numbered with the lost? The thing is, of course, impossible. If not saved, — fully and for ever, — it would not be true to say they were chosen “to salvation.”

I beg to name one passage more. Speaking of believers, a divinely inspired teacher says: —

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”  
(1 Peter, 1:5).

Here we are distinctly taught what the Divine Being is doing and will continue to do for His believing people. The Apostle asserts, that they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” If so, nothing is more certain than that they shall reach it, and enjoy it for ever. Had Peter believed that it was possible for any number of them to become outcasts from God, and die in their sins, he would never have employed the language which is found here. The declaration that believers are “kept” or garrisoned in (for such is the meaning of the term here employed) “by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation,” settles the point with us, and leaves us nothing more to desire in the shape of statement or promise. This is, indeed, a glorious declaration. Fellow pilgrims, let it fill you with the highest joy, as it gives you the fullest assurance that you are safe in the grasp and guardianship of Jehovah of hosts.

We hold and teach too, that the certain enjoyment of everlasting life is inseparably connected with continued faith in the Divine testimony concerning sin, Jesus, and His salvation. They shall be preserved in the

exercise of faith in the Redeemer, until they shall enter upon the possession of the heavenly inheritance. This is clearly taught here, and nothing less.

I have now referred to a few out of the many portions of God's word which teach the doctrine for which we contend. God's people shall be preserved, and will persevere to the end, for they were given to Christ in the everlasting covenant, that covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure:" the stability of which is as safe as the oath, and promise, and power of God can make it (Psalm 89:30, 34; Hebrews 6:18, 19). They are "loved by Him with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3); they are "chosen to salvation" (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 4:13); and God, their gracious and reconciled Father, "will rest in His love" (Zephaniah 3:17). Their safety, as believers in Jesus, is secured by the word and promise of the "God that cannot lie." He has said that He will never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:2); that they shall never perish" (John 10:28); and that He will confirm them unto the end" (1 Corinthians 1:8).

For this purpose the ever-availing intercession of Jesus is employed. He is at the right hand of God as their Brother, Representative, and Advocate. He prays for them that their faith fail not (Luke 22:32). They are, each and all, borne on His heart, and pleaded for in His gracious and ever-successful intercession. "Father," says he,

"I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24).

Oh, what priceless joy do these words afford to the believer's heart! No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. Their Almighty King will vanquish all their spiritual foes. He will so aid them that they shall contend victoriously against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." They shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved them (Romans 8:37). They shall be the saved of His right arm, and the everlasting monuments and trophies of His grace, love, and power. They are

"sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession"  
(2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:13, 14).

Having received the “earnest,” the pledge which guarantees the fulfillment of their Heavenly Father’s covenant to save them, they are perfectly and for ever secure.

We build our faith in this doctrine on God’s plain teaching. We extort no meaning from His word which cannot be found there by the simple and ordinary reader of it. We take its statements in their plain and grammatical sense, just as they would be interpreted by any unprejudiced expounder of language. We should be content to abide by the interpretation of them which would be given by any man, infidel or other, who felt no interest in our controversy, and who was entirely careless relative to our differences of opinion. One unequivocal passage teaching this doctrine would be, or should be sufficient to establish it, and to bring our opinions into harmony with Divine teaching; but we are not confined to one, or five, or ten; we have line upon line, promise upon promise, assurance upon assurance, and declaration upon declaration to this effect. So that we would fain ask, — If the doctrine be not taught in the portions of Scripture that I have named, what is taught in them? What is their import? What do they teach? Or, what language or terms would be thought sufficient to teach it? It is our firm conviction that no doctrine of religion is more clearly taught in the Bible than is this. It is expressed as plainly as words can possibly do it.

And are we, with these inspired declarations before us, to suppose it possible for wicked men or demons to say, when pointing to numbers of the lost, — “The Most High began to build up His kingdom in their souls, but He was not able to finish it! He quickened them into spiritual life, — renewed, pardoned, justified, and sanctified them; but now they are torn from His grasp, His enemies were able — contrary to the words of Jesus (1 John 10:21) — ‘to pluck them out of His hand,’ and they have done it.”

This would, indeed, make short work of many plain and positive declarations found in the Bible: it would prove, beyond doubt, that its promises, and assurances, and declarations are of very little value.

Let me, before I close, say — and say with the fullest emphasis possible — that we believe as firmly as any man living, as firmly as we believe any truth taught in the Bible, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). We know no other evidence of being in Christ, or of being a Christian, than that which is furnished by a life and behavior

becoming the Gospel. And though holiness is not the cause of God's first or continued love to His people, it is the effect and fruit of that love, and a main part of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus — that salvation to which they are chosen (Ephesians 1:4); and he who is satisfying himself with the notion that he is safe for eternity, while he is living in any known sin, is turning the grace of our God into licentiousness, and is a deadly enemy of the Cross of Christ. The blessed doctrine which the Bible teaches, and in which we glory, is — the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance, and that doctrine was never designed to comfort any man who is not living a life of faith in the Son of God, intensely anxious to please God in all things, and to be the holy and happy subject of that mind which was in Jesus.

Very interesting, then, is the question, when asked in no wrong spirit — Are there few that be saved? If GOD does not hold up His people, if He does not keep them by His grace and power, they will be very few indeed — a child may count them, and, in fact, have none, not one, to count. But let no man charge our views with being “narrow,” or “embracing only a few,” or contemplating the eternal salvation of “a very limited number” of our race, for, according to the view which we hold and teach, they will be a numberless number. We believe, and our hearts swell with high and holy joy in believing, that every child of man who loved God, — every one of Adam's race who was renewed in heart, — all who were ever on the Lord's side, — will be found among the saved. Not one will be lost. Not one will be missed from the eternal banquet. Not one, will be outside the gates of the holy city. All, all shall be there, and there for ever, and ever, and ever!

*“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
He will not, He cannot, give up to His foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
He'll never! no, never! no, never forsake!”*

#### NOTE

\*Unchanging Love. Tresidder, Ave Maria Lane, London. All the texts that are usually quoted in opposition to the doctrine now noticed are passed under calm review. [Return to text.]

# INTERCESSORY PRAYER

## SERMON NO. 404

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST THE 11TH, 1861

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends” —  
Job 42:10*

THE LORD turned the captivity of Job.” So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown for ever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness for ever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath his wings, — “The Lord turned again the captivity of Job.” Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten his end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan’s challenge, had stretched forth his hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh, and yet the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job’s faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew uprightly. The fire had been fierce enough, the gold was undiminished, and only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was his own glory. And God was glorified abundantly. Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had gotten unto himself eternal renown through that grace by which he supported his poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others, which may have been in Job’s temper

had been at last removed, and any self-justification which once had lurked within, was fairly driven out. Now God's gracious designs are answered, he removed the rod from his servant's back, and takes the melted silver from the midst of the glowing coals. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought, and he shows this by the fact that he never afflicts them longer than there is a need for it, and never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of his wisdom and of his love. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job." Beloved brother in Christ, thou hast had a long captivity in affliction. God hath sold thee into the hand of thine adversaries, and thou hast wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging thy harp upon the willows. Despair not! He that turned the captivity of Job can turn thine as the streams in the south. He shall make again thy vineyard to blossom, and thy field to yield her fruit. Thou shalt again come forth with those that make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on thy lip. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about thy soul. Hope yet, for there is hope. Trust thou still, for there is ground of confidence. He shall bring thee up again rejoicing from the land of thy captivity, and thou shalt say of him, "He hath turned my mourning into dancing."

The circumstance which attended Job's restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Intercessory prayer was the omen of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within. Brethren, it is not fetching a laborious compass, when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job, and pray for our friends, and peradventure if we have been in trouble, our captivity shall be turned.

Four things I would speak of this morning, and yet but one thing; I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus — first, by way of commending the exercise; secondly, by way of encouraging you to enlist in it; thirdly, by way of suggestion, as to the persons for whom you should especially

pray; and fourthly, by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercession for others.

**I.** First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you that intercessory prayer has been practiced by all the best of God's saints. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint's name, but beyond a doubt, there has never been a man eminent for piety personally, who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others, and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" With what importunity did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with him again and again for Sodom; how frequently did he reduce the number, as though, to use the expression of the Puritan, "He were bidding and beating down the price at the market." "Peradventure there be fifty; peradventure there lack five of the fifty; peradventure there be twenty found there; peradventure there be ten righteous found there: wilt thou not spare the city for the sake of ten?" Well did he wrestle, and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city. Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned; how often did he intercede! How frequently do you meet with such a record as this — "Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God!" Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal disadvantage to intercede, and yet when God had said, "Let me alone, I will make of thee a great nation," yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of justice, and cried, "Spare them, Lord, and if not," (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) "blot my name out of the Book of Life." Never was there a mightier prophet than Moses, and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer. Or pass on, if you will, to the days of Samuel. Remember his words, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you." Or bethink you of Solomon, and of his earnest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands he prayed for the assembled people; or if you want another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib's letter spread out before the Lord, when he prayed not only for himself, but for God's people of Israel in



those times of straits. Think ye, too, of Elias, who for Israel's sake would bring down the rain that the land perish not; as for himself, miracles gave him his bread and his water, it was for others that he prayed, and said to his servant, "Go again seven times." Forget not Jeremy, whose tears were prayers — prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lip. He wept himself away, his life was one long shower, each drop a prayer, and the whole deluge a flood of intercession. And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and his apostles, remember how Peter prays on the top of the house, and Stephen amidst the falling stones. Or think you, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said, that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, "making mention of you daily in my prayers," stopping in the very midst of the epistle and saying, "For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion that there is not a single child of God who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the church at large, and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others.

But further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that Christ in His holy gospel has made it your duty and your privilege to intercede for others. When he taught us to pray, he said, "Our Father," and the expressions which follow are not in the singular but in the plural — "Give us this day our daily bread." "Forgive us our debts"; "Lead us not into temptation"; evidently intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone, that while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Savior's own — "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers, though offered in private; and even in secret we should not forget the church of the living God. By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Ghost exhort us to pray for ministers! "Brethren," says Paul, "pray for us"; and then after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, "And for us also that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak." While James, who is ever a practical apostle, bids us pray for one another; in that same verse, where he says, "Confess your sins the one to

the other,” he says, “and pray one for another,” and adds the privilege “that ye may be healed,” as if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer; we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.

But, brethren, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of the high example of your Master; he is your pattern; follow ye his leadership. Was there even one who interceded as he did? Remember that golden prayer of his, where he cried for his own people, “Father, keep them, keep them from the evil!” Oh what a prayer was that! He seems to have thought of all their wants, of all their needs, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, he pours out his heart before his Father’s throne. Bethink you how, even in the agonies of his crucifixion, he did not forget that he was still an intercessor for man. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, remember, brethren, it is your Savior’s example to you today, for there before the throne, with outstretched hands, he prays not for himself, for he has attained his glory; not for himself, for he rests from his labors, and has received his everlasting recompense; but for you, for the purchase of his blood, for as many as are called by his grace, yea, and for those who shall believe on him through our word —

*“For all that come to God by him,  
Salvation he demands;  
Points to the wounds upon his heart,  
And spreads his bleeding hands.”*

Come, brethren, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others.

But I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was his will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ’s practice to intercede, yet the very spirit of our holy religion would constrain us to plead for others. Dost thou go up into thy closet, and in the face and presence of God think of none but thyself? Surely the love of Christ cannot be in thee, for the spirit of Christ is not selfish. No man liveth unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I

know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if they hear the Word, if they be saved, if they get to heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, thou shalt not get there! It would need another heaven for thee, for the heaven of Christ is the heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the large-hearted, the bliss of living spirits, the heaven of those who, like Christ, are willing to become poor that others may be rich. I cannot believe — it were a libel upon the cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which he taught — if I could ever believe that the man whose prayers are selfish has anything of the spirit of Christ within him. Brethren, I commend intercessory prayer, because it opens man's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, constrains him to feel that he is not everybody, and that this wide world and this great universe were not after all made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet. It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not uplifted alone for him, for its far-reaching arms were meant to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race. Thou lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make another man of thee, a man more like the Son of Man, and less like Nabal the churl. But again; I commend the blessed privilege of intercession, because of its sweet brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard, and harsh, and unlovely of spirit, but praying much for others will remind us we have, indeed, a relationship to the saints, that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us the one to the other than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbour enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him. If he hath done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy seat, and prayed over it, you must forgive. Surely you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God and then come forth to curse him in your own soul. When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother, it is generally the best way to say, "Let us pray before we enter into the matter." Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the brethren who contend, "Let us pray first," and it will often happen that through prayer the differences will soon be forgotten. They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the brethren rise from their knees they will say, "They

are gone; we cannot contend now after having been one in heart before the throne of God.” I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister, and his minister wisely said to him, “Well, don’t talk to me in the street; come to my house, and let us hear it all.” He went, and the minister said, “My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me; no doubt I have my imperfections as well as any other man, and I hope I shall never be above being told of them, but in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me let us kneel down and pray together.” So our quarrelsome friend prayed first and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, “Now, my brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind; tell me what it is that you have to find fault with.” The man blushed, and stammered, and stuttered, and said, he did not think there was anything at all, except in himself. “I have forgotten to pray for you, sir,” said he, “and of course I cannot expect that God will feed my soul through you when I neglect to mention you at the throne of grace.” Ah, well, brethren, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren you will forgive their tempers, you will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words; but knowing that you also may be tempted, and are men of like passions with them, you will cover their faults, and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except it be this, that it seems to me that when God gives any man much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family. I would compare you who have near communion with God to courtiers in the king’s palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage — a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage which you ought to use right diligently. I ask you to use it on my behalf. When it is well with you, then think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing; when thou hast the King’s ear, speak to him for us. When thou art permitted to come very near to his throne, and he saith to thee, “Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt”; when thy faith is strong, thine eye clear, thine access near,

thine interest sure, and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in thy heart — then take the petitions of thy poor brethren who stand outside at the gate and say, “My Lord, I have a poor brother, a poor child of thine, who has desired me to ask of thee this favor. Grant it unto me; it shall be a favor shown unto myself; grant it unto him, for he is one of thine. Do it for Jesus’ sake!” Nay, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace, unless it prompts you to use your influence for others. Soul, if thou hast grace at all, and art not a mighty intercessor, that grace must be but as a grain of mustard-seed — a shrivelled, uncomely, puny thing. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a rich cargo of the wants of others up to the throne of God, and thou wouldst bring back for them rich blessings which but for thee they might not have obtained. If thou be like an angel with thy foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to heaven, if thou art ascending and descending, know that thou wilt ascend with others’ prayers and descend with others’ blessings, for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone. Thus much on commendation.

**II.** We turn to our second point, and endeavor to say something BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.

First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censer, there is not a single grain that is for himself. His work is done; his reward obtained. Now you do not doubt but that Christ’s prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications. Very well, my brethren, the more like your prayer is to Christ’s, the more sweet it will be; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness, they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of thy sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! Intercessory prayer has stayed plagues. It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt; it drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land; it scattered the lice and

locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoar; it removed the murrain, and the thunder, and the lightning; it stayed all the ravages which God's avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases; — we know it did in the early church. We have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king's arm was withered, he said to the prophet, "Pray for me," and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead, for Elias stretched himself upon the child seven times, and the child sneezed, and the child's soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, recording angel, thou canst tell! Eternity, thou shalt reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do. Oh! believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it now with faith, and thou shalt surely prevail. But perhaps you have a doubt about interceding for some one who has fallen far into sin. Brethren, did ye ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have ye never heard by the farmer's fire some old-fashioned story of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet he was but in a trance and not dead? And have ye not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you that spiritually there has been many a man given up for dead that was still within reach of grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet even by Christian people, given up to damnation even by the ministers of Christ, consigned to perdition even by their own kinsfolk. But yet into perdition they did not come, but God found them, and took them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon his living rock. Oh! give up nobody; still pray, lay none out for spiritually dead until they are lain out for dead naturally. But perhaps you say, "I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless." You will get strength, my brethren, by the exertion. But besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses. Now, brethren, if you sow seed you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest, — it is the vitality in the seed. And so in the prayer of faith. When you can plead a promise and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your

weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God and bring down blessings from on high. Job! thou comest from thy dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness; — thou comest from thy poverty and thy desertion to intercede for others, and so may we. Elias was a man of like passions — sweet word! — of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed, and so shalt thou; only do thou see to it that thou be not negligent in these exercises, but that thou pray much for others even as Job prayed for his friends.

Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen, more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach. Now, that I may have your attention yet once again — and a change of posture may do you all good — will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer and then I will go on again. It shall be this one:

*“Pity the nations, O our God,  
Constrain the earth to come;  
Send thy victorious word abroad,  
And bring the strangers home!”*

(The congregation here rose, and sung the verse.)

**III.** The third head is A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY. It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. In the case of Job, he prayed for his offending friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and though there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure — for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man — yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps, there is no greater offense which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face, to suspect his motives, and to accuse him of self-seeking. And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun forgets the darkness that has hidden its glory, and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy seat, and pleads. He is accepted himself, and he begs that his friends may be accepted too. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God; it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness. Do not do that, however, in a threatening

way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threatening, he should pray for me. It was a horrid threat, for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord. Do not do it in that sense, as though like a supercilious hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain glory; but do it when you are alone before God, and in secret; not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story out again, for that were abominable indeed; but that you may remove from your erring brother any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.

Again: be sure you take there your controverting friends. These brethren had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to controvert. Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, "Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out." I say, "No! let the two good men meet and pray the matter out." He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy seat, I should suspect is wrong. I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my brethren who do not see "Believers' baptism" may be made to see it. If they think it is wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right; but I have never heard them do that; I have never heard them pray to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling — I wish they would, if they believe it to be scriptural, and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test, the God that answereth by fire, let him be God, and whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand. Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion-room, or to the debating-club, but carry them before God, and let this be your cry, "Oh! Thou that teachest us to our profit, teach me if I be wrong, and teach my friend wherein he errs, and make him right."

This is the thing we ought also to do with haughty friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty — Oh! how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless they thought it very great condescension. Now, you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It will not make them humble for you to



grumble about that. What if there be a Mrs. So-and-so who wears a very rustling dress, and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too! What if there be a brother who can afford to wear creaking boots, and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor! Tell your Father about it; that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a torpid liver, or a cataract in the eye; you would pity him. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride; go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it; it may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right. Pray him down, brother, pray him down; have duel with him, and have the choice of weapons yourself, and let that be the weapon of all — prayer; and if he be proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of his own child and make him humble as he should be. But particularly let me ask you to pray most for those who are disabled from praying for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said he would not accept them if they did. He said he was angry with them, but as for Job, said he, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even of God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer; he must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And there are many poor Christians that cannot pray; doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence, and they are standing outside the gate with their petitions; they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, that are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith, and therefore they cannot prevail. Now, my dear brethren, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you, and when you have had your own hearing, then say, "But, my Lord, inasmuch as thou hast honored me, and made me to eat of thy bread, and drink from thy cup, hear me for thy poor people who are just now denied the light of thy countenance." Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin and they cannot pray, pray for them; it is a blessed thing — that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith; which a saint may exert towards a sinner. "Lord, that sinner does not feel; help me to feel for him because he will not feel; Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ, he does not think that Christ can save

him, but I know he can, and I will pray believingly for that sinner, and I will repent for him, and though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet it may come to pass that through me he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer.”

**IV.** Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us thy strength now, that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience, and we may at once engage in this exercise! Brethren, I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighborhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If you have, I have not. For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin; and while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.

I begin thus, by saying, Brethren, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you. I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God’s Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you that were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants. Your mothers’ liquid prayers fell hot upon your infant brows, and gave you what was a true christening while you were still but little ones. There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives’ prayers; brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister’s pleading; children who must confess that their sabbath-school teachers were wont to pray for them. Now, if by others’ prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness, but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him may write himself down a hopeless character. During one of the revivals in America, a young man was going to see the minister, but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness. A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done, and he said, “Well, I did not want to see him; I knew he had only come to mock and scoff; what should I see him for; you do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done

the same." A day or two after there was a public meeting, where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued. A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse, and as he was riding along he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, "Where are you going today, William?" "Well, I am going to the meeting, and I hear that you have been converted." "I thank God I have been brought to a knowledge of the truth," he answered. "Oh!" said the other, "I shall never be; I wish I might." His friend was surprised to hear him whom the minister thought to be so hard say that, and he said, "But why cannot you be converted?" "Why?" said the other, "you know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K — ." "Yes, so I was." "Ah," said the other, "there is nobody to pray for me; they have all given me up long ago." "Why," said his friend, "it is very singular, but Mr. K — , who prayed for me, has been praying for you too; we were together last night, and I heard him." The other threw himself back in his saddle, and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise. "Is that true?" said he. "Yes, it is." "Then blessed be God, there is hope for me now, and if he has prayed for me, that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself." And he did so, and that meeting witnessed him confessing his faith in Christ. Now, let no man of your acquaintance say that there is nobody to pray for him; but as you had somebody to plead for you, let poor souls of your acquaintance find in you a person to plead for them.

Then, again, permit me to say, how are you to prove your love to Christ or to his church if you refuse to pray for men? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If we do not love the brethren, we are still dead. I will aver no man loves the brethren who does not pray for them. What! It is the very least thing you can do, and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater. You do not love the brethren unless you pray for them, and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins. Let me ask you again how is it that you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, "Selfish wretch, thou art always knocking at my door, but it is always to cry for thine own welfare and never for another's; inasmuch as thou hast never asked for a blessing for one of the least of

these my brethren, neither will I give a blessing to thee. Thou lovest not the saints, thou lovest not thy fellow men, how canst thou love me whom thou hast not seen, and how shall I love thee and give thee the blessing which thou askest at my hands?" Brethren, again I say I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests, but how priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world, even as Christ was sent into the world, but how sent unless they are sent to pray? Christians are meant not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, but how if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession, cast down, I pray you, the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense, renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out, make not a mock and sport of solemn things. And you must do so if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplications before the throne. O brethren, let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighborhood! Let us carry "London" written on our breasts just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons and your daughters! Men and brethren, let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty! Let us cry aloud and keep no silence, and give to the Lord no rest till he establish and make his Church a praise in the earth. Wake, ye watchmen upon Zion's walls, and renew your shouts! Wake, ye favorites of heaven, and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you, it is yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers. God hath put high up in the mountains of his promise springs of love, it is yours to bring them down by the divine channel of your intense supplications. Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your bowels of compassion and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, he should say in his wrath, "These are not my children. They have not my spirit. They are not partakers of my love, neither shall they enter into my rest." Why, there are some of you that have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it be at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayers are. It is, "Lord, take care of my family." You know how some farmers pray. "Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country. Lord, preserve the precious fruits of the field all round this neighborhood. Never mind about

their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up.” And so there are some who make themselves special objects of supplication; and what care they for the perishing crowd. This is the drift of some men’s wishes, “Lord, bless the Church, but don’t send another minister into our neighborhood lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send laborers into the vineyard, but do not send them into our corner lest they should take any of our glory from us.” That is the kind of supplication. Let us have done with such. Let us be Christians; let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others. Let us weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice; and as a Church and as private persons, we shall find the Lord will turn our captivity when we pray for our friends. God help us to plead for others! And as for you that have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

# GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL

## SERMON NO. 442

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 30TH, 1862,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,  
but of God that showeth mercy.” — Romans 9:16*

*“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” — Revelation 22:17*

THE great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of “the will.” I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and to stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against — sectarianism, for “sectarianism” is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism, let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When

we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then truth shall fly out of hand, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged, — a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good — mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason: moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over “Robinson Crusoe” as the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. “This is good; oh! this is precious!” say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to dishonor. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, a then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God’s truth upon the model of this toy; they magnify one capital truth till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be

able say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavor honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you, if it be according to God's Word, reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man; and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored.

**I.** First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So saith our text — “It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;” by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because he wills it, but because God willed, accord to that other passage, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependent upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument. There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which lead you to assert, “That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books.” Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of creation. There was a time when these works had no existence;



the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in the counsel by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping, so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his molding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift up their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself, ordained that yon Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalcule up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying,

*My goodness is most free  
To act or not: Necessity and Chance  
Approach not me, and what I will is fate.*

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdicated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of Providence. I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with

doubts about the matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride — “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou.” From the first moment of human history even to the last, God’s will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime — there may be the second causes and the action of human evil, but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of Providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God’s people that “all things work together for good to them that love God;” and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common Providence is left as a lonely providence to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no brethren. As surely as God’s will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God’s will is the great heart of providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man’s hardness of heart, despite man’s willful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his won decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of e text, that salvation is not left with man’s will.

**2.** But, secondly, we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot bear to look them in

the face. If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory — that salvation depends upon our own will — you have first of all this difficulty to meet, that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent. You have put an “if” upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to that theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond-slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God’s grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, “This is the sure mercy of David;” for there is an “if,” and a “but;” a “perhaps,” and a “peradventure.” In fact, the reigns are gone out of God’s hands; the linch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man’s own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be gloried or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when come back to the old fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in; not only is everything made contingent, but it does seem to us as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe. According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must win like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is; God willeth good and would do it, but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man: for man, according to that theory nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills. If it be as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say. "I will" or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God himself; though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works — the salvation man — to be dependent upon the will of his creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

**3.** We think that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will; and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man, — God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" you will say that is a figure. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive

to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a “spirit” with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body, but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, “the spirit,” he knows nothing of and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then again, what make you of the words of our Savior where he said to those who had heard even him, “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?” Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dare say they will? “Ah, but,” you say, “they could if they would.” Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am talking about if they would, the question is “will they?” and we say “no,” they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief, and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact does not alter for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall make him will? — unless, in some mysterious way, he who made heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

**4.** But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. It is consistent with the universal experience of all God’s people that salvation is of God’s will. You will say, “I have not had a very long life, I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God’s grace had sweetly

influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymn-book which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayer into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse —

*Oh! yes, I do love Jesus,  
Because he first loved me.  
Nor would they find fault with our own hymn,  
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced us in;  
Else we had still refused to taste,  
And perished in our sin.*

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say. "Crown him; crown him, put it on his head, for he is worthy; he has made us to differ; he has done it, and unto him be the praise for ever and ever." What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience, — that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

**5.** But, lastly, in the way of argument. and to bring our great battering-ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the know feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not accord to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse,

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*

according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will”

— a double word you notice — it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse,

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.”

So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse —

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:”

a stronger expression than “of his will” — “of his own will,” his free unbiased will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose — redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse:

“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified.”

So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the Gospel according to John, the first chapter and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the

vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: “Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse:

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we  
should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.”

In these passages — and they are not the only ones — the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to the sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God’s holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourteenth chapter, and third verse, we have, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixteenth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God’s people, rests upon his will.

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing, we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

## **II. MAN’S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.**

“Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.” According to this and many other texts the Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by



compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought of forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free-agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we are never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his old will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved — no, that is a cold word — as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we do hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will to do of his own good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral suasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far

as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you, — and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things, — this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live by a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun, which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never run after him. If you are saying, “Come to me, Jesus,” it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father’s face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then

when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give your yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? Yea. And if he does come, does he come because God brings him? Yea. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those are the yea and nay people who have a nay for the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon as a man has any willingness given to him, he has a special promise. Before he had the willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hense your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise — "Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm-yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul! are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could be but saved, I would ask nothing else.

*Lord, deny me what thou wilt,  
Only ease me of my guilt;  
Suppliant at thy feet I lie,  
Give me Christ, or else I die.*

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel, he speaks to you and says — "Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but

you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now! Thou are willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "Deus vult; God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulcher, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink from the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" yet "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely."

# THE STONY HEART REMOVED

## SERMON NO. 456

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 25TH, 1862,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,  
and I will give you an heart of flesh.” — Ezekiel 36:26.*

THE FALL of man was utter and entire. Some things when they have become dilapidated may be repaired; but the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is rent and rotten; he that would mend it with new cloth doth but make the rent worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals; he who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottles will burst, and his wine will be lost. Old shoes and clouted might be good enough for Gibeonites; but we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible. If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out; if you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound, and the mark may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure? If the core were smitten with death, what power but the divine could ever restore it to life? If a man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid, and the bone is by-and-bye restored to its former strength, if a man hath youth on his side. But if a man's heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvelous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say:

*“Can aught beneath a power divine  
The stubborn will subdue?  
‘Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,  
To form the heart anew.*

*To chase the shades of death away  
And bid the sinner live!  
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,  
‘Tis thine alone to give.”*

But while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delighteth to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man; but to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delighteth to undertake strange things; to bring light out of darkness; order out of confusion; to send life into the dead; to heal the leprosy; to work marvels of grace and mercy, and wisdom, and peace — these, I say, God delighteth to do; and so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to him. And more, its impossibility to us commends it to him, and makes him the more willing to undertake it, that he may thus glorify his great name.

According to the Word of God, man’s heart is by nature like a stone; but God, through his grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this prodigy of love, this miracle of grace, which is to engage our attention to-night. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been wrought in ourselves. I trust we shall talk experimentally, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of divine love.

Two things we shall talk of to-night. First, the stony heart and its dangers; secondly, the heart of flesh and its privileges.

**I.** Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?

**1.** First, because, like a stone it is cold. Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations; and it is thought to be a part, of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but for how

short a time will it retain its heat; and though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man. It is warm enough towards sin; it it grows hot as coals of juniper, towards its own lusts; but naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God. You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment, but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, “What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth!” and another added, “But there is a greater wonder than that — to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly.” Ah, dear friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warm the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus; nay, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man. Though your hearts renewed by grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbor’s heart with the divine heat; he will think you a fool for being so enthusiastic; he will turn upon his heel and think you a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him: the warmth that is in your heart you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it. The heart of man, like marble, is stone-cold.

**2.** Then, again, like a stone, it is hard. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite-beds, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone; it is harder than the diamond; it cannot be cut; it cannot be broken; it cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth’s great steam hammer, come down upon a man’s heart, and the heart has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking. We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it, we have marked the great battery of the law with its ten great pieces of ordnance all fired against the heart of man, but man’s heart has been harder even than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships, and the great shots of the law have dropped harmlessly against a man’s conscience — he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged

sentence can cut your hearts? What needle-warning can prick your consciences? Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard, and impenetrable. Some of you now present, have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you, but like Pharaoh, you have said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I will not bow my neck, neither will I do his will. I am my own master, and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God.” O rocks of iron and hills of brass, ye are softer than the proud heart of man!

**3.** Again, a stone is dead. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it; it will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales; no smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the most happy story. It is dead; there is no consciousness in it; prick it and it will not bleed; stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man’s heart is not like this as to natural things, yet spiritually this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion. “Ye are dead in trespasses and sins ,” powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower, but real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melancthon may preach, but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him. Ye may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and ye may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead. Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Tears are lost on him; threatenings are but as the whistlings of the wind, the preachings of the law, and even of Christ crucified — all these are null and void and fall hopelessly to the ground, so long as the man’s heart continues what is by nature — dead, and hard, and cold.

**4.** Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man’s heart is like a stone because it is not easily to be softened. Lay a stone in water as long as you will and you shall not find it readily subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere and the sulfurous vapors of London; certain stones



crumble to decay, but the stone of a man's heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue; it grows harder whether it be the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it. Mercy and love alike make it more solid, and knit its particles closer together; and surely until the Omnipotent himself speak the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken. There is an invention, I believe, for liquifying flints, and then afterwards they may be poured out in a solution which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones; but you never can liquify, except by a divine power, the flinty heart of man. Granite may be ground, may be broken into pieces, but unless God gets the hammer in his hand, and even he must put both hands to it, the great granitic heart of man will not yield in any way. Certain stones have their veins, and certain crystallic stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow; but you can never find a vein in man's heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges with tears, with entreaties, with threatenings, and it will not break; nay, even the fires of hell, do not melt man's heart, for the damned in hell grow more hard by their agonies, and they hate God, and blaspheme him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only Omnipotence itself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man.

**5.** So, then, man's heart is cold, and dead, and hard, and cannot be softened; and then, again — and this is but an enlargement of a former thought — it is utterly senseless, incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science; we are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view. Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word; they often get so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts; but alas! their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone; if you have hot running wax you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear never so hard upon the stamp, there is no

impression, the surface shows no trace of your labor. So is man's heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so, they do not like to hear human nature slandered, so they say. Well, friend, if though hast not this hard heart, why is it thou art not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits this nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his chapel and said, "Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don't believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe, and is not without spiritual power." "Well," said the doctor, "have you repented and believed?" "No," said the other. "Very well, then," said he, "you deserve double damnation." And so I say to the man who boasts that he has not such a hard heart as this — have you laid hold of Christ? have you come to him? if you have not, then out of your own heart be you condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God, for having resisted the influences of God's Spirit and rejected his grace. I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally by-and-bye, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.

But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of final impenitence. If all these years the processes of nature have been at work with your heart, and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish. Many of you are no strangers to the means of grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the gospel preached ever since you were little ones: you went to the Sabbath school; mayhap, you were wont in your boy hood to listen to old Mr. So-and-so, who often brought tears to your eyes, and of late you have been here, and there have been times with this congregation when the word seemed enough to melt the very rocks and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance, and yet you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely this should be the natural inference from the logic of facts you will continue as you are now, means will be useless to you, privileges will but become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over, and eternity approaches, unblest, unsaved, and you will go down to the doom of the lost soul. "Oh!" saith one, "I hope not;" and I add, I hope not too; but I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the gospel, and you are

getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it. As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith's dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks, but afterwards got so used to it, that he could lie and sleep under the anvil; and there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God's wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse. I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you, but asleep in your hearts, your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher, and your ears may be listening to his voice.

And further, there is another danger, hearts that are not softened grow harder and harder; what little sensibility they seemed to have, at last departs. Perhaps there are some of you that can recollect what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at this hour, which teaches a good moral: there is a mother putting her children to bed, the father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers; the little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers; there is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down; he is putting his hand to his head, and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it; he recollects when he too was taught to pray at his mother's knee, and though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear hearers, that you do not grow worse and worse; for it will be so; we either grow ripe or rotten, one of the two, as years pass over us. Which is it with you?

Then further, a man who has a hard heart is Satan's throne. There is a stone they tell us, in Scotland, at Scone, where they were wont to crown their old kings: the stone on which they crown the old king of hell is a hard heart; it is his choicest throne; he reigns in hell, but he counts hard hearts to be his choicest dominions.

Then again, the hard heart is ready for anything. When Satan sits upon it and makes it his throne, there is no wonder that from the seat of the scorner flow all manner of evil. And besides that, the hard heart is impervious to all instrumentality. John Bunyan, in his history of the "Holy War," represents old Diabolus, the devil, as providing for the people of Mansoul a coat of armor, of which the breastplate was a hard heart. Oh! that is a

strong breastplate. Sometimes when we preach the gospel, we wonder that there is not more good done. I wonder that there is so much. When men sit in the house of God, armed up to their very chins in a coat of mail, it is not much wonder that the arrows do not pierce their hearts. If a man has an umbrella, it is no marvel if he does not get wet; and so when the showers of grace are falling, there are many of you who put up the umbrella of a hard heart, and it is no marvel if the dew of grace and the rain of grace do not drop into your souls. Hard hearts are the devil's life-guards. When he once gets a man in an armor of proof — that of a hard heart — “Now,” says he, “you may go anywhere.” So he sends them to hear the minister, and they make fun of him; he lets them read religious books, and they can find something to mock at there; he will then turn them even to the Bible, and with their hard heart they may read the Bible pretty safely, for even the Word of God the hard heart can turn to mischief, and find something to find fault with even in the person of Christ, and in the glorious attributes of God himself. I shall not stay longer upon this very painful subject; but if you feel that your hearts are hard, may your prayer go up to God, “Lord, melt my heart. None but a bath of blood divine can take the flint away; but do it Lord, and thou shalt have the praise.”

**II.** Secondly, and briefly, A HEART OF FLESH AND ITS PRIVILEGES. “I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” In many — very many who are present to-night my text has been fulfilled. Let us join in praying for others whose hearts are still stony, that God would work this miracle in them, and turn their hearts to flesh.

What is meant by a heart of flesh? I means a heart that can feel on account of sin — a heart that can bleed when the arrows of God stick fast in it; it means a heart that can yield when the gospel makes its attacks — a heart that can be impressed when the seal of God's word comes upon it; it means a heart that is warm, for life is warm — a heart that can think, a heart that can aspire, a heart that can love — putting all in one — a heart of flesh means that new heart and right spirit which God giveth to the regenerate. But wherein does this heart of flesh consist; wherein does its tenderness consist? Well, its tenderness consists in three things. There is a tenderness of conscience. Men who have lost their stony hearts are afraid of sin, even before sin they are afraid of it. The very shadow of evil across their path frightens them. The temptation is enough for them, they flee

from it as from a serpent; they would not dally and toy with it, lest they should be betrayed. Their conscience is alarmed even at the approach of evil, and away they fly; and in sin, for even tender hearts do sin, they are uneasy.; As well might a man seek to obtain quiet rest on a pillow stuffed with thorns, as the tender conscience get any peace while a man in sinning. And then, after sin — here comes the pinch — the heart of flesh bleeds as though it were wounded to its very core. It hates and loathes and detests itself that ever it should have gone astray. Ah, stony heart, you can think of sin with pleasure, you can live in sin and not care about it; and after sin you can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue and say, “Who is my master? I care for none; my conscience does not accuse me.” But not so the tender broken heart. Before sin, and in sin, and after sin, it smarts and cries out to God. So also in duty as well as in sin, the new heart is tender. Hard hearts care nothing for God’s commandment; hearts of flesh wish to be obedient to every statute. “Only let me know my Master’s will and I will do it.” The hearts of flesh when they feel that the commandment has been omitted, or that the command has been broken, mourn and lament before God. Oh! there are some hearts of flesh that cannot forgive themselves, if they have been lax in prayer, if they have not enjoyed the Sabbath-day, if they feel that they have not given their hearts to God’s praise as they should. These duties which hearts of stone trifle with and despise, hearts of flesh value and esteem. If the heart of flesh could have its way, it would never sin, it would be as perfect as its Father who is in heaven, and it would keep God’s command without flaw of omission or of commission. Have you, dear friends, such a heart of flesh as this?

I believe a heart of flesh, again, is tender, not only with regard to sin and duty, but with regard to suffering. A heart of stone can hear God blasphemed and laugh at it; but our blood runs cold to hear God dishonored when we have a heart of flesh. A heart of stone can bear to see its fellow creatures perish and despise their destruction; but the heart of flesh is very tender over others. “Faith its pity would reclaim, and snatch the firebrand from the flame.” A heart of flesh would give its very life-blood if it might but snatch others from going down to the pit, for its bowels yearn and its soul moves toward its fellow sinners who are on the broad road to destruction. Have you, oh, have you such a heart of flesh as this?

Then to put it in another light, the heart of flesh is tender in three ways. It is tender in conscience. Hearts of stone make no bones, as we say, about great mischiefs; but hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry even for a minute is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and rent before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done great iniquity, "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God's law?" But not so the heart of flesh. Great sins are little to the stony heart, little sins are great to the heart of flesh — if little sins there be. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron; conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender; like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch, it cannot bear the presence of evil; it is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that. Then again, the heart of flesh grows tender of God's will. My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to bring him down to subject himself to God's will. When you have a man's conscience on God's side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim —

*“Convince a man against his will  
He's of the same opinion still.”*

is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh! there are some of you that know the right, but you will do the wrong. You know what is evil, but you will to pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must rend it up by the roots; but the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the divine influence, and sweetly yields to it. To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a tenderness of the affections. The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, stolid. "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?" The heart of flesh says —

*“Thou know’st I love thee, dearest Lord,  
But oh! I long to soar  
Far from this world of sin and woe,  
And learn to love thee more.”*

O may God give us a tenderness of affection, that we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. “‘Tis here the Spirit dwells, ‘tis here that Jesus rests.” The soft heart is ready now to receive every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honor and praise of God. Oh! if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be. What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in heaven! We may indeed pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a savior of life unto life, and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defense against sin, while it is the best preparative for heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from heaven.

Now, my voice fails me, and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody’s sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine. So let us be brief, and let us conclude; only we must press this enquiry home — Has God taken away the heart of stone and has he given you the heart of flesh. Dear friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it; you may rub as long as ever you like outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch-water into wine; you may polish the exterior of your lanthorn, but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree, but all the pruning in the world won’t into an apricot; so you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won’t change your heart. Polish your shilling, but it will not change into gold; nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done? Christ is the great heart changer.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith the mature is renewed. What sayest thou, sinner? Dost thou believe that Christ is able to save thee? Oh, trust him then to save thee, and if thou doest that thou art saved; thy

nature is renewed, and the work of sanctification which shall begin to-night, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection, and thou, borne on angel's wings to heaven, "glad the summons to obey," shalt enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.



# RELIGION — A REALITY

## SERMON NO. 457

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 22ND, 1862,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.”*  
— *Deuteronomy 32:47.*

IT APPEARS from this closing remark of Moses, that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness: for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed nation obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offenses against God’s law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts; while repentance and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue; and yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, “It is a vain thing to serve the Lord.” Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel? It would, indeed, be marvelous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed: we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trodden under foot. The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, “It is a vain thing,” and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not

remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, whilst inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic: "They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion itself is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here — and we believe it to be utterly so — yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

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

hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for he who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and he will surely discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus, that which has been revealed to us of the Holy Ghost by the apostles and prophets, and specially by the Messiah himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word “vain” in different shades of meaning. It is no fiction it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation. In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence — “Because it is your life.”

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

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction to us. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we be honest men, may prevail with others who may be sceptical upon this point. We say, then, that the objects of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. God the Father to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As to communing with him, as to speaking to him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked unto him, and he has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with our friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being, tell us that there is a

God. We have had personal dealings with him; he has been with us in our chamber; we have seen his face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon him; and therefore to us the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with Christ Jesus. To mere professors Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but he is only an historical personage to them. To true believers in Christ, however, he is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of his people. And oh! I bear my witness that if there be anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness it is the existence of Jesus, the man, the Son of God. Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communings we could say, He was to us as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found him without we did embrace him, and we would not let him go? His left hand has been under our head, and his right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ be not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in his likeness. A real Christ and a real God — no man has real religion till he knows these. So again the Holy Spirit, who is, with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three — the Holy Spirit is also real, for

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

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires, but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in; when its strength is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things; their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and that

at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel himself less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loatheth his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit! We have seen his goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-bye, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

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

joy. Oh, the mirth! oh, the bliss! oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say

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*“Happy, happy, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away,  
Happy, happy, happy day.”*

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

pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, “There is a reality here; there is something in true religion; let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!”

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

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

my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

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



God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction! If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public-houses; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say, it is not a vain thing.

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

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

If religion be false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ be true, it is the most solemn truth that ever was known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it be true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it be not true it is detestable, but if it be

true it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle. Briefly consider why it is not. It deals with your soul. If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with your soul. As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your immortal soul it deals with. Your soul has to live for ever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with.

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

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control, may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door, must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and

yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you; oh! make it no trifle to yourselves. I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors. Oh! professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful, but oh! be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege; but oh! be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

now; and then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before a death, but now I begin to live."

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

*“Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live!  
‘Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.  
After death its joys will be  
Lasting as eternity!  
Be the living God my friend,  
Then my bliss shall never end.”*

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



# THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

## SERMON NO. 458

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 29TH, 1862,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” — Isaiah 53:12.*

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ’s passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners’ consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that he must have intended the merit of his blood and the efficacy of his passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to him. Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the plan itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity it was intended to bless sinners. Wherefore salvation if men be not lost, and for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in grace, but how “grace” unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing? If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of grace? Build then on justice; let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners and not with the righteous. Moreover, think of the work itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, think you? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity. Why should he weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine

linen? He had, moreover, to shed his blood. For whom his blood? Wherefore the agony in the garden? Wherefore the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved. What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that he came into the world to save sinners. And then look at God's end in the whole work. It was to glorify himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by grace those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making his love and his mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity, that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners, or else that end and aim never could be accomplished. Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship; the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge; the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of it away; and it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God, to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there be sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's grace. A moment's thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed, dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in his glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to pourtray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters; but if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains; let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders rejoicing; let me hear his song of mirth when he calleth upon his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost. When looks our God most like a loving and tender father? Truly he looketh blessed when he divideth his inheritance among his sons, but I never saw him so resplendent in his fatherhood as when he runneth out to meet the prodigal, throweth his arms about his neck, and kisseth him, crying — "My son that was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a

priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there be sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is he a Savior except to the lost? How is he a physician but to the sick? How is he like the brazen serpent if he doth not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if he doth not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there be a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text; in fact it can have no meaning to them.

**I.** We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that **CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS**. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, in the census of the Roman empire. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that he may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors, and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh — that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors in the scroll of fame. Ask public rumor "What is the

character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for him. "This — — — " they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. Fame, with her lying tongue, said he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber, because he would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since he came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance; he came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." They called him mad. His warm enthusiasm, his stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places, brought upon him the accusation that he had a devil. "Thou has a devil and art mad," said they. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunkards made him their song, and the vilest thought him viler than themselves, for he was, by current rumor, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, "he was numbered with transgressors in the courts of law." The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of him, "Thou blasphemest;" and they smote him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The courts civil also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water, and say, "I find no fault in him," but still, driven by the infernal clamours of an angry people, he is compelled to write, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;" and he gives him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land. Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, the whole Jewish people numbered him with transgressors; nay, they reprobated him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." See, brethren, his being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, he bears the transgressor's scourging! He is tied to the whipping-post, his back is marred and scarred; the ploughers make deep furrows, and the blood flows

in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for he bears the felon's cross; he comes into the street bowed down with the weight of his own gibbet, which he must carry upon his raw and bleeding shoulders; he goes along to the place of doom; he comes to Calvary — the place of a skull — and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected him and heaven refused him shelter, he dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors. But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eye pity? Will no man declare his innocence? None; they are all silent! Silent, did I say? 'Tis worse! All earth holds up its hands for his death; it is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue; they hoot; they laugh; they cry, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe; for he is despised and rejected of men; of all men is he accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon thy throne, wilt thou let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, "I thirst." Wilt thou permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is; heaven confirms it. He has no sin of his own, but he has the sin of his people upon his shoulders; and God, the Eternal Judge, shows that he too considers him to be in the roll of transgressors, for he veils his face; and the Eternal Father betakes him to his hiding-place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of his Father's face, till he shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer's soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The only answer from heaven being, "I must forsake transgressors; thou art numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake thee." But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, he will be taken down ere he dies? Death is the curse for sin; it cannot come on any but transgressors; it is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver his Son at the last moment, and having tried him in the furnace, he will bring him out? Nay, not so; he must become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell; he that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor's crown of thorns, lies in the transgressor's grave. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." It is a

marvelous thing, brethren, a marvelous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvelous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of men (that were a gracious act) but numbered with transgressors; numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered, not with those who earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith — that were a marvelous condescension; but here it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and wonderful thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, think you, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because he could the better become their advocate. I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counsellor continually using the word “we;” he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counsellor with the client; nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there himself. The trumpet sounds; the great assize is set. Come, come, ye sinners, come to the bar to be tried. There stands the man whose hands are pierced; he standeth numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it; he points to his side, his hands, his feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom he represents; he pleads his blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, “Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for he at their head hath found a ransom.”

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, that he might plead with them. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out his abundant love to these prisoners he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will

come in with cold dignity; but he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done aught that is wrong?" "I will not answer you that," saith he; "but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, "Art thou become like one of us? Then we will talk with thee." And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, dost thou see this? Christ puts himself as near on a level with thee as he can. He cannot be sinful as thou art, for he is God and perfect man; but he so puts his name down in the list that when the roll is called his name is called over with thine. Oh, how near doth he come to thee in thy ruined state!

Then he does this that sinners may feel their hearts drawn to him. What dost thou become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesus, Son of God, dost thou allow thyself to be numbered among lost ones that thou mightest find me? Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give thee a hearty reception. Come in, thou loving Savior, abide with me, and go no more out for ever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ; but who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and put down in the same list with us? Surely now we may come boldly to him, and confess our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ourselves, cometh not to condemn, but to absolve; not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors' list that we might be written in the red roll of the saints. He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; he transfers his name from yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious, for there is a transfer made between Christ and his people. All that we have goes to Christ, sin and all; and all that Christ has comes to us. His righteousness, his blood, and everything that he hath belongeth unto us.

Dear hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here; nothing else. "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, soul, can thy heart say, "Then if he was numbered with me, if he put his name down where mine stands in that

terrific roll, then I will believe in him that he is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in his hands?" I conjure thee by the living God do it, man, and thy soul is saved. Oh, by him who from the highest throne in glory stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust thy soul with him. It is all he asks of thee, and this he gives thee. Blessed Master, would that thou couldst stand here, and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with you; God accounted me as if I had committed your sin, and visited me as if I had been a transgressor; trust me; cast your souls upon my perfect righteousness; wash in my cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before my Father's face."

**II.** We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BARE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noon-day, that Christ dealt with sinners. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again: man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell; Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the room, place, and stead of his people; and he did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins — that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction, but really transferred from them to him. You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back; it is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies weight, and weight is the sure indicator of reality. Christ did bear sin in its fullness, vileness, and condemnation upon his own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on him, and those sins did actually and in very deed become his sins; (not that he had committed them, nor that he had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which he had consented, and for which he came in to the world,) and there lay the sins of all his people upon Christ's shoulders.

Then notice, that as he did bear them, so other texts tell us that he did bear them away. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the



world.” Sin being on his head, the scape-goat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it be sought for it shall not be found; the Everlasting God seeth it no more, it hath ceased to be, for he hath finished iniquity and made an end of sin; and when there is an end of it what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but he was not long before he paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now; there is not one in God’s book against his chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ hath paid the debt, then there is no debt left; it is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge; I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself I gone. “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” “I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea.” And yet again, “I will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thine iniquity like a thick cloud.” Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain; they are gone; no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again; there are no such things; they are gone. And so with believers’ sins, they were black, thick, thick clouds; full of tempests; big with lightnings and with thunder; but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ; the thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon him, and the clouds are gone, for Christ has taken them away. “He bare the sins of many,” and he bore them away for ever.

And then, beloved, you must understand that if it be so, if Christ did really bear his people’s sins, and did bear them away — and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died. “And who are they?” you say. Why, all those who trust him. Any man whatsoever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent —

*“Sons of God, redeemed by blood,  
 Raise your songs to Zion’s God —  
 Made from condemnation free,  
 Grace triumphant sing with me.”*

Now, do you not see that his must be for sinners? See, you black ones, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners. You see it does not say it was for sensible sinners; no, no, but sinners. It does not say, “He was numbered with awakened transgressors;” no, it is “transgressors.” It does not say that he bare the sins of tender-hearted sinners; no, but “he bare the sin of many.” This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ, and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away. Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. “Oh,” says one, “I am a sinner, but, but — .” Well, what but? If you be a sinner, you are commanded to trust Christ this morning. “Oh, but — .” I will have no “buts,” sir, no “but” whatever. Are you a sinner? Yes or no. If you say “No,” then I have nothing to say to you; Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. “But I have been a thief!” I suppose a thief is a sinner? “But I have been a drunkard!” A drunkard is a sinner. “But I have been an unclean liver!” You are a sinner, then. “But I have such a hard heart!” Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. “But I am unbelieving!” Well, that is a sin too. You come in under the list of sinners, and I say that such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when he came to save, for “he was numbered with transgressors,” and “he bare” — not the virtues of many, not the merits of many, not the good works of many, but “the sin of many.” So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer; and if you are a sinner, here is Christ, numbered with you. “Oh!” says one, “but what is faith? I want to know at once.” Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus now. Saving faith can sing this verse —

*“Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one foul blot,  
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”*

It is as sinners, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died for us. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and

called; in fact, for them, and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

**III.** Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. “And made intercession for the transgressors.”

He prays for his saints, but, dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for transgressors! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the gospel for many years — for many years; and he has heard it preached faithfully too. He is growing grey now; but while his head is getting white his heart is black; he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by-and-bye, unless grace prevents — but I need not tell that story. What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying — “Lo, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” The woodman feels his axe; it is sharp and keen. “Now,” says he, “I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down.” But hark! There is one that maketh intercession for transgressors, hear him, hear him, “Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit well; but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down.” You see there was nothing in that tree why he should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why he should plead for you, yet he does it. This very morning, perhaps, he is crying “Spare him yet a little while; let him hear the gospel again; let him be entreated once more; oh! let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel; let me have another endeavor with his hard heart; it may be, it may be that he will yield.” O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, he pleads for their forgiveness. They are nailing him to the cross; the wretches are driving iron through his hands; but even while they fasten him to the tree hear him — “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart; and it broke mine too, to think that I could rebel against Christ whilst he was loving me; that I could despise him while he was putting himself in my way in order to do me

good. Oh! it is this that breaks a man's heart; to think that Christ should have been loving me, with the whole force of his soul, while I was despising him, and would have nothing to do with him. There is a man there who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming, and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O sinner, I would this might break thy heart, and bring thee to the Savior.

Nor does he end there. He next prays that those for whom he intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of his intercession for transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live he does not cease to pray for them, for by his intercession they are preserved. They are tempted and tried, but hear what he says. "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy strength fail not." Yes, brethren, beloved, and this is the reason why we are not condemned, for our Apostle puts it — "Who is he that condemneth?" and the answer he gives is, "Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, who ever maketh intercession for us;" as if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell, and delivered us from condemnation. And more, our coming to glory is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners "Go home and pray; go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the gospel. The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am; I cannot plead before him, for I am a wretch undone; if I should stand in his presence he would drive me from him." Behold Jesus Christ maketh intercession for transgressors. It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes in, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, he takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of him who is the advocate of his

people than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free. So, sinner, you are safe if he pleads for you. "Ah," say you, "but if he asks me what he should plead I have nothing to tell him." You know the counsellor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner — "Now, just tell me the case; what can I say in your favor?" The criminal replies, "Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so," and perhaps he is able to say "Why, sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair, and I can prove an alibi, or I can do this or that." Very well; the advocate having ground to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, "Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what he is to plead, for I have nothing to plead; the fact is I am guilty, and thoroughly guilty too, and I deserve to be punished, and must be; I have nothing to plead." Now what does our blessed Advocate say? "Oh," saith he, "but I have the plea in myself;" and up he rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read he puts in this to that accusation — "In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne." "How?" saith Justice. And he shows the nail-prints in his hands, and lays bare his side, and says, "I suffered for that sinner; I was punished with the sinner's punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of my passion and my agony, that the sinner should go his way." Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because he can appear for us, and what is more, he can find a plea for us. "Ah!" I hear you say, "but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that; I wish I had, but I have nothing to give him; if he asks any fees I have nothing; I do not deserve the love of Christ; I do not know why he should take up my cause; if he would I should be saved, but I cannot think he will, for I cannot hope to pay him." "Nay," says he, "but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully, and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you need it; not because you are not a transgressor, but because you are." That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why he will. You are full of disease. "Ah!" say you, "the physician will never look at such an arm as that;" but because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, "I will cure that." Your qualification is your disqualification, and what you think to be the reason why he never will look at you, is certainly the only reason you can plead why he should. You are nothing; you are utterly lost; you have no merit; you have nothing

unless the Lord Jesus Christ make prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly; but I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God himself must be numbered with sinners, and smart and die for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing; hate it. If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh! pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight.

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word: you know what sin means; I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence: I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ wants any preparation by you or in you before you come to him. You may come to him now; nay, more, you are commanded to come to him now, just as you are. And to every man among you to-day, and to every woman and child, I preach this gospel in the name of Jesus Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him now — in your seat — standing in the aisles — crowded in these galleries — trust him now; God commands you. "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." As Peter said, so say I, "Repent and be converted, every one of you;" and as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." If you do not, this shall condemn you; not your sin, but your unbelief; for they that believe not are condemned already, Why, why are such condemned? Because they believe not. That is the accusation; that is the damning crime and curse. "Well," says one, "then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I'll do it." Ah! soul, do it then. Can you do it? Can you trust him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up. Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up. Do you trust him wholly? Can you say, "His blessed wounds, his flowing blood, his perfect righteousness, on these I rest. I do trust him, wholly?" Are you half afraid to say you do? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it then;

do a bold thing for once! Say, "Lord, I'll trust thee, and if thou cast me away, I'll still trust thee; I bless thee that thou canst save me, and that thou wilt save me." Can you say that? I say, have you believed in him? You are saved, then; you are not in a salvable state, but you are saved; not partly, but wholly saved; not some of your sins blotted out, but all; behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But I hear one say, "It is too good to be true!" Soul, wilt thou be lost through thinking little things of Christ? "Ah!" says another, "it is too simple; if this be the gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ and being saved." And glory be to God if it be so! For my part I am never afraid of big sinners being saved. I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh! no; faith in Christ would change their nature; and it will change yours too; for this is salvation: to have the nature changed, to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy. Come, soul, wilt thou trust him? I do not like you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival; but here is better music if you trust Christ, for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a brother redeemed. Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition; but here is a greater wonder than that, if you came into this place this morning in a state of nature, and go out in a state of grace, only to wait a little while, and then to reach a state of glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show; but here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture; here is food for your souls; here is that whereof if a man eateth he shall live for ever; and here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved. Outside in the street there is a drinking-fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it; you will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, "You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress." "You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket." No, no, go and drink; and when you have hold of the ladle and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt — "I do not feel my thirst enough," still take a drink whether you do or not. So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and he inviteth every thirsty soul to come and drink. You need not

stop and say, “Am I thirsty enough? Am I black enough?” You do want it whether you think you do or not. Come as you are; come as you are. Every fitness is legality; every preparation is a lie; every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way. You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like a boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before. Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the blackest soul out of hell, trust Christ, and that act of trust shall make you clean. This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it; so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, “It is too good to be true;” or else you despise it because it is so simple; for the gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it. Oh! may the Holy Ghost lay this home to you; may he make you willing in the day of his power. I hope he has; I trust he has, so that ere we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate; —

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength; my righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.”*



# FAITH AND REPENTANCE INSEPARABLE

SERMON NO. 460

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 13TH, 1862,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” — Mark 1:15*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences his ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber; his love notes are repentance and faith. He cometh forth fully prepared for his office, having been in the desert, “tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin”; his loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preacheth with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of morning he glittereth with the dew of his youth. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messias speaketh in the greatness of his strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Let us give our ears to these words which, like their author, are full of grace and truth. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ’s whole teaching — the Alpha and Omega of his entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such an one, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed, and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

**I.** I shall commence my remarking that the gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Our Lord does condescend to reason. Often his ministry graciously acted out the old text, “Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.” He does persuade men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does invite men, and oh, how lovingly he woos them to be wise.

“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He does entreat men; he condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to his own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to him. Indeed, he maketh this to be the duty of his ministers, “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Yet, remember, though he condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still his gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command; and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God, attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected save at the infinite peril of the soul. When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage-supper, there was an invitation, but it had all the obligation of a command, since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject Christ, he becomes a stone of stumbling to “the disobedient”; but how could they disobey if there were no command? The gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseechings, but it also takes the higher ground of authority. “Repent ye” is as much a command of God as “Thou shalt not steal.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” has as fully a divine authority as “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength.” Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation!” God commands you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke — that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and with thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through his only begotten Son, when he saith to us, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Why is this, dear friends; why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners: may I believe? Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put

aside, once for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it. Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at his name; every creature, wherever the gospel comes, wherever the truth is preached, is commanded there and then to believe the gospel; and it is put in that shape, I say, least any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you may do what God commands you to do. You may know this in the devil's teeth — "I may do it; I am bidden to do it by him who hath authority, and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from his presence, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" "This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross. However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." He that commanded thee to believe will justify thee in believing; he cannot condemn thee for that which he himself bids thee do. But while there is this blessed reason for the gospel's being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the day of judgment; that no man may say at the last, "Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ; Lord, heaven's gate was shut in my face; I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man." "Nay," saith the Lord, with tones of thunder, "the times of man's ignorance I winked at, but in the gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent; I sent my Son, and then I sent my apostles, and afterwards my ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted everyone of you'; and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so bade I them preach to thee. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in, and inasmuch as you did not come at my command, you have added sin to sin; you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities; and now, inasmuch as you did reject my Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" "To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, he who gives you the breath of your nostrils, he against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel. He

gives his promise — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”; and he adds the solemn threatening — “He that believeth not shall be damned.” I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth which maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word; and I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commandeth men to repent, and believe the gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man’s utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost, no man ever will be obedient to this command, but still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it; and while publishing God’s command with all simplicity, we may expect that he will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom he has ordained unto eternal life.

**II.** While the gospel is a command, it is a two-fold command explaining itself. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

I know some very excellent brethren — would God there were more like them in zeal and love — who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies “to change one’s mind.” Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle; and the change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often I admit, but still is used, which signifies “an after-care,” a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety, than that which signifies changing one’s mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I

have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn —

*“Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.”*

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit; and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, repentance. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith; and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, “Believe the gospel.” Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it, is not the repentance meant here. Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not part of their repentance; it is a sin, a very great and grievous sin, for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood; it is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise; it is a detracting from the grace and favor of God who sent the gospel. Such a persuasion you must labor to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Ghost never did teach a man that his sins were too great to be forgiven, for that would be to make God the Holy Spirit to teach a lie. If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it; it cometh from the powers of darkness, and not from the Holy Ghost; and if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you; be you as black as hell he can save you; and it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the high majesty of divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin itself, and so keeps him from believing. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and of eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, "They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar," and have felt the torments of the pit before they went thither. Dear friends, this is not repentance. Many a man has felt all that and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but, they are not an essential part of it. That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God's mercy is gone for ever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance; in fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus doth often beat the great hell-drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the gospel which proclaimeth pardon to them. I tell thee, sinner, any repentance that keeps thee from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of; any repentance that makes thee think Christ will not save thee, goes beyond the truth and against the truth, and the sooner thou are rid of it the better. God deliver thee from it, for the repentance that will save thee is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil; there is no hope for me; I will not hear the Word any more." If they hear it it is nothing to them, their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance; but no; they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong, but yet they go on in it all the same, feeling that there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were wont to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of grace. Now, that is no repentance. It is a fire which hardens, and not the Lord's fire which melts; it may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together, and not to break the heart. If, dear friends, you have never

been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus any how, but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you feel, but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Do remember that no repentance is worth having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint, on his sick-bed, once used this remarkable expression; “Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but” — and here is the beauty of it — “lift me high as heaven in faith.” Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save, and has saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live; they repent as bitterly as for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole master of the heart; the repentance which purges the soul from dead works, and the faith that fills the soul with living works; the repentance which pulls down, and the faith which builds up; the repentance that scatters stones, and the faith which puts stones together; the repentance which ordains a time to weep, and the faith that gives a time to dance — these two things together make up the work of grace within, whereby men’s souls are saved. Be it, then laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, let us dwell for a moment on what it is. The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith; it is born at the same time with faith — they are twins, and to say which is the elder-born passes my knowledge. It is a great mystery; faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact being that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the right repentance. When I can say, “My sin is washed away by Jesu’s blood,” and then repent

because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die — that dove-eyed repentance which looks at his bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ — that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it — that is the repentance which bringeth us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin to-day because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God; but when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave himself up for me, and because I am not my own, but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God.

And again, that change of mind, that after-carefulness which leads me to resolve that in future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because he hath redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood — that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance he asks of me. O ye nations of the earth, he asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while ye do fear and shake because his lightnings are abroad; but he asks you to weep and wail because of him; to look on him whom you have pierced, and to mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son; he bids you remember that you nailed the Savior to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Savior there, and put the Lord of glory to an ignominious and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach; not law and terrors; not despair; not driving men to self-murder — this is the terror of the world which worketh death; but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation though Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, “Believe the gospel.” Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can admire their faithfulness and bless God for them; yet there is a difficulty and a danger; it may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, that they omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin; for my text seems to me to put it thus: no repentance is true but that



which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away"; and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquitous of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear; never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders — such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o'er again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions — I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith"; and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others; laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally with it; they make excuses for it; they commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offenses slight faults and little defalcations; and in business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade; the fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you; the sooner you are cleaned out of it the better for you, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock. My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your

repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance; to hate the very thought of sin; so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ, and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies; but when you get on a death-bed, and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered mortar; that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace. Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

**III.** But we must pass on to a third remark. These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character.

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should repent? You have a person who has offended you; you are ready to forgive him; do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask of him an apology; if you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," say you, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him." So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, seeth it to be inconsistent with the dignity of his kingship to absolve an offender who expresseth no contrition; and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Doth God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather doth he not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in his grace has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy"? Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet go to heaven? What, you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man, keep the thief in doors, and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained, and yet be thought spotless? Harbour the disease and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance

is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary; it is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable, and they would repent; it is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the gospel.

And then, again, believing; is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty; altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that he has made, that he should believe what he tells him. And what is it he asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, he can still be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that he will save you if you will not trust him? Have you really the hardihood to think that he will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare he cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Savior to save you while you say, "I do not believe thou art a Savior, and I will not trust thee"? Is it consistent with his dignity for him to save you, and suffer you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting his grace, mistrusting his love, slandering his character, doubting the efficacy of his blood, and of his plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that he should demand of thee that thou shouldst believe in Christ. And this he doth demand of thee this morning. "Repent and believe the gospel." O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you never will repent and believe the gospel. We may lay God's command, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God his due; you will go on in your sins; you will not come unto him that you may have life; and it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of his power. But oh! in God's name I warn you that, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without his Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you; for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes.

Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! for if the truths which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day.

**IV.** But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make, and that is, this is a command which demands immediate obedience. I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls now. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of cannon. One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we should not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open, listening to all this noise." No; and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith; they listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh — very well." But suppose it were real; suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe. Yes, sirs, but it is real, and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape from your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the gospel, and you would do this to-day. This is the command of Christ, I say, to-day. To-day is God's time. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "To-day," the gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy gospel. If the gospel told men to repent of sin to-morrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it to-day, and that would indeed be to pander to men's lusts. But the gospel maketh a clean sweep of sin, and demandeth of man that he should throw down the weapons of his rebellion now. Down with them, man! every one of them. Down, sir, down with them, and down with them now! You must not keep one of them; throw them down at once! The gospel challengeth him that he believe in Jesus now. So long as thou continuest in unbelief thou continuest in sin, and art increasing thy sin; and to give thee leave to be an unbeliever for an hour,

were to pander to thy lusts; therefore it demandeth of thee faith, and faith now, for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner. Besides, sinner, it is thy time. This is the only time thou canst call thine own. To-morrow! Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written save in the almanack of the fool? To-morrow! Oh, how hast thou ruined multitudes! "To-morrow," say men; but like the hind-wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front-wheel, always near to their duty; they still go on, and on, but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, to-morrow is still a little beyond them — but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said

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*“I will to-morrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it’;  
To-morrow comes, to-morrow goes, And still thou art ‘to do it’;  
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,  
Until the day of death is one, And judgment is the other.”*

O sons of men, always to be blessed, to be obedient, but never obedient, when will ye learn to be wise? This is your only time; it is God's time, and this is the best time. You will never find it easier to repent than now; you will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible now except the Spirit of God be with you; it will be as impossible to-morrow; but if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the gospel which I preach; and while I cry out to thee in God's name, "Repent and believe," he that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command, that even as Christ spake to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet, so when we speak to your proud heart it yields because of the grace that accompanies the word, and you repent and believe the gospel. So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a continual force. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old grey-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through — "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." St. Anselm, who was a saint — and that is more than many of them were who were called so — St. Anselm once cried out "Oh! sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!" And

Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance. Why, dear friend, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than he ever did before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought; because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust; because the thought of evil has flitted through the mind — for all this he will vex himself before God; and were it not that he still continues to believe the gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and rest. When temptation comes to him the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was. One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might, and she ran after him, crying, "Wherefore runnest thou away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I; I am a new man." Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin; that hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that maketh him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear friend, the more the Christian man knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the gospel will make a Christian man repent. Election, for instance. "How could I sin," saith he. "I that was God's favorite, chosen of him from before the foundation of the world?" Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," says he, "that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fount for sacred

woe; and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert —

*“Oh, who will give me tears?  
Come, all ye springs,  
Ye clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,  
My grief hath need of all the wat’ry things  
That nature hath produc’d. Let ev’ry vein  
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,  
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,  
Unless they set new conduits, new supplies  
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”*

And all this is because he murdered Christ; because his sin nailed the Savior to the tree; and therefore he weepeth and mourneth even to his life’s end. Sinning, repenting, and believing — these are three things that will keep with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan; repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin; and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so needful as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master’s will to you this morning, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England; you came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed. Now, this I have to say to you this morning: In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, “I did not hear the gospel; I did not know what I must do to be saved!” You have heard it: “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” That is, trust Christ; believe that he is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present — oh! let us hope all of us — who will be able to say, “Thank God that ever I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance; thank God that I looked to Christ, and took him to be my Savior from first to last; for here am I, a monument of grace, a

sinner saved by blood, to praise him while time and eternity shall last!” God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this gospel; but if you repent and believe, then we shall praise that grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you? Wherefore, wherefore will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel,” I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world’s Redeemer, I charge you by cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha, obey this divine message and you shall have eternal life; but refuse it, and on your heads be your blood for ever and ever!



# THE LOADED WAGON

## SERMON NO. 469

*“Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”*  
— Amos 2:13.

WE have been into the corn-fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth; and I trust that the timid and faint-hearted have been encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go to-day to the gate of the harvest-field with another object — to see the wagon piled up aloft with many sheaves come creaking forth, making ruts along the field. We come with gratitude to God, thanking him for the harvest, blessing him for favorable weather, and praying him to continue the same till the last shock of corn shall be brought in, and the husbandmen everywhere shall shout the “Harvest Home.”

What a picture is a wagon loaded with corn of you and of me, as loaded with God’s mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf of blessing. What could the Lord do for us more than he has done? He has daily loaded us with benefits. Let us adore his goodness, and yield him our cheerful gratitude.

Alas! that such a sign should be capable of another reading. Alas! that while God loadeth us with mercy, we should load him with sin. While he continually heapeth on sheaf after sheaf of favor we also add iniquity unto iniquity, till the weight of our sin becomes intolerable to the Most High, and he cries out by reason of the burden, saying, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”

Our text begins with a “Behold!” and well it may. “Beholds” are put in the Bible as signs are hung out from houses of business, to attract attention. There is something new, important, deeply impressive, or worthy of attention wherever we see a “Behold” in sacred Scripture. I see this “Behold!” standing, as it were, like a maiden upon the steps of the house of wisdom, crying, “Turn in hither, O ye that are wise-hearted, and listen

to the voice of God.” Let us open our eyes that we may “behold,” and may the Spirit make a way through our eyes and ears to our hearts, that repentance and self-abhorrence may take hold upon us, because of our evil conduct towards our gracious God.

It is to be understood before we proceed farther, that our text is only a figure, since God cannot actually be oppressed by man; all the sin that man may commit can never disturb the serenity of the divine perfection, nor cause so much as a wave upon his everlasting calm. He doth but speak to us after the manner of man, and bring down the sublimities and mysteries of heaven to the feebleness and ignorance of earth. He speaketh to us as a great father may talk to his little child. Just as a cart has the axles bent, and as the wheels creak under the excessive load, so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt he is pressed down, until he crieth out, because he can bear no longer the iniquity of those that offend against him. We shall now turn to our first point; may the Holy Ghost make it pointed to our consciences!

The first and most apparent truth in the text is, that **SIN IS VERY GRIEVOUS AND BURDENSOME TO GOD.**

Be astonished, O heavens, and be amazed, O earth, that God should speak of being pressed and weighed down! I do not read anywhere so much as half a suggestion that the whole burden of creation is any weight to the Most High. “He taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor all the ponderous orbs which his omnipotence has created, cost him any labor in their sustenance. The heathen picture Atlas as stooping beneath the globe; but the eternal God, who beareth up the pillars of the universe, “fainteth not, neither is weary.” Nor do I find even the most distant approach to a suggestion that providence fatigues its Lord. He watches both by night and day; his power goeth forth every moment. ‘Tis he who bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season and guideth Arcturus with his sons. He beareth up the foundations of the earth! and holdeth the corner-stone thereof. He causeth the dayspring to know its place, and setteth a bound to darkness and the shadow of death. All things are supported by the power of his hand, and there is nothing without him. Just as a moment’s foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever, so would the universe depart if the eternal God did not daily

sustain it. This incessant working has not diminished his strength, nor is there any failing or thought of failing with him. He worketh all things, and when they are wrought they are as nothing in his sight. But strange, most passing strange, miraculous among miracles, sin burdens God, though the world cannot; and iniquity presses the Most High, though the whole weight of providence is as the small dust of the balance. Ah, ye careless sons of Adam, ye think sin a trifle; and as for you, ye sons of Belial, ye count it sport, and say, "He regardeth not; he seeth not; how doth God know? and if he knoweth he careth not for our sins." Learn ye from the Book of God, that so far from this being the truth, your sins are a grief to him, a burden and a load to him, till, like a cart that is overloaded with sheaves, so is he weighed down with human guilt.

This will be very clear if we meditate for a moment upon what sin is, and what sin does. Sin is the great spoiler of all God's works. Sin turned an archangel into an arch-fiend, and angels of light into spirits of evil. Sin looked on Eden and withered all its flowers. Ere sin had come the Creator said of the new-made earth, "It is very good"; but when sin had entered, it grieved God at his very heart that he had made such a creature as man. Nothing tarnishes beauty so much as sin, for it mars God's image and erases his superscription.

Moreover, sin makes God's creatures unhappy, and shall not the Lord, therefore, abhor it? God never designed that any creature of his hand should be miserable. He made the creatures on purpose that they should be glad; he gave the birds their song, the flowers their perfume, the air its balm; he gave to day the smiling sun and to night its coronet of stars; for he intended that smiles should be his perpetual worship, and joy the incense of his praise. But sin has made God's favorite creature a wretch, and brought down God's offspring, made in his own image, to become naked, and poor, and miserable; and therefore God hateth sin, and is pressed down under it, because it maketh the objects of his love unhappy at their heart.

Moreover, remember that sin attacks God in all his attributes, assails him on his throne, and stabs at his existence. What is sin? Is it not an insult to God's wisdom? O sinner, God biddeth thee do his will; when thou doest the contrary it is because thou dost as much as say, "I know what is good

for me, and God does not know.” You do in effect declare that infinite wisdom is in error, and that you, the creature of a day, are the best judge of happiness. Sin impugns God’s goodness; for by sin you declare that God has denied you that which would make you happy, and this is not the part of a good, tender, and loving Father. Sin cuts at the Lord’s wisdom with one hand, and at his goodness with the other.

Sin also abuses the mercy of God. When you, as many of you have done, sin with the higher hand because of his longsuffering towards you; when, because you have no sickness, no losses, no crosses, therefore you spend your time in revelry and obstinate rebelliousness? It is no small grief to the loving father to see his substance spent with harlots in riotous living; he cannot endure it that his child should be so degraded as to turn even the mercy which would woo him to repentance into a reason why he should sin the more against him. Besides, let me remind the careless and impenitent that every sin is a defiance of divine power. In effect it is lifting your puny fists against the majesty of heaven, and defying God to destroy you. Every time you sin, you defy the Lord to prove whether he can maintain his law or no. Is this a slight thing, that a worm, the creature of a day, should defy the Lord of ages, the God that filleth and upholdeth all things by the word of his power? Well may he be weary, when he has to bear with such provocations and insults as these! Mention what attribute you will, and sin has blotted it; speak of God in any relationship you choose, and sin has cast a slur upon him. It is evil, only evil, and that continually: in every view of it it must be offensive to the Most High. Sinner, dost thou know that every act of disobedience to God’s law is virtually an act of high treason? What dost thou do but seek to be God thyself, thine own master, thine own lord? Every time thou swervest from his will, it is to put thy will into his place; it is to make thyself a god, and to undeify the Most High. And is this a little offense, to snatch from his brow the crown, and from his hand the scepter? I tell thee it is such an act that heaven itself could not stand unless it were resented: if this crime were suffered to go unpunished, the wheels of heaven’s commonwealth would be taken from their axles, and the whole frame of moral government would be unhinged. Such a treason against God shall certainly be visited with punishment.

To crown all, sin is an onslaught upon God himself, for sin is atheism of heart. Let his religious profession be what it may, the sinner hath said in his heart, “No God.” Ruler. Is this a trifle? To be a Deicide! To desire to put God out of his own world! Is this a thing to be winked at? Can the Most High hear it and not be pressed down beneath its weight? I pray you do not think that I would make a needless outcry against sin and disobedience. It is not in the power of human imagination to exaggerate the evil of sin, nor will it ever be possible for mortal lips, though they should be touched like those of Esaias with a live coal from off the altar, to thunder out the ten-thousandth part of the enormity of the least sin against God. Think, dear friends! We are his creatures, and yet we will not do his will. We are fed by him, the breath in our nostrils he gives us, and yet we spend that breath in murmuring and rebellion.

Once more, we are always in the sight of our omniscient God, and yet the presence of God is not enough to compel us to obedience. Surely if a man should insult law in the very presence of the lawgiver, that were not to be borne with; but this is your case and mine. We must confess, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” We must remember also, that we offend, knowing that we are offending. We do not sin as the Hottentot, or the cannibal. We in England sin against extraordinary light and sevenfold knowledge; and is this a light thing? Can you expect that God shall pass by wilful and deliberate offenses? Oh, that these lips had language, that this heart could burn for once! for if I could declare the horrible infamy of sin it would make the blood chill in even a haughty Pharaoh’s veins, and proud Nebuchadnezzar would bow his head in fear. It is indeed a terrible thing to have rebelled against the Most High. The Lord have mercy upon his servants and forgive them.

This is our first point, but I cannot teach you it, God himself must teach it by his Spirit. Oh, that the Holy Ghost may make you feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, so that it is grievous and burdensome to God!

Secondly, **SOME SINS ARE MORE ESPECIALLY GRIEVOUS TO GOD.** The connection of our text will help you to see the force of this observation.

There is no such thing as a little sin, but still there are degrees of guilt, and it were folly to say that a sinful thought hath in it the same extent of evil as a sinful act. A filthy imagination is sinful — wholly sinful and greatly

sinful, but still a filthy act has attained a higher degree of provocation. There are sins which especially provoke God. In the connection of the text we read that licentiousness does this. The Jewish people in the days of Amos seem to have gone to a very high degree of fornication and lechery. This sin is not uncommon in our day; let our midnight streets and our divorce courts be the witness. I say no more. Let each one keep his body pure; for want of chastity is a grievous evil before the Lord.

Oppression, too, according to the prophet, is another great provocation to God. The prophet speaks of selling the poor for a pair of shoes; and some would grind the widow and the orphan, and make the laborer toil for nought. How many business men have no "bowels of compassion." Men form themselves into societies, and then exact an outrageous usury upon loans from the unhappy beings who fall into their hands. Cunning legal quibbles and crafty evasions of just debts often amount to heavy oppression, and are sure to bring down the anger of the Most High.

Then, again, it seems that idolatry and blasphemy are highly offensive to God, and have a high degree of heinousness. He says that the people drank the wine of false gods. If any man sets up his belly, or his gold, or his wealth as his god, and if he lives to these instead of living to the Most High, he hath offended by idolatry. Woe to such, and equal woe to those who adore crosses, sacraments, or images.

Specially is blasphemy a God-provoking sin. For blasphemy there is no excuse. As George Herbert says, "Lust and wine plead a pleasure;" there is gain to be pleaded for avarice, "but the cheap swearer from his open sluice lets his soul run for nought." There is nothing gained by profane talk; there can be no pleasure in cursing; this is offending for offending's sake, and hence it is a high and crying sin, which makes the Lord grow weary of men. There may be some among you to whom these words may be personal accusations. Do I address the lecherous, or the oppressive, or the profane? Ah, soul, what a mercy God hath borne with thee so long; the time will come, however, when he will say, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," and how easily will he cast you off and appoint you an awful destruction.

Again, whilst some sins are thus grievous to God for their peculiar heinousness, many men are especially obnoxious to God because of the

length of their sin. That grey-headed man, how many times has he provoked the Most High! Why, those who are but lads have cause to count their years and apply their hearts unto wisdom because of the length of time they have lived in rebellion; but what shall I say of you who have been half a century in open war against God — and some of you sixty, seventy, what if I said near upon eighty years? Ah, you have had eighty years of mercies, and returned eighty years of neglect: for eighty years of patience you have rendered eighty years of ingratitude. O God, well mayest thou be wearied by the length and number of man's sins!

Furthermore, God taketh special note and feeleth an especial weariness of sin that is mixed with obstinacy. Oh how obstinate some men are! They will be damned; there is no helping them; they seem as if they would leap the Alps to reach perdition, and swim through seas of fire that they may destroy their souls. I might tell you cases of men that have been sore sick of fever, ague, and cholera, and they have only recovered their health to return to their sins. Some of them have had troubles in business thick, and threefold: they were once in respectable circumstances, but they spent their living riotously, and they became poor; yet they still struggle on in sin. They are growing poorer every day, most of their clothes have gone to the pawnshop; but they will not turn from the tavern and the brothel. Another child is dead! The wife is sick, and starvation stares the family in the face; but they go on still with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This is obstinacy, indeed. Sinner! God will let thee have thine own way one of these days, and that way will be thine everlasting ruin. God is weary of those who set themselves to do mischief, and against warnings, and invitations, and entreaties, are determined to go on in sin.

The context seems to tell us that ingratitude is intensely burdensome to God. He tells the people how he brought them out of Egypt; how hes for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites; and yet they rebelled against him! This was one of the things that pricked my heart when I first came to God as a guilty sinner, not so much the peculiar heinousness of my outward life, as the peculiar mercies that I had enjoyed. How generous God has been to some of us, — some of us who never had a want! God has never cast us into poverty, nor left us to infamy, nor given us up to evil example, but he has kept us moral, and made us love his house even when we did not love him, and all this he has done year after year: and

what poor returns we have made! To us, his people what joy he has given, what deliverances, what love, what comfort, what bliss — and yet we have sinned to his face! Well may he be as a cart that is pressed down, that is full of sheaves.

Let me observe, before I leave this point, that it seems from our text, that the Lord is so pressed, that he even crieth out. Just as the cart when laden with the sheaves, groaneth under the weight, so the Lord crieth out under the load of sin. Have you never heard those accents? “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!” Hear again: “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Better still, hear the lament from the lips of Jesus, soft and gentle as the dew, — “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Sinner, God is cut to the heart by thy sin; thy Creator grieves over that which thou laughest at; thy Savior crieth out in his spirit concerning that which thou thinkest to be a trifle, — “O do not this abominable thing which I hate!” For God’s sake do it not! We often say “for God’s sake,” without knowing not your Creator, that ye cause not the Eternal One himself to cry out by reason of weariness of you. Cease ye, cease ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? I now leave those two points to pass on very briefly to the next.

While it is true that sin is grievous to the Lord, it magnifies his mercy when we see that HE BEARS THE LOAD. As the cart is not said to break, but is pressed only, so is he pressed, and yet he bears. If you and I were in God’s place, should we have borne it? Nay, within a week we should have burned the universe with fire, or trodden it to powder beneath our feet. If the law of heaven were as swift to punish as the law of man, where were we? How easily could he avenge his honor! How many servants wait around him ready to do his bidding! As the Roman consul went out, attended by his lictors carrying the axe, so God is ever attended by his executioners, who are ready to fulfill his sentence. A stone, a tile from a roof, a thunderbolt, a puff of wind, a grain of dust, a whiff of gas, a broken blood-vessel, and all is over, and you are dead, and in the hands of an angry God. Indeed, the Lord has to restrain the servants of his anger, for



the heavens cry, "Why should we cover that wretch's head?" Earth asks, "Why should I yield a harvest to the sinner's plough?! The lightnings thunder, and say, "Let us smite the rebel," and the seas roar upon the sinner, desiring him as they prey. There is no greater proof of the omnipotence of God than his longsuffering; for it shows the greatest possible power for God to be able to control himself. Sinner, yet Jehovah bears with thee. The angels have been astonished at it; they thought he would strike, but yet he bears with you. Have you ever seen a patient man insulted? He has been met in the street by a villain, who insults him before a mob of boys. He bears it. The fellow spits in his face. He bears it still. The offender strikes him. He endures it quietly. "Give him in charge," says one. "No," says he, "I forgive him all." The fellow knocks him down, and rolls him in the kennel, but he bears it still; yes, and when he rises all covered with mire, he says, "If there be anything that I can do to befriend you, I will do it now." Just at that moment the wretch is arrested by a sheriff's officer for debt; the man who has been insulted takes out his purse and pays the debt, and says, "You may go free." See, the wretch spits in his face after that! "Now," you say, "let the law have its way with him." Is there any room for patience now? So would it have been with man; it has not been so with God. Though like the cart he is pressed under the load of sheaves, yet like the cart the axle does not break. He bears the load. He bears with impenitent sinners still.

And this brings me to the fourth head, on which I would have your deepest attention. Some of you, I fear, have never seen sin in the light of grieving God, or else you would not wish to grieve him any more. O. This is our fourth head. Not only doth God still bear with sin, but **GOD, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, DID BEAR AND TAKE AWAY SIN.**

These words would have deep meaning if put into the lips of Jesus — "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Here stood the great problem. God must punish sin, and yet he desired to have mercy. How could it be? Lo! Jesus comes to be the substitute for all who trust him. The load of guilt is laid upon his shoulders. See how they pile on him the sheaves of human sin!

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

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” There they lie, sheaf on sheaf, till he is pressed down like the wain that groaneth as it moves along. “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” See him, he did “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” Herod mocks him. Pilate jeers him. They have smitten the Prince of Judah upon the cheek. “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” They have tied him to the pillar; they are beating him with rods, not this time forty stripes save one, for there is no “save one” with him. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” See him; like a cart pressed down with sheaves traversing the streets of Jerusalem. Well may ye weep, ye daughters of Jerusalem, though he bids ye dry your tears! Abjects hoot at him as he walks along bowed beneath the load of his own cross, which was the emblem of our sin. They bring him to Golgotha. They throw him on his back, they stretch out his hands and his feet. They are tearing through his hands and feet. He hangeth in extremity, for God hath forsaken him; his enemies persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. They mock his nakedness; they point at his agonies. They look and stare upon him. With ribald jests they insult his griefs. They make puns upon his prayers. He is now indeed a worm, and no man, crushed till you can scarcely think that divinity dwells within him. Fever parches him; his tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and he cries, “I thirst!” Vinegar is all they yield him. The sun refuses to shine, and the dense midnight of that awful mid-day is a fitting emblem of the tenfold darkness of his soul. Out of that all-encompassing horror he crieth, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Then, indeed, was he pressed down! There was never sorrow like unto his sorrow. All mortal griefs found a reservoir in his heart, and the punishment of human guilt spent itself upon his body and his soul. Shall sin ever be a trifle to me? Shall I laugh at that which made my Savior groan? Shall I toy and dally with that which stabbed him to the heart? Sinner, wilt thou not give up thy sins for the sake of him who suffered for sin? “Yes,” sayest thou, “yes, if I could believe that he suffered for my sake.” Wilt thou trust

thy soul in his hands at once? Dost thou do so? Then he died for thee and took thy guilt, and carried all thy sorrows, and thou mayest go free, for God is satisfied, and thou art absolved. Christ was burdened that thou mightest be lightened; he was pressed that thou mightest be free. I would I could talk of my precious Master as John would speak, who saw him and bare witness, for he could tell in plaintive tones of the sorrows of Calvary. Such as I have I give you; oh that God would give you with it the power, the grace to believe on Jesus at once.

**V.** For if not, and here is our last point, God will only bear the load of our provocation for a little while; and if we are not in Christ when the end shall come **THAT SAME LOAD WILL CRUSH US FOR EVER.**

My text is translated by many learned men in a different way from the version before us. According to them it should be read, "I will press you as a cart that is full of sheaves presseth your place." That is, just as a heavy loaded wagon pressed into the soft eastern roads and left deep furrows, so will I crush you, saith God, beneath the load of your sin. This is to be your doom, my hearer, if you are out of Christ: your own deeds are to press upon you. Need we enlarge upon this terror? I think not. It only needs that you should make a personal application of the threatening! Divide yourselves now. Divide yourselves, I say! Answer each one for himself, — Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? then the threatening is not thine. But if thou believest not I conjure thee listen to me now as if thou wert the only person here. A Christless soul will ere long be a castaway; he that believeth not in Christ is condemned already, because he believeth not. How wilt thou escape if thou wilt neglect so great salvation? Thus saith the Lord unto thee, "Consider thy ways." By time, by eternity, by life, by death, by heaven, by hell, I do conjure thee believe in him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto him; but if thou believest not in Christ thou shalt die in thy sins.

After death the judgment! Oh! the judgment, the thundering trumpet, the multitude, the books, the great white throne, the "Come, ye blessed," the "Depart, ye cursed!"

After judgment, to a soul that is out of Christ, Hell! Who among us? who among us shall abide with the devouring flame? Who among us? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? I pray that none of us

may. But we must unless we fly to Christ. I beseech thever look into mine again; but I shake my skirts of thy blood if thou believest not in Christ. My tears entreat thee; my lips persuade thee. God has had patience with thee; let his longsuffering lead thee to repentance. He willeth not the death of any, but that they should turn unto him and live: and this turning lies mainly in trusting Jesus with your soul. Wilt thou believe in Christ? Nay, I know thou wilt not unless the Spirit of God shall constrain thee; but if thou wilt not, it shall not be for want of pleading and entreating. Come, 'tis mercy's welcome hour. I pray thee, come. Jesus with pierced hands invites thee, though thou hast long rejected him. He knocks again. His unconquerable love defies thy wickedness. He begs thee to be saved. Sinner, wilt thou have him or no? "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." God help you to come, for the glorious Redeemer's sake. Amen.

# MEALTIME IN THE CORNFIELDS

## SERMON NO. 421

*“And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.” — Ruth 2:14.*

WE are going to the cornfields, not so much to glean, as to rest with the reapers and the gleaners, when under some wide-spreading oak they sit down to take refreshment. We hope some timid gleaner will accept our invitation to come and eat with us, and will have confidence enough to dip her morsel in the vinegar. May all of us have courage to feast to the full on our own account, and kindness enough to carry home a portion to our needy friends at home.

**I.** Our first point of remark is this — THAT GOD’S REAPERS HAVE THEIR MEALTIMES.

Those who work for God will find him a good master. He cares for oxen, and he has commanded Israel, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” Much more doth he care for his servants who serve him. “He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.” The reapers in Jesus’ fields shall not only receive a blessed reward at the last, but they shall have plenteous comforts by the way. He is pleased to pay his servants twice: first in the labor itself, and a second time in the labor’s sweet results. He gives them such joy and consolation in the service of their Master that it is a sweet employ, and they cry, “We delight to do thy will, O Lord.” Heaven is made up of serving God day and night, and a foretaste of heaven is enjoyed in serving God on earth with earnest perseverance.

God has ordained certain mealtimes for his reapers; and he has appointed that one of these shall be when they come together to listen to the Word

preached. If God be with ministers they act as the disciples did of old, for they received the loaves and the fishes from the Lord Jesus, and then they handed them to the people. We, of ourselves, cannot feed one soul, much less thousands; but when the Lord is with us we can keep as good a table as Solomon himself, with all his fine flour, and fat oxen, and roebucks, and fallow-deer. When the Lord blesses the provisions of his House, no matter how many thousands there may be, all his poor shall be filled with bread. I hope, beloved, you know what it is to sit under the shadow of the Word with great delight, and find the fruit thereof sweet unto your taste. Where the doctrines of grace are boldly and plainly delivered to you in connection with the other truths of revelation; where Jesus Christ upon his cross is always lifted up; where the work of the Spirit is not forgotten; where the glorious purpose of the Father is never despised, there is sure to be rich provision for the children of God.

Often, too, our gracious Lord appoints us mealtimes in our private readings and meditations. Here it is that his “paths drop fatness.” Nothing can be more fattening to the soul of the believer than feeding upon the Word, and digesting it by frequent meditation. No wonder that men grow so slowly when they meditate so little. Cattle must chew the cud; it is not that which they crop with their teeth, but that which is masticated, and digested by rumination, that nourishes them. We must take the truth, and turn it over and over again in the inward parts of our spirit, and so shall we extract suitable nourishment therefrom. My brethren, is not meditation the land of Goshen to you? If men once said, “There is corn in Egypt,” may they not always say that the finest of the wheat is to be found in secret prayer? Private devotion is a land which floweth with milk and honey; a paradise yielding all manner of fruits; a banqueting house of choice wines. Ahasuerus might make a great feast, but all his hundred and twenty provinces could not furnish such dainties as meditation offers to the spiritual mind. Where can we feed and lie down in green pastures in so sweet a sense as we do in our musings on the Word? Meditation distils the quintessence of joy from the Scriptures, and gladdens our mouth with a sweetness which excels the virgin honey. Your retired periods and occasions of prayer should be to you refreshing seasons, in which, like the reapers at noonday, you sit with the Master and enjoy his generous provisions. The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain was wont to say that when

he was lonely, and his wallet was empty, his Bible was to him meat, and drink, and company too: he is not the only man who has found a fullness in the Word when all else has been empty. During the battle of Waterloo a godly soldier, mortally wounded, was carried by his comrade into the rear, and being placed with his back propped up against a tree, he besought his friend to open his knapsack and take out the Bible which he had carried in it. "Read to me," he said, "one verse before I close my eyes in death." His comrade read him that verse: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" and there, fresh from the whistling of the bullets, and the roll of the drum, and the tempest of human conflict, that believing spirit enjoyed such holy calm that ere he fell asleep in the arms of Jesus he said, "Yes, I have a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps my heart and mind through Jesus Christ." Saints most surely enjoy delightful mealtimes when they are alone in meditation.

Let us not forget that there is one specially ordained mealtime which ought to occur at least once in the week — I mean the Supper of the Lord. There you have literally, as well as spiritually, a meal. The table is richly spread, it has upon it both bread and wine; and looking at what these symbolize, we have before us a table richer than that which kings could furnish. There we have the flesh and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger and never thirst, for that bread shall be unto his everlasting life. Oh! the sweet seasons we have known at the Lord's Supper. If some of you knew the enjoyment of feeding upon Christ in that ordinance you would chide yourselves for not having united with the Church in fellowship. In keeping the Master's commandments there is "great reward," and consequently in neglecting them there is great loss of reward. Christ is not so tied to the sacramental table as to be always found of those who partake thereat, but still it is "in the way" that we may expect the Lord to meet with us. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is a sentence of touching power. Sitting at this table, our soul has mounted up from the emblem to the reality; we have eaten bread in the kingdom of God, and have leaned our head upon Jesus' bosom. "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

Besides these regular mealtimes, there are others which God gives us, at seasons when, perhaps, we little expect them. You have been walking the

street, and suddenly you have felt a holy flowing out of your soul toward God; or in the middle of business your heart has been melted with love and made to dance for joy, even as the brooks, which have been bound with winter's ice, leap to feel the touch of spring. You have been groaning, dull, and earthbound; but the sweet love of Jesus has enwrapped your heart when you scarce thought of it, and your spirit, all free, and all on fire, has rejoiced before the Lord with timbrel and dance, like Miriam of old. I have had times occasionally in preaching when I would fain have kept on far beyond the appointed hour, for my overflowing soul has been like a vessel wanting vent. Seasons, too, we have had on our sick beds, when we would have been content to be sick always if we could have had our bed so well made by tender love, and our head so softly pillowed on condescending grace.

Our blessed Redeemer comes to us in the morning, and wakes us up by dropping sweet thoughts upon our souls; we know not how they came, but it is as if, when the dew was visiting the flowers, a few drops had taken pity upon us. In the cool eventide, too, as we have gone to our beds, our meditation of him has been sweet; and, in the night watches, when we tossed to and fro, and could not sleep, he has been pleased to become our song in the night.

God's reapers find it hard work to reap; but they gain a blessed solace when in one way or another they sit down and eat of their Master's rich provisions; then, with renewed strength, they rise with sharpened sickle, to reap again in the noontide heat.

Let me observe that, while these mealtimes come we know not exactly when, there are certain seasons when we may expect them. The Eastern reapers generally sit down under the shelter of a tree, or a booth, to take refreshment during the heat of the day. And certain I am, that when trouble, affliction, persecution, and bereavement, become the most painful to us, it is then that the Lord hands out to us the sweetest comforts. We must work till the hot sun forces the sweat from our faces, and then we may look for repose; we must bear the burden and heat of the day before we can expect to be invited to those choice meals which the Lord prepares for true laborers. When thy day of trouble is hottest, then the love of Jesus shall be sweetest.



Again, these mealtimes frequently occur before a trial. Elijah must be entertained beneath a juniper tree, for he is to go a forty-days' journey in the strength of that meat. You may suspect some danger nigh when your delights are overflowing. If you see a ship taking in great quantities of provision, it is probably bound for a distant port, and when God gives you extraordinary seasons of communion with Jesus, you may look for long leagues of tempestuous sea. Sweet cordials prepare for stern conflicts.

Times of refreshing also occur after trouble or arduous service. Christ was tempted of the devil, and afterwards angels came and ministered unto him. Jacob wrestled with God, and afterwards, at Mahanaim, hosts of angels met him. Abraham fought with the kings, and returned from their slaughter, and then it was that Melchisedec refreshed him with bread and wine. After conflict, content; after battle banquet. When thou hast waited on thy Lord, then thou shalt sit down, and thy Master will gird himself and wait upon thee.

Let worldlings say what they will about the hardness of religion, we do not find it so. We own that reaping for Christ has its difficulties and troubles; but still the bread which we eat is of heavenly sweetness, and the wine which we drink is crushed from celestial cluster —

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

**II.** Follow me while we turn to a second point, TO THESE MEALS THE GLEANER IS AFFECTIONATELY INVITED. That is to say, the poor, trembling stranger who has not strength enough to reap, who has no right to be in the field except the right of charity — the poor, trembling sinner, conscious of his own demerit, and feeling but little hope and little joy, is invited to the feast of love.

In the text the gleaner is invited to come. “At mealtime, come thou hither.” We trust none of you will be kept away from the place of holy feasting by any shame on account of your dress, or your personal character, or your poverty; nay, nor even on account of your physical infirmities. “At mealtime come thou hither.” I knew a deaf woman who could never hear a sound, and yet she was always in the House of God, and when asked

why, her reply was that a friend found her the text, and then God was pleased to give her many a sweet thought upon it while she sat with his people; besides, she felt that as a believer she ought to honor God by her presence in his courts, and by confessing her union with his people; and, better still, she always liked to be in the best of company, and as the presence of God was there, and the holy angels, and the saints of the Most High, whether she could hear or no, she would go. If such persons find pleasure in coming, we who can hear should never stay away. Though we feel our unworthiness, we ought to be desirous to be laid in the House of God, as the sick were at the pool of Bethesda, hoping that the waters may be stirred, and that we may step in and be healed. Trembling soul, never let the temptations of the devil keep thee from the assembly of worshippers; “at mealtime come thou hither.”

Moreover, she was bidden not only to come but to eat. Whatever there is sweet and comfortable in the Word of God, ye that are of a broken and contrite spirit are invited to partake of it. “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” — sinners such as you are. “In due time Christ died for the ungodly” — such ungodly ones as you feel yourselves to be. You desire to be Christ’s. You may be Christ’s. You are saying in your heart, “O that I could eat the children’s bread!” You may eat it. You say, “I have no right.” But the Lord gives you the invitation! Come without any other right than the right of his invitation.

*“Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream.”*

But since he bids you “come,” take him at his word; and if there be a promise, believe it; if there be an encouraging word, accept it, and let the sweetness of it be yours.

Note further, that she was not only invited to eat the bread, but to dip her morsel in the vinegar. We must not look upon this as being some sour stuff. No doubt there are crabbed souls in the church, who always dip their morsel in the sourest imaginable vinegar, and with a grim liberality invite others to share their misery with them; but the vinegar in my text is altogether another thing. This was either a compound of various juices expressed from fruits, or else it was that weak kind of wine mingled with water which is still commonly used in the harvest-fields of Italy and the

warmer parts of the world — a drink not exceedingly strong, but good enough to impart a relish to the food. It was, to use the only word which will give the meaning, a sauce, which the Orientals used with their bread. As we use butter, or as they on other occasions used oil, so in the harvest-field, believing it to have cooling properties, they used what is here called “vinegar.” Beloved, the Lord’s reapers have sauce with their bread; they have not merely doctrines, but the holy unction which is the essence of doctrines; they have not merely truths, but a hallowed delight accompanies the truths. Take, for instance, the doctrine of election, which is like the bread; there is a sauce to dip it in. When I can say, “He loved me before the foundations of the world,” the personal enjoyment of my interest in the truth becomes a sauce into which I dip my morsel. And you, poor gleaner, are invited to dip your morsel in it too. I used to hear people sing that hymn of Toplady’s, which begins —

*“A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing;  
Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,  
My person and offering to bring.”*  
*The hymn rises to its climax in the lines —*

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given;  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

I used to think I should never be able to sing that hymn. It was the sauce, you know. I might manage to eat some of the plain bread, but I could not dip it in that sauce. It was too high doctrine, too sweet, too consoling. But I thank God I have since ventured to dip my morsel in it, and now I hardly like my bread without it. I would have every trembling sinner partake of the comfortable parts of God’s Word, even those which cavillers call “HIGH DOCTRINE.” Let him believe the simpler truth first, and then dip it in the sweet doctrine and be happy in the Lord.

I think I see the gleaner half prepared to come, for she is very hungry, and she has nothing with her; but she begins to say, “I have no right to come, for I am not a reaper; I do nothing for Christ; I am only a selfish gleaner; I am not a reaper.” Ah! But thou art invited to come. Make no questions about it. Boaz bids thee; take thou his invitation, and approach at once. “But,” you say, “I am such a poor gleaner; though my labor is all for

myself, yet it is little I win by it; I get a few thoughts while the sermon is being preached, but I lose them before I reach home." I know you do, poor weak-handed woman. But still, Jesus invites thee. Come! Take thou the sweet promise as he presents it to thee, and let no bashfulness of thine send thee home hungry. "But," you say, "I am a stranger; you do not know my sins, my sinfulness, and the waywardness of my heart." But Jesus does, and yet he invites you. He knows you are but a Moabitess, a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel; but he bids you come. Is not that enough? "But," you say, "I owe so much to him already; it is so good of him to spare my forfeited life, and so tender of him to let me hear the gospel preached at all; I cannot have the presumption to be an intruder, and sit with the reapers." Oh! but he bids you. There is more presumption in your doubting than there could be in your believing. He bids you. Will you refuse Boaz? Shall Jesus' lips give the invitation, and will you say him nay? Come, now, come. Remember that the little which Ruth could eat did not make Boaz any the poorer; and all that thou wantest will make Christ none the less glorious or full of grace. Are thy necessities large? His supplies are larger. Dost thou require great mercy? He is a great Savior. I tell thee that his mercy is no more to be exhausted than the sea is to be drained. Come at once. There is enough for thee, and Boaz will not be impoverished by thy feasting to the full. Moreover, let me tell thee a secret — Jesus loves thee; therefore is it that he would have thee feed at his table. If thou art now a longing, trembling sinner, willing to be saved, but conscious that thou deservest it not, Jesus loves thee, and he will take more delight in seeing thee eat than thou wilt take in the eating. Let the sweet love he feels in his soul toward thee draw thee to him. And what is more — but this is a great secret, and must only be whispered in your ear — he intends to be married to you; and when you are married to him, why, the fields will be yours; for, of course, if you are his spouse, you are joint proprietor with him. Is it not so? Doth not the wife share with the husband? All those promises which are "yea and amen in Christ" shall be yours; nay, they all are yours now, for "the man is next of kin unto you," and ere long he will take you unto himself for ever, espousing you in faithfulness, and truth, and righteousness. Will you not eat of your own? "Oh! but," says one, "how can it be? I am a stranger." Yes, a stranger; but Jesus Christ loves the stranger. "A publican, a sinner;" but he is "the friend of publicans and sinners." "An outcast;" but he "gathereth together

the outcasts of Israel.” “A stray sheep;” but the shepherd “leaves the ninety and nine” to seek it. “A lost piece of money;” but he “sweeps the house” to find thee. “A prodigal son;” but he sets the bells a-ringing when he knows that thou wilt return. Come, Ruth! Come, trembling gleaner! Jesus invites thee: accept the invitation. “At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.”

**III.** Now, thirdly — and here is a very sweet point in the narrative — **BOAZ REACHED HER THE PARCHED CORN.** She did “come and eat.” Where did she sit? Note well that she “sat beside the reapers.” She did not feel that she was one of them, but she “sat beside” them. Just like some of you who do not come to the Lord’s Supper, but sit and look on. You are sitting “beside the reapers.” You fear that you are not the people of God; still you love them, and therefore sit beside them. If there is a good thing to be had, and you cannot get it, you will sit as near as you can to those who do get it. “She sat beside the reapers.”

And while she was sitting there, what happened? Did she stretch forth her hand and take the food herself? No, it is written, “He reached her the parched corn.” Ah! That is it. None but the Lord of the harvest can hand out the choicest refreshments of spiritual minds. I give the invitation in my Master’s name, and I hope I give it earnestly, affectionately, sincerely; but I know very well that at my poor bidding none will come till the Spirit draws. No trembling heart will accept divine refreshing at my hand; unless the King himself comes near, and reaches the parched corn to each chosen guest, none will receive it. How does he do this? By his gracious Spirit, he first of all inspires your faith. You are afraid to think that it can be true that such a sinner as you are can ever be “accepted in the Beloved”; he breathes upon you, and your faint hope becomes an expectancy, and that expectation buds and blossoms into an appropriating faith, which says, “Yes, my beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me.”

Having done this, the Savior does more; he sheds abroad the love of God in your heart. The love of Christ is like sweet perfume in a box. Now, he who put the perfume in the box is the only person that knows how to take off the lid. He, with his own skillful hand, opens the secret blessing, and sheds abroad the love of God in the soul.

But Jesus does more than this: he reaches the parched corn with his own hand, when he gives us close communion with himself. Do not think that this is a dream; I tell you there is such a thing as speaking with Christ to-day. As certainly as I can talk with my dearest friend, or find solace in the company of my beloved wife, so surely may I speak with Jesus, and find intense delight in the company of Immanuel. It is not a fiction. We do not worship a far-off Savior; he is a God nigh at hand. His word is in our mouth and in our heart, and we do to-day walk with him as the elect did of old, and commune with him as his apostles did on earth; not after the flesh, it is true, but after a real and spiritual fashion.

Yet once more let me add, the Lord Jesus is pleased to reach the parched corn, in the best sense, when the Spirit gives us the infallible witness within, that we are "born of God." A man may know that he is a Christian beyond all question. Philip de Morny, who lived in the time of Prince Henry of Navarre, was wont to say that the Holy Spirit had made his own salvation to him as clear a point as a problem demonstrated in Euclid. You know with what mathematical precision the scholar of geometry solves a problem or proves a proposition, and with as absolute a precision, as certainly as twice two are four, we may "know that we have passed from death unto life." The sun in the heavens is not more clear to the eye than his present salvation to an assured believer; such a man could as soon doubt his own existence as suspect his possession of eternal life.

Now let the prayer be breathed by poor Ruth, who is trembling yonder. Lord, reach me the parched corn! "Show me a token for good." "Deal bountifully with thy servant." "Draw me, we will run after thee." Lord, send thy love into my heart!

*"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all thy quickening powers,  
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,  
And that shall kindle ours."*

There is no getting at Christ except by Christ revealing himself to us.

**IV.** And now the last point. After Boaz had reached the parched corn, we are told that "SHE DID EAT, AND WAS SUFFICED, AND LEFT." So shall it be with every Ruth. Sooner or later every penitent shall become a believer, every mourner a singer. There may be a space of deep conviction, and a

period of much hesitation; but there shall come a season when the soul decides for the Lord, and cries, "If I perish, I perish. I will go as I am to Jesus. I will not play the fool any longer with my buts and ifs, but since he bids me believe that he died for me, I will believe it, and will trust his cross for my salvation." Whenever you shall be privileged to do this, you shall be "satisfied." "She did eat, and was sufficed." Your head shall be satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; your heart shall be content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; your hope shall be filled, for whom have you in heaven but Christ? Your desire shall be satiated, for what can even your desire hunger for more than "to know Christ, and to be found in him." You shall find Jesus charm your conscience, till it is at perfect peace, he shall content your judgment, till you know the certainty of his teachings; he shall supply your memory with recollections of what he did, and gratify your imagination with the prospects of what he is yet to do.

"She was sufficed, and left." Some of us have had deep draughts of love; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ, but when we have done our best, we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat down with a ravenous appetite at the table of the Lord's love, and said, "Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me," and that infinite has been granted us. I have felt that I am such a great sinner that nothing short of an infinite atonement could wash my sin away, and no doubt you have felt the same; but we have had our sin removed, and found merit enough and to spare in Jesus; we have had our hunger relieved, and found a redundancy remaining for others who are in a similar case. There are certain sweet things in the word of God which you and I have not enjoyed yet, and which we cannot enjoy yet; and these we are obliged to leave for a while, till we are better prepared to receive them. Did not our Lord say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"? There is a special knowledge to which we have not attained, a place of intimate fellowship with Christ which we have not yet occupied. There are heights of communion which as yet our feet have not climbed — virgin snows of the mountain of God untrodden by the foot of man. There is yet a beyond, and there will be for ever.

A verse or two further on we are told what Ruth did with her leavings. It is very wrong, I believe, at feasts to carry anything home with you; but

she was not under any such regulation, for that which was left she took home and gave to Naomi. So it shall be even with you, poor tremblers, who think you have no right to a morsel for yourselves; you shall be allowed to eat, and when you are quite sufficed, you shall have courage to bear away a portion to others who are hungering at home. I am always pleased to find the young believer beginning to pocket something for others. When you hear a sermon you think, "My poor mother cannot get out to-day; how I wish she would have been here, for that sentence would have comforted her. If I forget everything else, I will tell her that." Cultivate an unselfish spirit. Seek to love as you have been loved. Remember that "the law and the prophets" are fulfilled in this, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. How can you love your neighbor as yourself if you do not love his soul? You have loved your own soul; through grace you have been led to lay hold on Jesus; love your neighbor's soul, and never be satisfied till you see him in the enjoyment of those things which are the charm of your life and the joy of your spirit. Take home your gleanings for those you love who cannot glean for themselves.

I do not know how to give you an invitation to Christ more pleasantly, but I would with my whole heart cry, "Come and welcome to Jesus." I pray my Lord and Master to reach a handful of parched corn of comfort to you if you are a trembling sinner, and I also beg him to make you eat till you are fully sufficed.



# THE WARRANT OF FAITH

## SERMON NO. 531

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1863,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” — 1 John 3:23.*

THE old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that “they shall keep all God’s holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.” Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labor after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.”

We sing, and sing rightly too —

*“My soul, no more attempt to draw  
Thy life and comfort from the law,”*

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. “To convince and to condemn is all the law can do.” O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mingle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. “If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work.”

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the gospel, is very anxious to know first, what is the matter of the believing here intended; and secondly, what is the sinner’s warrant for so believing in Christ; nor will he fail to consider the mandate of the gospel.

**I.** First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text — believing on “his Son Jesus Christ.” That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith. they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God’s Son — so the text puts it — “His Son.” We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Savior can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God’s Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as “Jesus,” the Savior. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as “Christ,” the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation’s errand, not that

sinner might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, Coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement — regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law's curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are "accepted in the beloved." We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: "I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession."

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. "Believing" is most clearly explained by that simple word "trust." Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood — I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs — I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy

Savior this day, thou art justified ; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it, yet if thou wilt honor God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

**II.** The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the commandment of God. This is the commandment, that ye “believe on his Son Jesus Christ.”

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: “You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him.” Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of “The Sound Believer,” and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled “sensible sinners,” and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus — “I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ.” Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion

may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fullness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe — and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election — how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election, which I cannot get without faith. is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness — because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit — this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I shall deal with that matter first of all, negatively, and then, positively.

**1.** First, **NEGATIVELY**; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is absurd. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well ; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine ? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and

not to sinners. “Nay,” saith one, “but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus.” Friend, do you not know what all good desires have some degree of holiness in them ? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? My brethren, where is our inducement to labor where our efforts are so little needed ? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that “Jesus came into the world to save sinners” — sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners “of whom I am chief.”

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is legal, I dare to say it — legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance, conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, “The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ.” Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but

because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we shall be always looking within. “Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot.” And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such’ legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a boasting way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, “Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise.” See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, “Believe in Jesus,” we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs. or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is changeable. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a

melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, if so the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lustings and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly incomprehensible. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation



required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit — such as humility, godly sorrow, and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel against which I Contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death — another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the Cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me !" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had ongoing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ as a sinner, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible, or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it ill; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is unacceptable to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may

believe.” When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? “He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more.” Did you do so? “I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, some-times I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart.” What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? “He said I ought to pray much.” Did you pray? “I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could.” What did he say then? “He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises.” Yes, did you do so? “No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was.” What did he say then? “He told me to be diligent in the use of the means, and to attend his ministry.” What did you say to that? “I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven.” What did he say then? “Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, Carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God’s work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on.” And sinner, how is it now with you? where are you now? “Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?” Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God’s command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must heave him; I have no

more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” But you will find in ninety-nine Cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was Cast into the Red Sea of Jesus’ blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him;” and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner’s case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ’s most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner’s faith than the gospel itself, is false and dangerous.

It is false, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible — “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he

has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How dangerous is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous us to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit — and this is using strong language — than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature’s spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ’s place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strawed upon the water, and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be; and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own

impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life: Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity he addresses you, “Him that cometh to me I will in no Wise cast out.” If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded.

**2.** But now, POSITIVELY, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel Command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The words of our text imply this — “This is the commandment.” My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God’s command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe — if this be his commandment that thou believe — canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other. Surely the Lord’s Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner’s warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” It ought to run, according to the other plan, “preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul.” But it is not so; it is to “every creature.” But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to every creature. Then how is it put? — “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our reaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” but “Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe.” Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with

preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions, and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus; but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but “Christ, and him crucified.” Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Savior, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life — beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims — how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus — “Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth; hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God,” asked the meaning, and’ the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, “Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?” O my brethren, this is God’s weapon, God’s method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text — that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be

right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. “He laid down his life for our sins,” says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, “If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you ; if you will feel holy emotions — if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you.” There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, “Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live” — when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities.” Why, this is divine. You know what David said, “I have sinned.” What did Nathan say? “The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die,” and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. “The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live.” May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse — a book, by Abraham Booth, called “Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners.” I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth’s soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, “The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath

promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ.” Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject, to the law and to the testimony we must go ; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners — nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do on not see that this levels us all? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; it forbids despair. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything Could cut off Giant Despair’s head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

Again, how it makes a man live close to Christ! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him ;” if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, m preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou wilt g to in cur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then



dare to believe. Thou canst not say, “I have no right:” you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the Command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you — it is preached to every Creature nuder heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood. and to be married to so bright a Savior, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, “Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.”

# BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

## SERMON NO. 573

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 5TH, 1864,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” — Mark 16:15-16.*

In the preceding verse our Lord Jesus Christ gives us some little insight into the natural character of the apostles whom he selected to be the first ministers of the Word. They were evidently men of like passions with us, and needed to be rebuked even as we do. On the occasion when our Lord sent forth the eleven to preach the gospel to every creature, he “appeared unto them as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen;” from which we may surely gather that to preach the Word, the Lord was pleased to choose imperfect men; men, too, who of themselves were very weak in the grace of faith in which it was most important that they should excel. Faith is the conquering grace, and is of all things the main requisite in the preacher of the Word; and yet the honored men who were chosen to be the leaders of the divine crusade needed a rebuke concerning their unbelief. Why was this? Why, my brethren, because the Lord has ordained evermore that we should have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. If you should find a perfect minister, then might the praise and honor of his usefulness accrue to man; but God is frequently pleased to select for eminent usefulness men evidently honest and sincere, but who have some manifest infirmity by which all the glory is cast off from them and laid upon Himself, and upon Himself alone. Let it never be supposed that we who are God’s ministers either excuse our faults or pretend to perfection. We labour to walk in holiness, but we cannot claim to be all

that we wish to be. We do not base the claims of God's truth upon the spotlessness of our characters, but upon the fact that it comes from him. You have believed in spite of our infirmities, and not because of our virtues; if, indeed, you had believed our word because of our supposed perfection, your faith would stand in the excellency of man and not in the power of God. We come unto you often with much trembling, sorrowing over our follies and weaknesses, but we deliver to you God's Word as God's Word, and we beseech you to receive it not as coming from us poor, sinful mortals, but as proceeding from the Eternal and Thrice Holy God; and if you so receive it, and by its own vital force are moved and stirred up towards God and his ways, then is the work of the Word sure work, which it could not and would not be if it rested in any way upon man.

Our Lord having thus given us an insight into the character of the persons whom he has chosen to proclaim his truth, then goes on to deliver to the chosen champions, their commission for the Holy War. I pray you mark the words with solemn care. He sums up in a few words the whole of their work, and at the same time foretells the result of it, telling them that some would doubtless believe and so be saved, and some on the other hand would not believe and would most certainly, therefore, be damned, that is, condemned for ever to the penalties of God's wrath. The lines containing the commission of our ascended Lord are certainly of the utmost importance, and demand devout attention and implicit obedience, not only from all who aspire to the work of the ministry, but also from all who hear the message of mercy. A clear understanding of these words is absolutely necessary to our success in our Master's work, for if we do not understand the commission it is not at all likely that we shall discharge it aright. To alter these words were more than impertinence, it would involve the crime of treason against the authority of Christ and the best interests of the souls of men. O for grace to be very jealous here.

Wherever the apostles went they met with obstacles to the preaching of the gospel, and the more open and effectual was the door of utterance the more numerous were the adversaries. These brave men who wielded the sword of the Spirit as to put to flight all their foes; and this they did not by craft and guile, but by making a direct cut at the error which impeded them. Never did they dream for a moment of adapting the gospel to the unhallowed tastes or prejudices of the people, but at once directly and

boldly they brought down with both their hands the mighty sword of the Spirit upon the crown of the opposing error. This morning, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, my Helper and Defense, I shall attempt to do the same; and if I should provoke some hostility — if I should through speaking what I believe to be the truth lose the friendship of some and stir up the enmity of more, I cannot help it. The burden of the Lord is upon me, and I must deliver my soul. I have been loath enough to undertake the work, but I am forced to it by an awful and overwhelming sense of solemn duty. As I am soon to appear before my Master's bar, I will this day, if ever in my life, bear my testimony for truth, and run all risks. I am content to be cast out as evil if it must be so, but I cannot, I dare not, hold my peace. The Lord knoweth I have nothing in my heart but the purest love to the souls of those whom I feel imperatively called to rebuke sternly in the Lord's name. Among my hearers and readers, a considerable number will censure if not condemn me, but I cannot help it. If I forfeit your love for truth's sake I am grieved for you, but I cannot, I dare not, do otherwise. It is as much as my soul is worth to hold my peace any longer, and whether you approve or not I must speak out. Did I ever court your approbation? It is sweet to everyone to be applauded; but if for the sake of the comforts of respectability and the smiles of men any Christian minister shall keep back a part of his testimony, his Master at the last shall require it at his hands. This day, standing in the immediate presence of God, I shall speak honestly what I feel, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me; and I shall leave the matter with you to judge concerning it, as you will answer for that judgment at the last great day.

I find that the great error which we have to contend with throughout England (and it is growing more and more), is one in direct opposition to my text, well known to you as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. We will confront this dogma with the assertion, that **BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH SAVES NO ONE**. The text says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" but whether a man be baptized or no, it asserts that "he that believeth not shall be damned:" so that baptism does not save the unbeliever, nay, it does not in any degree exempt him from the common doom of all the ungodly. He may have baptism, or he may not have baptism, but if he believeth not, he shall be in any case most surely damned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling, in his infancy, or

in his adult age, if he be not led to put his trust in Jesus Christ — if he remaineth an unbeliever, then this terrible doom is pronounced upon him — ”He that believeth not shall be damned.” I am not aware that any Protestant Church in England teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration except one, and that happens to be the corporation which with none too much humility calls itself the Church of England. This very powerful sect does not teach this doctrine merely through a section of its ministers, who might charitably be considered as evil branches of the vine, but it openly, boldly, and plainly declares this doctrine in her own appointed standard, the Book of Common Prayer, and that in words so express, that while language is the channel of conveying intelligible sense, no process short of violent wresting from their plain meaning can ever make them say anything else.

Here are the words: we quote them from the Catechism which is intended for the instruction of youth, and is naturally very plain and simple, since it would be foolish to trouble the young with metaphysical refinements. The child is asked its name, and then questioned, “Who gave you this name?” “My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” Is not this definite and plain enough? I prize the words for their candour; they could not speak more plainly. Three times over the thing is put, lest there should be any doubt in it. The word regeneration may, by some sort of juggling, be made to mean something else, but here there can be no misunderstanding. The child is not only made “a member of Christ” — union to Jesus is no mean spiritual gift — but he is made in baptism “the child of God” also; and, since the rule is, “if children then heirs,” he is also made “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” Nothing can be more plain. I venture to say that while honesty remains on earth the meaning of these words will not admit of dispute. It is clear as noon day that, as the Rubric hath it, “Fathers, mothers, masters, and dames, are to cause their children, servants, and apprentices,” no matter how idle, giddy, or wicked they may be, to learn the Catechism, and to say that in baptism they were made members of Christ and children of God. The form for the administration of this baptism is scarcely less plain and outspoken, seeing that thanks are expressly returned unto Almighty God, because the person baptized is regenerate. “Then shall the priest say, ‘Seeing now, dearly

beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." "Nor is this all, for to leave no mistake, we have the words of the thanksgiving prescribed, "Then shall the priest say, 'We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church.'"

This, then, is the clear and unmistakable teaching of a Church calling itself Protestant. I am not now dealing at all with the question of infant baptism: I have nothing to do with that this morning. I am now considering the question of baptismal regeneration, whether in adults or infants, or ascribed to sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Here is a Church which teaches every Lord's day in the Sunday-school, and should, according to the Rubric, teach openly in the Church, all children that they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven when they were baptized! Here is a professedly Protestant Church, which, every time its minister goes to the font, declares that every person there receiving baptism is there and then "regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's Church."

"But," I hear many good people exclaim, "there are many good clergymen in the Church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration." To this my answer is prompt. Why then do they belong to a Church which teaches that doctrine in the plainest terms? I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment, but I question, gravely question their morality. To take oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe, would to my conscience appear little short of perjury, if not absolute downright perjury; but those who do so must be judged by their own Lord. For me to take money for defending what I do not believe — for me to take the money of a Church, and then to preach against what are most evidently its doctrines — I say for me to do this (I judge others as I would that they should judge me) for me, or for any other simple, honest man to do so, were an atrocity so great, that if I had perpetrated the deed, I should consider myself out of the pale of

truthfulness, honesty, and common morality. Sirs, when I accepted the office of minister of this congregation, I looked to see what were your articles of faith; if I had not believed them I should not have accepted your call, and when I change my opinions, rest assured that as an honest man I shall resign the office, for how could I profess one thing in your declaration of faith, and quite another thing in my own preaching? Would I accept your pay, and then stand up every Sabbath-day and talk against the doctrines of your standards? For clergymen to swear or say that they give their solemn assent and consent to what they do not believe is one of the grossest pieces of immorality perpetrated in England, and is most pestilential in its influence, since it directly teaches men to lie whenever it seems necessary to do so in order to get a living or increase their supposed usefulness: it is in fact an open testimony from priestly lips that at least in ecclesiastical matters falsehood may express truth, and truth itself is a mere unimportant nonentity. I know of nothing more calculated to debauch the public mind than a want of straightforwardness in ministers; and when worldly men hear ministers denouncing the very things which their own Prayer Book teaches, they imagine that words have no meaning among ecclesiastics, and that vital differences in religion are merely a matter of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, and that it does not much matter what a man does believe so long as he is charitable towards other people. If baptism does regenerate people, let the fact be preached with a trumpet tongue, and let no man be ashamed of his belief in it. If this be really their creed, by all means let them have full liberty for its propagation. My brethren, those are honest Churchmen in this matter who, subscribing to the Prayer Book, believe in baptismal regeneration, and preach it plainly. God forbid that we should censure those who believe that baptism saves the soul, because they adhere to a Church which teaches the same doctrine. So far they are honest men; and in England, where else, let them never lack a full toleration. Let us oppose their teaching by all Scriptural and intelligent means, but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their doctrine, but I love their honesty; and as they speak but what they believe to be true, let them speak it out, and the more clearly the better. Out with it, sirs, be it what it may, but do let us know what you mean. For my part, I love to stand foot to foot with an honest foeman. To open warfare, bold and true hearts raise no objection but the ground of quarrel; it is covert enmity which we have most cause to fear,

and best reason to loathe. That crafty kindness which inveigles me to sacrifice principle is the serpent in the grass — deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where union and friendship are not cemented by truth, they are an unhallowed confederacy. It is time that there should be an end put to the flirtations of honest men with those who believe one way and swear another. If men believe baptism works regeneration, let them say so; but if they do not so believe it in their hearts, and yet subscribe, and yet more, get their livings by subscribing to words asserting it, let them find congenial associates among men who can equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will neither ask nor accept their friendship.

We ourselves are not dubious on this point, we protest that persons are not saved by being baptized. In such an audience as this, I am almost ashamed to go into the matter, because you surely know better than to be misled. Nevertheless, for the good of others we will drive at it. We hold that persons are not saved by baptism, for we think, first of all that it seems out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach, that he should make salvation depend upon mere ceremony. Judaism might possibly absorb the ceremony by way of type into her ordinances essential to eternal life; for it was religion of types and shadows. The false religions of the heathen might inculcate salvation by a physical process, but Jesus Christ claims for his faith that it is purely spiritual, and how could he connect regeneration with a peculiar application of aqueous fluid? I cannot see how it would be a spiritual gospel, but I can see how it would be mechanical, if I were sent forth to teach that the mere dropping of so many drops upon the brow, or even the plunging a person in water could save the soul. This seems to me to be the most mechanical religion now existing, and to be on a par with the praying windmills of Thibet, or the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase to which Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness. The operation of water-baptism does not appear even to my faith to touch the point involved in the regeneration of the soul. What is the necessary connection between water and the overcoming of sin? I cannot see any connection which can exist between sprinkling, or immersion, and regeneration, so that the one shall necessarily be tied to the other in the absence of faith. Used by faith, had God commanded it, miracles might be wrought; but without faith or even consciousness, as in the case of babes, how can spiritual



benefits be connected necessarily with the sprinkling of water? If this be your teaching, that regeneration goes with baptism, I say it looks like the teaching of a spurious Church, which has craftily invented a mechanical salvation to deceive ignorant, sensual, and grovelling minds, rather than the teaching of the most profoundly spiritual of all teachers, who rebuked Scribes and Pharisees for regarding outward rites as more important than inward grace.

But it strikes me that a more forcible argument is that the dogma is not supported by facts. Are all persons who are baptized children of God? Well, let us look at the divine family. Let us mark their resemblance to their glorious Parent! Am I untruthful if I say that thousands of those who were baptized in their infancy are now in our goals? You can ascertain the fact if you please, by application to prison authorities. Do you believe that these men, many of whom have been living by plunder, felony, burglary, or forgery, are regenerate? If so, the Lord deliver us from such regeneration. Are these villains members of Christ? If so, Christ has sadly altered since the day when he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Has he really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of his body? Do you not revolt at the supposition? It is a well-known fact that baptized persons have been hanged. Surely it can hardly be right to hang the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Our sheriffs have much to answer for when they officiate at the execution of the children of God, and suspend the members of Christ on the gallows! What a detestable farce is that which is transacted at the open grave, when “a dear brother” who has died drunk is buried in a “sure and certain hope of the resurrection of eternal life,” and the prayer that “when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ, as our hope is that this our brother doth.” Here is a regenerate brother, who having defiled the village by constant uncleanness and bestial drunkenness, died without a sign of repentance, and yet the professed minister of God solemnly accords him funeral rites which are denied to unbaptized innocents, and puts the reprobate into the earth in “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” If old Rome in her worst days ever perpetrated a grosser piece of imposture than this, I do not read things aright; if it does not require a Luther to cry down this hypocrisy as much as Popery ever did, then I do not even know that twice two make four. Do we find — we who baptize on profession of faith, and

baptize by immersion in a way which is confessed to be correct, though not allowed by some to be absolutely necessary to its validity — do we who baptize in the name of the sacred Trinity as others do, do we find that baptism regenerates? We do not. Neither in the righteous nor the wicked do we find regeneration wrought by baptism. We have never met with one believer, however instructed in divine things, who could trace his regeneration to his baptism; and on the other hand, we confess it with sorrow, but still with no surprise, that we have seen those whom we have ourselves baptized, according to apostolic precedent, go back into the world and wander into the foulest sin, and their baptism has scarcely been so much as a restraint to them, because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Facts all show that whatever good there may be in baptism, it certainly does not make a man “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” or else many thieves, whoremongers, drunkards, fornicators, and murderers, are members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Facts, brethren, are against this Popish doctrine; and facts are stubborn things.

Yet further, I am persuaded that the performance styled baptism by the Prayer Book is not at all likely to regenerate and save. How is the thing done? One is very curious to know when one hears of an operation which makes men members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, how the thing is done. It must in itself be a holy thing truthful in all its details, and edifying in every portion. Now, we will suppose we have a company gathered round the water, be it more or less, and the process of regeneration is about to be performed. We will suppose them all to be godly people. The clergyman officiating is a profound believer in the Lord Jesus, and the father and mother are exemplary Christians, and the godfathers and godmothers are all gracious persons. We will suppose this — it is a supposition fraught with charity, but it may be correct. What are these godly people supposed to say? Let us look to the Prayer Book. The clergyman is supposed to tell these people, “Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully, for his part, promise by you that

are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments." This small child is to promise to do this, or more truly others are to take upon themselves to promise, and even vow that he shall do so. But we must not break the quotation, and therefore let us return to the Book. "I demand therefore, dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?" Answers "I renounce them all." That is to say, on the name and behalf of this tender infant about to be baptized, these godly people, these enlightened Christian people, these who know better, who are not dupes, who know all the while that they are promising impossibilities — renounce on behalf of this child what they find it very hard to renounce for themselves — "all covetous desires of the world and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that they will not follow nor be led by them." How can they harden their faces to utter such a false promise, such a mockery of renunciation before the presence of the Father Almighty? Might not angels weep as they hear the awful promise uttered? Then in the presence of high heaven they profess on behalf of this child that he steadfastly believes the creed, when they know, or might pretty shrewdly judge that the little creature is not yet a steadfast believer in anything, much less in Christ's going down into hell. Mark, they do not say merely that the babe shall believe the creed, but they affirm that he does, for they answer in the child's name, "All this I steadfastly believe. Not we steadfastly believe," but I, the little baby there, unconscious of all their professions and confessions of faith. In answer to the question, "Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" they reply for the infant, "That is my desire." Surely the infant has no desire in the matter, or at the least, no one has been authorized to declare any desires on his behalf. But this is not all, for then these godly, intelligent people next promise on the behalf of the infant, that "he shall obediently keep all God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life." Now, I ask you, dear friends, you who know what true religion means, can you walk in all God's holy commandments yourselves? Dare you make this day a vow on your own part, that you would renounce the devil and all his works, the poms and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful

lusts of the flesh? Dare you, before God, make such a promise as that? You desire such holiness, you earnestly strive after it, but you look for it from God's promise, not from your own. If you dare make such vows I doubt your knowledge of your own hearts and of the spirituality of God's law. But even if you could do this for yourself, would you venture to make such a promise for any other person? For the best-born infant on earth? Come, brethren, what say you? Is not your reply ready and plain? There is not room for two opinions among men determined to observe truth in all their ways and words. I can understand a simple, ignorant rustic, who has never learned to read, doing all this at the command of a priest and under the eye of a squire. I can even understand persons doing this when the Reformation was in its dawn, and men had newly crept out of the darkness of Popery; but I cannot understand gracious, godly people, standing at the font to insult the all-gracious Father with vows and promises framed upon a fiction, and involving practical falsehood. How dare intelligent believers in Christ to utter words which they know in their conscience to be wickedly aside from truth? When I shall be able to understand the process by which gracious men so accommodate their consciences, even then I shall have a confirmed belief that the God of truth never did and never will confirm a spiritual blessing of the highest order in connection with the utterance of such false promises and untruthful vows. My brethren, does it not strike you that declarations so fictitious are not likely to be connected with a new birth wrought by the Spirit of truth?

I have not done with this point, I must take another case, and suppose the sponsors and others to be ungodly, and that is no hard supposition, for in many cases we know that godfathers and parents have no more thought of religion than that idolatrous hollowed stone around which they gather. When these sinners have taken their places, what are they about to say? Why, they are about to make the solemn vows I have already recounted in your hearing! Totally irreligious they are, but yet they promise for the baby what they never did, and never thought of doing for themselves — they promise on behalf of this child, “that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments.” My brethren, do not think I speak severely here. Really I think there is something here to make mockery for devils. Let every honest man lament, that ever God's Church should tolerate such

a thing as this, and that there should be found gracious people who will feel grieved because I, in all kindness of heart, rebuke the atrocity. Unregenerate sinners promising for a poor babe that he shall keep all God's holy commandments which they themselves wantonly break every day! How can anything but the longsuffering of God endure this? What! not speak against it? The very stones in the street might cry out against the infamy of wicked men and women promising that another should renounce the devil and all his works, while they themselves serve the devil and do his works with greediness! As a climax to all this, I am asked to believe that God accepts that wicked promise, and as the result of it, regenerates that child. You cannot believe in regeneration by this operation, whether saints or sinners are the performers. Take them to be godly, then they are wrong for doing what their conscience must condemn; view them as ungodly, and they are wrong for promising what they know they cannot perform; and in neither case can God accept such worship, much less infallibly append regeneration to such a baptism as this.

But you will say "Why do you cry out against it?" I cry out against it because I believe that baptism does not save the soul, and that the preaching of it has a wrong and evil influence upon men. We meet with persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptized. The number of these persons is increasing, fearfully increasing, until all grades of society are misled by this belief. How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say Ye must be born again to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own "unfeigned assent and consent" to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in baptism. What is he to do with them? Why, my dear friends, the gospel then has no voice; they have rammed this ceremony down its throat and it cannot speak to rebuke sin. The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, "I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke me? Call me to repentance? Call me to a new life? What better life can I have? for I am a member of Christ — a part of Christ's body. What! rebuke me? I am a child of God. Cannot you see it in my face? No matter what my walk and conversation is, I am a child of God. Moreover, I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is true, I drink and swear, and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the

kingdom of heaven, for when I die , though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave, and tell everybody that I died ‘in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.’“

Now, what can be the influence of such preaching as this upon our beloved England? Upon my dear and blessed country? What but the worst of ills? If I loved her not, but loved myself most, I might be silent here, but, loving England, I cannot and dare not; and having soon to render an account before my God, whose servant I hope I am, I must free myself from this evil as well as from every other, or else on my head may be the doom of souls.

Here let me bring in another point. It is a most fearful fact, that in no age since the Reformation has Popery made such fearful strides in England as during the last few years. I had comfortably believed that Popery was only feeding itself upon foreign subscriptions, upon a few titled perverts, and imported monks and nuns. I dreamed that its progress was not real. In fact, I have often smiled at the alarm of many of my brethren at the progress of Popery. But, my dear friends, we have been mistaken, grievously mistaken. If you will read a valuable paper in the magazine called “Christian Work,” those of you who are not acquainted with it will be perfectly startled at its revelations. This great city is now covered with a network of monks, and priests, and sisters of mercy, and the conversions made are not by ones or twos, but by scores, till England is being regarded as the most hopeful spot for Romish missionary enterprise in the whole world; and at the present moment there is not a mission which is succeeding to anything like the extent which the English mission is. I covet not their money, I despise their sophistries, but I marvel at the way in which they gain their funds for the erection of their ecclesiastical buildings. It really is an alarming matter to see so many of our countrymen going off to that superstition which as a nation we once rejected, and which it was supposed we should never again receive. Popery is making advances such as you would never believe, though a spectator should tell it to you. Close to your very doors, perhaps even in your own houses, you may have evidence ere long of what a march Romanism is making. And to what is it to be ascribed? I say, with every ground of probability, that there is no marvel that Popery should increase when you have two things to make it grow: first of all, the falsehood of those who profess a faith which they

do not believe, which is quite contrary to the honesty of the Romanist, who does through evil report and good report hold his faith; and then you have, secondly, this form of error known as baptismal regeneration, and commonly called Puseyism, which is not only Puseyism, but Church-of-Englandism, because it is in the Prayer Book, as plainly as words can express it — you have this baptismal regeneration preparing stepping-stones to make it easy for men to go to Rome. I have but to open my eyes a little to foresee Romanism rampant everywhere in the future, since its germs are spreading everywhere in the present. In one of our courts of legislature but last Tuesday, the Lord Chief Justice showed his superstition, by speaking of “the risk of the calamity of children dying unbaptized!” Among Dissenters you see a veneration for structures, a modified belief in the sacredness of places, which is idolatry; for to believe in the sacredness of anything but of God and of his own Word, is to idolize, whether it is to believe in the sacredness of the men, the priests, or in the sacredness of the bricks and mortar, or of the fine linen, or what not, which you may use in the worship of God. I see this coming up everywhere — a belief in ceremony, a resting in ceremony, a veneration for altars, fonts, and Churches — a veneration so profound that we must not venture upon a remark, or straightway of sinners we are chief. Here is the essence and soul of Popery, peeping up under the garb of a decent respect for sacred things. It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watch-dogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turfing the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words, we want the fiery Knox, and even though his vehemence should “ding our pulpits into blads,” it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action. We want Luther to tell men the truth unmistakably, in homely phrase. The velvet has got into our ministers’ mouths of late, but we must unrobe ourselves of soft raiment, and truth must be spoken, and nothing but truth; for of all lies which have dragged millions down to hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious — that in a Protestant Church there should be found those who swear that baptism saves the soul. Call a man a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter, or a Churchman, that is nothing to me — if he says that baptism saves the soul, out upon him, out upon him, he

states what God n ever taught, what the Bible never laid down, and what ought never to be maintained by men who profess that the Bible, and the whole Bible, is the religion of Protestants.

I have spoken thus much, and there will be some who will say — spoken thus much bitterly. Very well, be it so. Physic is often bitter, but it shall work well, and the physician is not bitter because his medicine is so; or if he be accounted so, it will matter, so long as the patient is cured; at all events, it is no business of the patient whether the physician is bitter or not, his business is with his own soul's health. There is the truth, and I have told it to you; and if there should be one among you, or if there should be one among the readers of this sermon when it is printed, who is resting on baptism, or resting upon ceremonies of any sort, I do beseech you, shake off this venomous faith into the fire as Paul did the viper which fastened on his hand. I pray you do not rest on baptism.

*“No outward forms can make you clean,  
The leprosy lies deep within.”*

I do beseech you to remember that you must have a new heart and a right spirit, and baptism cannot give you these. You must turn from your sins and follow after Christ; you must have such a faith as shall make your life holy and your speech devout, or else you have not the faith of God's elect, and into God's kingdom you shall never come. I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful invention of antichrist. O, may God save you from it, and bring you to seek the true rock of refuge for weary souls.

I come with much brevity, and I hope with much earnestness, in the second place, to say that FAITH IS THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SALVATION. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” Faith is the one indispensable requisite for salvation. This faith is the gift of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Some men believe not on Jesus; they believe not because they are not of Christ's sheep, as he himself said unto them; but his sheep hear his voice: he knows them and they follow him: he gives to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. What is this believing? Believing consists in two things; first there is an accrediting of the testimony of God concerning his Son. God tells you



that his Son came into the world and was made flesh, that he lived upon earth for men's sake, that after having spent his life in holiness he was offered up a propitiation for sin, that upon the cross he there and then made expiation — so made expiation for the sins of the world that Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. If you would be saved, you must accredit this testimony which God gives concerning his own Son. Having received this testimony, the next thing is to confide in it — indeed here lies, I think, the essence of saving faith, to rest yourself for eternal salvation upon the atonement and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to have done once for all with all reliance upon feelings or upon doings, and to trust in Jesus Christ and in what he did for your salvation.

This is faith, receiving of the truth of Christ: first knowing it to be true, and then acting upon that belief. Such a faith as this — such real faith as this makes the man henceforth hate sin. How can he love the thing which made the Savior bleed? It makes him live in holiness. How can he but seek to honor that God who has loved him so much as to give his Son to die for him. This faith is spiritual in its nature and effects; it operates upon the entire man; it changes his heart, enlightens his judgment, and subdues his will; it subjects him to God's supremacy, and makes him receive God's Word as a little child, willing to receive the truth upon the ipse dixit of the divine One; it sanctifies his intellect, and makes him willing to be taught God's Word; it cleanses within; it makes clean the inside of the cup and platter, and it beautifies without; it makes clean the exterior conduct and the inner motive, so that the man, if his faith be true and real, becomes henceforth another man to what he ever was before.

Now that such a faith as this should save the soul, is, I believe, reasonable; yea, more, it is certain, for we have seen men saved by it in this very house of prayer. We have seen the harlot lifted out of the Stygian ditch of her sin, and made an honest woman; we have seen the thief reclaimed; we have known the drunkard in hundreds of instances to be sobered; we have observed faith to work such a change, that all the neighbours who have seen it have gazed and admired, even though they hated it; we have seen faith deliver men in the hour of temptation, and help them to consecrate themselves and their substance to God; we have seen, and hope still to see yet more widely, deeds of heroic consecration to God and displays of

witness-bearing against the common current of the times, which have proved to us that faith does affect the man, does save the soul. My hearers, if you would be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me urge you with all my heart to look nowhere but to Christ crucified for your salvation. Oh! if you rest upon any ceremony, though it be not baptism — if you rest upon any other than Jesus Christ, you must perish, as surely as this Book is true. I pray you believe not every spirit, but though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine than this, let him be accursed, for this, and this alone, is the soul-saving truth which shall regenerate the world — ”He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Away from all the tag-rags, wax candles, and millinery of Puseyism! away from all the gorgeous pomp of Popery! away from the fonts of Church-of-Englandism! we bid you turn your eyes to that naked cross, where hangs as a bleeding man the Son of God.

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

There is life in a look at the crucified; there is life at this moment for you. Whoever among you can believe in the great love of God towards man in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved. If you can believe that our great Father desireth us to come to him — that he panteth for us — that he calleth us every day with the loud voice of his Son’s wounds; if you can believe now that in Christ there is pardon for transgressions past, and cleansing for years to come; if you can trust him to save you, you have already the marks of regeneration. The work of salvation is commenced in you, so far as the Spirit’s work is concerned: it is finished in you so far as Christ’s work is concerned. O, I would plead with you — lay hold on Jesus Christ. This is the foundation: build on it. This is the rock of refuge: fly to it. I pray you fly to it now. Life is short: time speeds with eagle’s-wing. Swift as the dove pursued by the hawk, fly, fly poor sinner, to God’s dear Son; now touch the hem of his garment; now look into that dear face, once marred with sorrows for you; look into those eyes, once shedding tears for you. Trust him, and if you find him false, then you must perish; but false you never will find him while this word standeth true, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” God give us this vital, essential faith, without which there is no salvation. Baptized, re-baptized, circumcised, confirmed, fed upon sacraments, and

buried in consecrated ground — ye shall all perish except ye believe in him. The word is express and plain — he that believeth not may plead his baptism, may plead anything he likes, “But he that believeth not shall be damned;” for him there is nothing but the wrath of God, the flames of hell, eternal perdition. So Christ declares, and so must it be.

But now to close, there are some who say, “Ah! but baptism is in the text; where do you put that?” That shall be another point, and then we shall have done.

THE BAPTISM IN THE TEXT IS ONE EVIDENTLY CONNECTED WITH FAITH. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” It strikes me, there is no supposition here, that anybody would be baptized who did not believe; or, if there be such a supposition, it is very clearly laid down that his baptism will be of no use to him, for he will be damned, baptized or not, unless he believes. The baptism of the text seems to me — my brethren, if you differ from me I am sorry for it, but I must hold my opinion and out with it — it seems to me that baptism is connected with, nay, directly follows belief. I would not insist too much upon the order of the words, but for other reasons, I think that baptism should follow believing. At any rate it effectually avoids the error we have been combating. A man who knows that he is saved by believing in Christ does not, when he is baptized, lift his baptism into a saving ordinance. In fact, he is the very best protester against that mistake, because he holds that he has no right to be baptized until he is saved. He bears a testimony against baptismal regeneration in his being baptized as professedly an already regenerate person. Brethren, the baptism here meant is a baptism connected with faith, and to this baptism I will admit there is very much ascribed in Scripture. Into that question I am not going; but I do find some very remarkable passages in which baptism is spoken of very strongly. I find this — “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” I find as much as this elsewhere; I know that believer’s baptism itself does not wash away sin, yet it is so the outward sign and emblem of it to the believer, that the thing visible may be described as the thing signified. Just as our Savior said — “This is my body,” when it was not his body, but bread; yet, inasmuch as it represented his body, it was fair and right according to the usage of language to say, “Take, eat, this is my body.” And so, inasmuch as

baptism to the believer representeth the washing of sin — it may be called the washing of sin — not that it is so, but that it is to saved souls the outward symbol and representation of what is done by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the man who believes in Christ.

What connection has this baptism with faith? I think it has just this, baptism is the avowal of faith; the man was Christ's soldier, but now in baptism he puts on his regimentals. The man believed in Christ, but his faith remained between God and his own soul. In baptism he says to the baptizer, "I believe in Jesus Christ;" he says to the Church, "I unite with you as a believer in the common truths of Christianity;" he saith to the onlooker, "Whatever you may do, as for me, I will serve the Lord." It is the avowal of his faith.

Next, we think baptism is also to the believer a testimony of his faith; he does in baptism tell the world what he believes. "I am about," saith he, "to be buried in water. I believe that the Son of God was metaphorically baptized in suffering; I believe he was literally dead and buried." To rise again out of the water sets forth to all men that he believes in the resurrection of Christ. There is a showing forth in the Lord's Supper of Christ's death, and there is a showing forth in baptism of Christ's burial and resurrection. It is a type, a sign, a symbol, a mirror to the world: a looking-glass in which religion is as it were reflected. We say to the onlooker, when he asks what is the meaning of this ordinance, "We mean to set forth our faith that Christ was buried, and that he rose again from the dead, and we avow this death and resurrection to be the ground of our trust."

Again, baptism is also Faith's taking her proper place. It is, or should be one of her first acts of obedience. Reason looks at baptism, and says, "Perhaps there is nothing in it; it cannot do me any good." "True," says Faith, "and therefore will I observe it. If it did me some good my selfishness would make me do it, but inasmuch as to my sense there is no good in it, since I am bidden by my Lord thus to fulfil all righteousness, it is my first public declaration that a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is law, is law to me. If my Master had told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of him, 'What good will it do?' Cui

bono? is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, 'Therefore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my Master.' "When you tell your servant to do something, and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns round and says, "Please, sir, what for?" you are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, "What for?" I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to whatever the Lord hath said. Baptism is commanded, and Faith obeys because it is commanded, and thus takes her proper place.

Once more, baptism is a refreshment to Faith. While we are made up of body and soul as we are, we shall need some means by which the body shall sometimes be stirred up to co-work with the soul. In the Lord's Supper my faith is assisted by the outward and visible sign. In the bread and in the wine I see no superstitious mystery, I see nothing but bread and wine, but in that bread and wine I do see to my faith an assistant. Through the sign my faith sees the thing signified. So in baptism there is no mysterious efficacy in the baptistry or in the water. We attach no reverence to the one or to the other, but we do see in the water and in the baptism such an assistance as brings home to our faith most manifestly our being buried with Christ, and our rising again in newness of life with him. Explain baptism thus, dear friends, and there is no fear of Popery rising out of it. Explain it thus, and we cannot suppose any soul will be led to trust to it; but it takes its proper place among the ordinances of God's house. To lift it up in the other way, and say men are saved by it — ah! my friends, how much of mischief that one falsehood has done and may do, eternity alone will disclose. Would to God another George Fox would spring up in all his quaint simplicity and rude honesty to rebuke the idol-worship of this age; to rail at their holy bricks and mortar, holy lecterns, holy alters, holy surplices, right reverend fathers, and I know not what. These things are not holy. God is holy; his truth is holy; holiness belongs not to the carnal and the material, but to the spiritual. O that a trumpet-tongue would cry out against the superstition of the age. I cannot, as George Fox did, give up baptism and the Lord's Supper, but I would infinitely sooner do it, counting it the smaller mistake of the two than perpetrate and assist in perpetrating the uplifting of baptism and the

Lord's Supper out of their proper place. O my beloved friends, the comrades of my struggles and witnessings, cling to the salvation of faith, and abhor the salvation of priests. If I am not mistaken, the day will come when we shall have to fight for a simple spiritual religion far more than we do now. We have been cultivating friendship with those who are either unscriptural in creed or else dishonest, who either believe baptismal regeneration, or profess that they do, and swear before God that they do when they do not. The time is come when there shall be no more truce or parley between God's servants and the time-servers. The time is come when those who follow God must follow God, and those who try to trim and dress themselves and find out a way which is pleasing to the flesh and gentle to carnal desires, must go their way. A great winnowing time is coming to God's saints, and we shall be clearer one of these days than we now are from union with those who are upholding Popery, under the pretence of teaching Protestantism. We shall be clear, I say, of those who teach salvation by baptism, instead of salvation by the blood of our blessed Master, Jesus Christ. O may the Lord gird up your loins. Believe me, it is no trifle. It may be that on this ground Armageddon shall be fought. Here shall come the great battle between Christ and his saints on the one hand, and the world, and forms, and ceremonies, on the other. If we are overcome here, there may be years of blood and persecution, and tossing to and fro between darkness and light; but if we are brave and bold, and flinch not here, but stand to God's truth, the future of England may be bright and glorious. O for a truly reformed Church in England, and a godly race to maintain it! The world's future depends on it under God, for in proportion as truth is marred at home, truth is maimed abroad. Out of any system which teaches salvation by baptism must spring infidelity, an infidelity which the false Church already seems willing to nourish and foster beneath her wing. God save this favored land from the brood of her own established religion. Brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not afraid of any sudden fear nor calamity when it cometh, for he who trusteth to the Lord, mercy shall compass him about, and he who is faithful to God and Christ shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord." May the Lord bless this word for Christ's sake.

[Note. — Having been informed that the whole of the burial service is not usually read at executions, I have, for the sake of fairness, altered the passage upon page 318 [in the author's edition], although it strikes me that I might justly have retained it, since the rubric of the Church and not the practice of some of its ministers is that with which we must deal. The rubric says, "The office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves." The victim of our capital punishment is not by this rubric shut out from the privileges (?) of the Anglican burial service, unless his condemnation may be viewed as tantamount to excommunication, which I can hardly think be the case, since many condemned persons receive the sacrament. I have also altered an incorrect expression on page 316, which has been pointed out to me by both friends and foes. May God grant that the controversy which this sermon has commenced may lead to the advancement of his truth, and the enlightenment of many.]

# CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, AND NOT TO THE FONT

## SERMON NO. 581

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 24TH, 1864,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them” — Mark 10:13-16.*

MY attention has been specially directed to this passage by the fact that it has been quoted against me by most of the authors of those sermons and letters which are, by a stretch of imagination, called “replies” to my sermon upon “Baptismal Regeneration.” Replies they certainly are not, except to one another. I marvel that a Church so learned as the Anglican, cannot produce something a little more worthy of the point in hand. The various authors may possibly have read my discourse, but by reason of mental absorption in other meditations, or perhaps through the natural disturbance of mind caused by guilty consciences, they have talked with confusion of words, and have only been successful in refuting themselves, and answering one another. They must have been aiming at something far removed from my sermon, or else I must give them credit for being the worst shots that ever practiced with polemical artillery. They do not so much as touch the target in its extreme corners, much less in its center. The whole question is, Do you believe that baptism regenerates? If so — prove that your belief is Scriptural! Do you believe that baptism does not regenerate? Then justify your swearing that it does? Who will reply to this? He shall merit and bear the palm.



The Scripture before us is by several of the champions on the other side exhibited to the people as a rebuke to me. Their reasoning is rather ingenious than forcible: forsooth, because the disciples incurred the displeasure of Jesus Christ by keeping back the little children from coming to *Him*, therefore Jesus Christ is greatly displeased with me, and with all others like me, for keeping children from *the font*, and the performance there enacted; and specially displeased with me for exposing the Anglican doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration! Observe the reasoning — because Jesus was much displeased with disciples for hindering parents from seeking a blessing upon their children, therefore he is much displeased with us who do not believe in godfathers and godmothers, or the signing of the cross on the infant brow. I must say at the outset that this is rather a leap of argument, and would not ordinarily be thought conclusive, but this we may readily overlook, since we have long ceased to hope for reasonable arguments from those who support a cause based upon absurdity. My brethren, I concluded that there must be something forcible in such a text as this, or my opponents would not be so eager to secure it; I have therefore care fully looked at it, and as I have viewed it, it has opened up to me with a sacred splendor of grace. In this incident the very heart of Christ is published to poor sinners, and we may clearly perceive the freeness and the fullness of the mighty grace of the Redeemer of men, who is willing to receive the youngest child as well as the oldest man; and is greatly displeased with any who would keep back seeking souls from coming to him, or loving hearts from bringing others to receive his blessing.

**I.** In handling this text in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence, first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF THE SHADE OF THE GHOST OF A CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection so substantial as a spider's web between this incident and baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, Dear Friends, that *these young children were not brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized*. “They brought young children to him, that he should touch them,” says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought “that he would put his hands on them and pray,” but there is not a hint about their being baptized; no

godfathers or godmothers had been provided, and no sign of the cross was requested. Surely the parents themselves knew tolerably well what it was they desired, and they would not have expressed themselves so dubiously as to ask him to touch them, when they meant that he should baptize them. The parents evidently had no thought of regeneration by baptism, and brought the children for quite another end.

In the next place, *if they brought the children to Jesus Christ to be baptized, they brought them to the wrong person*; for the Evangelist, John, in the fourth chapter, and the second verse, expressly assures us that Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples: this settles the question once for all, and proves beyond all dispute that there is no connection between this incident and baptism.

But you will say, "*Perhaps they brought the children to be baptized by the disciples?*" Brethren, the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, and this is clear from the case in hand. If they had been in the habit of baptizing infants, would they have rebuked the parents for bringing them? If it had been a customary thing for parents to bring children with such an object, would the disciples who had been in the constant habit of performing the ceremony, have rebuked them for attending to it? Would any Church clergyman rebuke parents for bringing their children to be baptized? If he did so, he would act absurdly contrary to his own views and practice; and we cannot therefore imagine that if infant baptism had been the accepted practice, the disciples could have acted so absurdly as to rebuke the parents for bringing their little ones. It is obvious that such could not have been the practice of the disciples who were rebuked.

Moreover, and here is an argument which seems to me to have great force in it, *when Jesus Christ rebuked his disciples, then was the time if ever in his life, to have openly spoken concerning infant baptism, godfathers and godmothers, and the whole affair*. If he wished to rebuke his disciples most effectually, how could he have done it better than by saying, "Wherefore keep ye these children back? I have ordained that they shall be baptized; I have expressly commanded that they shall be regenerated and made members of my body in baptism; how dare you then, in opposition to my will, keep them back?" But no, dear friends, our Savior never said a word about "the laver of regeneration," or, "the quickening dew," when he

rebuked them — not a single sentence. Had he done so, the season would have been most appropriate if it had been his intention to teach the practice; in the whole of his life, there is no period in which a discourse upon infant regeneration in baptism could have been more appropriate than on this occasion, and yet not a single sentence about it comes from the Savior's lips.

To close all, *Jesus Christ did not baptize the children*. Our Evangelist does not inform us that he exclaimed, "Where are the godfathers and godmothers?" It is not recorded that he called for a font, or a Prayer Book? No; but "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them," and dismissed them without a drop of the purifying element. Now, if this event had any connection with baptism whatever, it was the most appropriate occasion for infant baptism to have been practiced. Why, it would have ended for ever the controversy. There may be some men in the world who would have raised the question of engrafting infants into the body of Christ's Church by baptism after all this, but I am certain no honest man would have done so who reverently accepted Christ as his spiritual leader. I, my brethren, would sooner be dumb than speak a single word against an ordinance which Christ himself instituted and practiced; and if on this occasion he had but sprinkled one of these infants, given him a Christian name, signed him with a cross, accepted the vows of his godparents, and thanked God for his regeneration, then the question would have been settled for ever, and some of us would have been saved a world of abuse, besides escaping no end of mistakes, for which we are condemned, in the judgment of many good people, for whom we have some affection, though for their judgment we have no respect.

So you see the parents did not ask baptismal regeneration; Christ did not personally baptize; the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, or else they would not have rebuked the parents; Christ did not speak about baptism on the occasion, and he did not baptize the little ones.

I will put a case to you which may exhibit the weakness of my opponents' position. Suppose a denomination should rise up which should teach that babes should be allowed to partake at the Lord's Table. Such teaching could plead precedents of great antiquity, for you are aware

that at one period, infant communion was allowed, and logically too; for if an infant has a right to baptism, it has a right to come to the Lord's Table. For years children were brought to the Lord's Table, but rather inconvenient accidents occurred, and therefore the thing was dropped as being unseemly. But if some one should revive the error, and try to prove that infants are to come to the Lord's Supper, he might prove it from this passage quite as clearly as our friends can prove infant baptism from it. Moreover do not forget that even if infant baptism could be proved from this text, the ceremony prescribed in the Prayer Book is quite as far from being established. Whether the baptism of infants may or may not be proved from other Scriptures I cannot now stay to enquire, but even if it can be, what are we to say for godfathers or godmothers, or the assertion that in baptism children are made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?" Truly I might as well prove vaccination from the text before me, as the performance which the Prayer Book calls "infant baptism." I do not hesitate to say that I could prove any earthly thing, if I might but have such reasoning granted to me as that which proved infant baptism from this passage. There is no possible connection between the two. The teaching of the passage is very plain and very clear, and baptism has been imported into it, and not found in it. As a quaint writer has well said, "These doctrines are raised from the text as our collectors raise a tax upon indigent, nonsolvent people, by coming armed with the law and a constable to distrain for that which is not to be had. Certainly never was text so strained and distrained to pay what it never owed; never man so racked to confess what he never thought; never was a pumice stone so squeezed for water which it never held." Still hundreds will catch at this straw, and cry, "Did not Jesus say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me?'" "To these we give this one word, see that ye read the Word as it is written, and you will find no water in it but Jesus only. Are the water and Christ the same thing? Is bringing a child to a font bringing the child to Christ? Nay, here is a wide difference, as wide as between Rome and Jerusalem, as wide as between Anti-christ and Christ, between false doctrine and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**II.** Now, for our second and much more pleasing task, WHY THEN WAS JESUS CHRIST DISPLEASED?

Read the passage and at once the answer comes to you. He was displeased with his disciples for two reasons: first, *because they discouraged those who would bring others to him*; and secondly, *because they discouraged those who themselves were anxious to come to him*. They did not discourage those who were coming to a font, they discouraged those who were coming to Jesus. There is a mighty distinction ever to be held between the font and Christ, between the sprinkling of the priest and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, *his disciples discouraged those who would bring others to him*. This is a great sin, and wherever it is committed Jesus Christ is greatly displeased, for a true desire to see others saved is wrought in the believer by God the Holy Spirit, who thus renders the called ones the means of bringing wandering sheep into the fold. In this case they discouraged those who would bring *children* to him to be blessed. How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, "he is risen;" but we can bring our children in a true, real, and spiritual sense. We take them up in the arms of our *prayer*. I hope many of us, so soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer, that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father's God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God; and when we looked into their young faces, we never asked wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else, but that they might be dear unto God, and that their names might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We did then bring our children to Christ as far as we could do it, by presenting them before God, by earnest prayer on their behalf. And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? Nay, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, "O, that they might live before thee!" God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion; our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy, if we should but know that they were the children of the living God. Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say with the apostle Paul, "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth." We continue, therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf. So soon as they become of years capable of understanding the

things of God, we endeavor to bring them to Christ by *teaching them the truth*. Hence our Sabbath-schools, hence the use of the Bible and family prayer, and catechizing at home. Any person who shall forbid us to pray for our children, will incur Christ's high displeasure; and any who shall say, "Do not teach your children; they will be converted in God's own time if it be his purpose, therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it be God's good pleasure; therefore leave it, and let the weeds spring up and cover it; do not endeavor for a moment to kill the weeds, or to sow the good seed." Why, such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ. Parents! I do hope you are all endeavoring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act, and he could judge between good and evil, without knowing the doctrine of the atonement, without understanding the great substitutionary work of Christ. Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin, and Christ's most precious blood; and as you set these before him, labor with him, persuade him, as the apostle did his congregation, with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord; and your prayers and supplications shall be heard so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus. How much more like the Scripture will such labors be than if you were to sing the following very pretty verse which disfigures Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise!" —

*“Though thy conception was in sin,  
A sacred bathing thou hast had;  
And though thy birth unclean has been,  
A blameless babe thou now art made.  
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;  
Be still, my dear, sweet baby, sleep.”*

I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of "Alleyn's Alarm," or of Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and this was

read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. Sunday-school teachers! you have a high and noble work, press forward in it. In our schools you do not try to bring children to the baptistry for regeneration, you point them away from ceremonies; if I know the teachers of this school aright, I know you are trying to bring your classes to Christ. Let Christ be the sum and substance of your teaching in the school. Young men and young women, in your classes lift up Christ, lift him up on high; and if anybody shall say to you, "Why do you thus talk to the children?" you can say, "Because my soul yearns towards them, and I pant for their conversion;" and if any should afterwards object, you can remember that Jesus is greatly displeased with *them*, and not with you, for you only obey the injunction, "Feed my lambs."

The case in our text is that of children, but objectors rise up who disapprove of endeavors to bring any sort of people to Christ by faith and prayer. There are some who spend their nights in the streets seeking after the poor harlot, and I have heard many harsh observations made about their work; some will say it is ridiculous to expect that any of those who have spent their days in debauchery should be converted. We are told that the most of those who are taken into the refuges go back and become as depraved as ever; I believe that to be a very sad and solemn truth; but I believe, if I or anyone else shall urge that or anything else as a reason why my brethren should not seek the harlot, that Jesus would be greatly displeased; for any man who stands between a soul-seeker and the divine object of getting a blessing for the sinner's soul, excites the wrath of Christ. Some have hopes of our convicts and criminals; but every now and then there is an outcry against those who even believe it possible for a

transport or a ticket-of-leave man to be converted. But Jesus is greatly displeased with any who shall say about the work, "It is too hard; it is impossible." My brethren in Christ, labor for souls of all sorts: for your children and for those who are past the threescore years and ten. Seek out the drunkard; go after the thief; despise not the poor down-trodden slave; let every race, let every color, let every age, let every profession, let every nation, be the object of your soul's prayers. You live in this world, I hope, to bring souls to Jesus; you are Christ's magnets with which through his Holy Spirit he will attract hearts of steel; you are his heralds, you are to invite wanderers to come to the banquet; you are his messengers, you are to compel them to come in that his house may be filled; and if the devil tells you will not succeed, and if the world tells you that you are too feeble and have not talent enough, never mind, Jesus would be greatly displeased with you if you should take any heed to them; and meanwhile he is greatly displeased with your adversaries for endeavoring to stop you. Beloved, this is why Jesus Christ was greatly displeased.

A second ground of displeasure must be noticed. These children, it strikes me, and I think there is good reason for the belief, *themselves desired to come to Christ to obtain a blessing*. They are called "little children," which term does not necessarily involve their being infants of six months or a year; indeed, it is clear, as I will show in a moment, that they were not such little children as to be unconscious babes. They were "infants," according to our version of Luke, but then you know the English word "infant" includes a considerable range of age, for every person in his minority is legally considered to be an infant, though he may be able to talk to any amount. We do not, however, desire to translate the text with so great a license. There is no necessity in the language used that these should have been anything but what they are said to be — "little children." It is evident they could walk, because in Luke it is said, "Jesus called *them*;" the gender of the Greek pronoun used there refers it to the children, not to the persons, nor to the disciples. Jesus called them, he called the children, which he would hardly have done if they could not comprehend his call: and he said, "Suffer the little children to come," which implies that they could come, and doubtless they did come, with cheerful faces, expecting to get the blessing. These perhaps may have been some of those very children, who, a short time after, pulled down branches



from the trees and strewed them in the way, and cried, “Hosanna,” when the Savior said, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.” Now Christ was greatly displeased with his disciples for pushing back these boys and girls. They did, as some old folks do now-a-days, who cry out — ”Stand back, you boys and girls! we do not want you here; we do not want children to fill up the place; we only want grown-up people.” They pushed them back; they thought that Christ would have too much to do, if he attended to the juveniles. Here comes out this principle, that we must expect Christ’s displeasure, if we attempt to keep anybody back from coming to Christ, even though it be the youngest child. You ask how persons can come to Christ now? They cannot come corporeally, but they can come by simple prayer and humble faith. Faith is the way to Jesus, baptism is not. When Jesus says, “Come *unto me* all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” he did not mean, “be baptized,” did he? No; and so when he said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” he did not mean, “Baptize them,” did he? Coming to Jesus Christ is quite a different thing from coming to a font. Coming to Christ means laying hold upon Christ with the hand of faith; looking to him for my life, my pardon, my salvation, my everything. If there be a poor little child here who is saying in her little heart, or his little heart, “I would like to come to Christ, O that I might be pardoned while I am yet a little one” — come, little lamb; come, and welcome. Did I hear your cry? Was it this?

*“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child;  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to thee.”*

Dear little one, Jesus will not despise your lisplings, nor will his servant keep you back. Jesus calls you, come and receive his blessing. If any of you say a word to keep the young heart back, Jesus will be displeased with you. Now I am afraid some do that; those, for instance, who think that the gospel is not for little children. Many of my brethren, I am sorry to say, preach in such a way that there is no hope of children ever getting any good by their preaching. I cannot glory in learning or eloquence, but in this one thing I may rejoice, that there is always a number of happy children here, who are quite as attentive as any of my audience. I do love to think that the gospel is suitable to little children. There are boys and girls in many of our Sabbath-school classes down below stairs who are as

truly converted to God as any of us. Nay, and if you were to speak with them about the things of God, though you should get to the knotty points of election and predestination, you would find those boys and girls well taught in the things of the kingdom: they know free will from free grace, and you cannot puzzle them when you come to talk about the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, for they can discern between things which differ. But a minister who preaches as though he never wanted to bring children to Christ, and shoots right over the little one's heads, I do think Jesus is displeased with him.

Then there are others who doubt whether children ever will be converted. They do not look upon it as a thing likely to happen, and whenever they hear of a believing child, they hold up their hands at the prodigy, and say, "What a wonder of grace!" It ought to be, and in those Churches where the gospel is simply preached, it is as common a thing for children to be converted as for grown-up people to be brought to Christ. Others begin to doubt the truth of juvenile conversions. They say, "They are very young, can they understand the gospel. Is it not merely an infantile emotion, a mere profession?" My brethren, you have no more right to suspect the sincerity of the young, than to mistrust the grey-headed; you ought to receive them with the same open-breasted confidence with which you receive others when they profess to have found the Savior. Do, I pray you, whenever you see the faintest desire in your children, go down on your knees, as your servant does, when the fire is almost out, and blow the spark with your own breath — seek by prayer to fan that spark to a flame. Do not despise any godly remark the child may make. Do not puff the child up on account of the goodness of the remark, lest you make him vain and so injure him, but do encourage him; let his first little prayers be noticed by you; though you may not like to teach him a form of prayer — I shall not care if you do not — yet teach him what prayer is; tell him to express his desires in his own words, and when he does so, join ye in it and plead with God on his behalf, that your little one may speedily find true peace in a Savior's blood. You must not, unless you would displease my Master, keep back the smallest child that longs to come to Christ.

Here let us observe that the principle is of general application, you must not hinder any awakened soul from seeking the Savior. O my brethren and sisters, I hope we have such a love for souls, such an instinct within us to

desire to see the travail of Christ's soul, that instead of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, we would do the best we could to gather out the stones. On Sabbath days I have labored to clear up the doubts and fears which afflict coming sinners; I have entreated God the Holy Spirit to enable me so to speak, that those things which hindered you from coming to the Savior might be removed; but how sad must be the case of those who delight themselves in putting stumbling-blocks in men's way. The doctrine of election for instance, a great and glorious truth, full of comfort to God's people; how often is that made to frighten sinners from Jesus! There is a way of preaching that with a drawn sword, and say, "You must not come unless you know you are one of God's elect." That is not the way to preach the doctrine. The true way of preaching it is, "God has a chosen people, and I hope you are one of them; come, lay hold on Jesus, put your trust in him." Then there be others who preach up frames and feelings as a preparation for Christ. They do in effect say, "Unless you have felt so much depression of spirit, or experienced a certain quantity of brokenness of heart, you must not come to Christ," instead of declaring, that whosoever will is permitted to come, and that the true way of coming to Christ is not with a qualification of frames and feeling and mental depressions, but just as you are. Oh! it is my soul's delight to preach a gospel which has an open door to it, to preach a mercy-seat which has no veil before it; the veil is rent in twain, and now the biggest sinner out of hell who desires to come, is welcome. You who are eighty years of age, and have hated Christ all the time, if now the Spirit of God makes you willing to come, Christ seems to say, "Suffer the grey-headed to come unto me, and forbid them not:" while to you little children, he stretches out his arms in the same manner, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." O my beloved, see to it that your heart longs to come to Christ, and not to ceremonies! I stand here this day to cry, "Come ye to the cross, not to the font." When I forget to lift up the Lord Jesus, and to cast down the forms of man's devising, "let my right hand forget her cunning," and "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth" —

*None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good;"*

The font is a mockery and an imposition if it be put before Christ. If you have baptism after you have come to Christ, well and good, but to point

you to it either as being Christ, or as being inevitably connected with Christ, or as being the place to find Christ, is nothing better than to go back to the beggarly elements of the old Romish harlot, instead of standing in the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and bidding the sinner to come as a sinner to Christ Jesus, and to Christ Jesus alone.

**III.** In the third and last place, let us also gather from our text, that **WHEN WE DISCOURAGE ANY, WE ALWAYS GO UPON WRONG GROUNDS.** Here was the case of children. I suppose that the grounds upon which the apostles kept back the children would be one of these — either that the children could not receive a blessing, or else that they could not receive it worthily.

Did they imagine that these little children could not receive the blessing? Perhaps so, for they thought them too young. Now, brethren, that was a wrong ground to go upon, for these children could receive the blessing and they did receive it, for Jesus took them in his arms and blessed them. If I keep back a child from coming to Christ on the ground that he is too young, I do it in the face of facts; because there have been children brought to Christ at an extremely early period. You who are acquainted with Janeway's "Tokens for Children," have noticed very many beautiful instances of early conversion. Our dear friend, Mrs. Rogers, in that book of hers, "The Folded Lamb," gave a very sweet picture of a little son of hers, soon folded in the Savior's bosom above, who, as early as two or three years of age, rejoiced and knew the Savior. I do not doubt at all, I cannot doubt it, because one has seen such cases, that children of two or three years of age may have precocity of knowledge, and of grace; a forwardness which in almost every case has betokened early death, but which has been perfectly marvelous to those who have talked with them. The fact is that we do not all at the same age arrive at that degree of mental stature which is necessary for understanding the things of God. Children have been reported as reading Latin, Greek, and other languages, at five or six years of age. I do not know that such early scholarship is any great blessing, it is better not to reach that point so soon; but some children are all that their minds ever will be at three or four, and then they go home to heaven; and so long as the mind has been brought up to such a condition that it is capable of understanding, it is also capable of faith, if the Holy Spirit shall implant it. To suppose that he ever did give faith to an unconscious babe

is ridiculous; that there can be any faith in a child that knows nothing whatever I must always take ground to doubt, for “How shall they believe without a preacher?” And yet they are brought up to make a profession in their long-clothes, when they have never heard a sermon in their lives. But those dear children to whom I have before referred, have understood the preacher, have understood the truth, have rejoiced in the truth, and their first young lisplings have been as full of grace as those glorious expressions of aged saints in their triumphant departures. Children are capable, then, of receiving the grace of God. Do mark by the way, that all those champions who have come out against me so valiantly, have made a mistake; they have said that we deny that little infants may be regenerated; we do not deny that God can regenerate them if he pleases; we do not know anything about what may or may not happen to unconscious babes; but we did say that little children were not regenerated by their godparents telling lies at a font — we did say that, and we say it again, that little children are not regenerated, nor made members of Christ, nor children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, by solemn mockery, in which godfathers and godmother s promise to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, much less for their children. That is the point; and if they will please to meet it, we will answer them again, but till such time as that, we shall probably let them talk on till God give s them grace to know better.

The other ground upon which the apostles put back the children would be, that although the children might receive the blessing, *they might not be able to receive it worthily*. The Lord Jesus in effect assures them t hat so far from the way in which a little child enters into the kingdom of heaven being exceptional, it is the rule; and the very way in which a child enters the kingdom, is the way in which everybody must enter it. How does a child enter the kingdom of heaven? Why, its faith is very simple; it does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told upon the authority of God’s Word, and it comes to God’s Word without previous prejudice. It has its natural sinfulness, but grace overcomes it, and the child receives the Word as it finds it. You will notice in boyish and girlish conversions, a peculiar simplicity of belief: they believe just what Christ says, exactly what he says. If they pray, they believe Christ will hear them: if they talk about Jesus, it is as of a person near at hand. They

do not, as we do, get into the making of these things into mysteries and shadows, but little children have a realizing power. Then they have great rejoicing. The most cheerful Christians we have are young believers; and the most cheerful old Christians are those who were converted when they were young. Why, see the joy of a child that finds a Savior! "Mother," he says, "I have sought Jesus Christ, and I have trusted him, and I am saved." He does not say, "I hope," and "I trust," but "I am;" and then he is ready to leap for joy because he is saved. Of the many boys and girls whom we have received into Church-fellowship, I can say of them all, they have all gladdened my heart, and I have never received any with greater confidence than I have these: this I have noticed about them, they have greater joy and rejoicing than any others; and I take it, it is because they do not ask so many questions as others do, but take Jesus Christ's word as they find it, and believe in it. Well now, just the very way in which a child receives Christ, is the way in which you must receive Christ if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know *too* much; you who have big brains; you who are always thinking, and have tendency to criticism, and perhaps to scepticism, you must come and receive the gospel as a little child. You will never get a hold of my Lord and Master while you are wearing that quizzing cap; no, you must take it off, and by the power of the Holy Spirit you must come trusting Jesus, simply trusting him, for this is the right way to receive the kingdom.

But here, let me say, the principle which holds good in little children holds good in all other cases as well. Take for instance the case of very great sinners, men who have been gross offenders against the laws of their country. Some would say they cannot be saved; they can be for some of them have been. Others would say they never receive the truth as it is in Jesus in the right manner; ay, but they do. How do great sinners receive Christ? There are some here who have been reclaimed from drunkenness, and I know not what. My brethren, how did you receive Christ? Why in this way. You said, "All unholy, all unclean, I am nothing else but sin; but if I am saved, it will be grace, grace, grace." Why, when you and I stood up, black, and foul, and filthy, and yet dared to believe in Christ, we said, "If we are saved, we shall be prodigies of divine mercy, and we will sing of his love for ever." Well but, my dear friends, you must all receive Jesus Christ in that very way. That which would raise an objection to the

salvation of the big sinner is thrown back upon you, for Christ might well say, "Except ye receive these things as the chief of sinners, ye cannot enter the kingdom." I will prove my point by the instance of the apostle Paul. He has been held by some to be an exception to the rule, but Paul did not think so, for he says that God in him showed forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them that believe, and made him as it were a type of all conversions; so that instead of being an exception his was to be the rule. You see what I am driving at. The case of the children looks exceptional, but it is not; it has, on the contrary, all the features about it which must be found in every true conversion. It is of such that the kingdom of heaven is composed, and if we are not such we cannot enter it. Let this induce all of us who love the Lord, to pray for the conversion both of children and of all sorts of men. Let our compassion expand, let us shut out none from the plea of our heart; in prayer and in faith let us bring all who come under our range, hoping and believing that some of them will be found in the election of grace, that some of them will be washed in the Savior's blood, and that some of them will shine as stars in the firmament of God for ever. Let us, on no consideration, believe that the salvation of any man or child is beyond the range of possibility, for the Lord saveth whom he wills. Let no difficulties which seem to surround the case hinder our efforts; let us, on the contrary, push with greater eagerness forward, believing that where there seems to be some special difficulty, there will be manifested, as in the children's case, some special privilege. O labor for souls, my dear friends! I beseech you live to win souls. This is the best rampart against error, a rampart built of living stones — converted men and women. This is the way to push back the advances of Popery, by imploring the Lord to work conversions. I do not think that mere controversial preaching will do much, though it must be used; it is grace-work we want; it is bringing you to Christ, it is getting you to lay hold of him — it is this which shall put the devil to a nonplus and expand the kingdom of Christ. O that my God would bring some of you to Jesus! If he is displeased with those who would keep you back, then see how willing he is to receive you. Is there in your soul any desire towards him? Come and welcome, sinner, come. Do you feel now that you must have Christ or die? Come and have him, he is to be had for the asking. Has the Lord taught you your need of Jesus? Ye thirsty ones, come and drink; ye hungry ones, come and eat. Yea, this is the proclamation of the gospel to-day, "The Spirit and the bride say,

Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I do trust there may be encouragement in this to some of you. I pray my Master make you feel it. If he be angry with those who keep you back, then he must be willing to receive you, glad to receive you; and if you come to him he will in nowise cast you out. May the Lord add his blessing on these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.



# PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL

## SERMON NO. 597

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 30TH, 1864

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” — Amos 3:3.*

THE believer is agreed with God. The war between the most holy God and his offending creatures is over in the case of bloodwashed sinners; not suspended by a truce, but ended for ever by a peace which passeth all understanding. The believer is fully agreed with God concerning the divine law: he confesses that “the law is holy, and just, and good”: he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God’s testimonies more than in all riches; yea, in his precepts doth he take delight, praying evermore, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed, while they secure the glory of the great Governor. The Christian “consents unto the law that it is good.” He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the law should be visited with penalty: he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary, and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great atonement for sin which God himself has ordained and provided in the person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary, while the Lord is content, the believer is satisfied; where God finds satisfaction for his injured honor, the believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration. Thou lovest Golgotha, O thou Judge of the earth; and thy people are perfectly agreed with thee in this. Henceforth the Christian is at one with God in his love of holiness: he delights in the law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed

unto the image of Christ. Great God, thou hast unsheathed thy sword, and bathed it in heaven, for the destruction of all evil, and thy redeemed are on thy side, abhorring that which is evil, and resolving to fight under thy command till the last sin shall be cut off. Thou hast uplifted thy banner because of the truth, and around thy standard the soldiers of the cross are rallying; for thy battle, O Most High, is the battle of the Church; thy foes are our foes, and thy friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here met in the name of Jesus, feel a deep, sincere, and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at his will; but yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and center knoweth that the will of the Lord is wise and good; and we therefore bow our heads with reverent agreement, and say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” “The will of the Lord be done.” Our soul, when through infirmity she is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after complete resignation of her wishes and desires to the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will, but we sigh after the spirit of self-denial; yea, of self-annihilation, that Christ may live in us, and that the old Ego, the carnal I, may be altogether slain. I would be as obedient to my God as are those firstborn sons of light, his messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air, and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive his wish and will, and move at once in obedience thereto. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will, but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say, that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God; and if we could have our will this morning, we would follow his commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that this agreement gives us power to walk with God. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which divine grace has bestowed on us: power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous communion. Believer, you can walk with God this very day. He is as near to thee as he was to Abraham beneath the oak at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show thee his love as he was to reveal himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the

streams of Chebar. Thou hast no greater distance this day between thee and thy God, than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the angel and prevailed. He is thy father, as truly as he was the father of the people whom he covered by day with a cloud, and cheered by night with a pillar of fire; and though no Shekinah lights up a golden mercy-seat, yet the throne of grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide thee in his pavilion, as he did his servant David; yea, in the secret of the tabernacle shall be thy hiding-place. Enoch's privilege was not peculiar to him; it is thy birthright: claim it. Noah's high honor of walking with God was not reserved for him alone; it belongs to thee also, shut in as thou art in the ark of the covenant, and saved from the deluge of divine wrath. It should be the Christian's delight to be always with his God; walking with him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with him four hundred years. O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night: may we dwell in God, and may he dwell in us. Walking implies action; and our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatsoever he eateth, or drinketh, or doeth, should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. Walking has in it the thought of progress; but all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ, so we must ask to grow up in him; ever abiding in our highest moments with God, and never imagining or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in him. Beloved brother in the Lord, it may be that thy heart is agreed with God, and yet thou hast lost for a time thy walking with him; be not at ease in thy soul till thou hast regained it. Search thine own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit; and when thou knowest thyself to be agreed with God, through Him who is our peace, hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to thy Father and thy God, notwithstanding all thy past wanderings; for he welcomes thee to walk with him, seeing that thou art agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it; I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable

manner, but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear friends, we need as the first and most essential thing in this matter, that God should walk with us. In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have his presence. If, then, we desire to have his presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with him both in the design of the work, and in the method of it; and I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination, that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church, unless we be agreed with him.

The first remark, then, of this morning, is simply this, — we desire in this matter to walk together with God; but, in the second place, if we would have him with us we must be agreed with him; and therefore, thirdly, we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God, and so prevent his coming to our aid. I do ask the prayers of God's people that he may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now: I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to some one else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune, and the strings are all loosened, but the chief musician understands his instruments, and knows how to get music out of us, and in answer to prayer he will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

**I.** Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORT WE MAY WALK WITH GOD; otherwise our strivings after revival will be very wearisome.

I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a prayer-meeting where the devotion is forced, and the fervour laborious; where brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement, and wind up the people to the proper pitch; when the addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness, and the prayers to beget superstition. God's true saints cannot but feel that to gain the graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting, and they say, "How different is this from occasions when God's Spirit has been really at work with us!" Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the Church, borne onward with the

breath of the divine Spirit, with a full tide of heaven's grace, speeds on her glorious way. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," was the request of Moses; and I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God's presence be not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without thine own power in it; let us have no special prayer-meetings merely for the sake of them; but let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer: if thou dost not intend to help us now let us weep in secret, but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance be lacking. During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things; if there be not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dulness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly; the numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent, and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our beloved. O thou who art our beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing, and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with thyself.

Not only is there weariness in our own attempts, but they always end in disappointment, unless God walketh with us. Ye may pray, and pray, and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening, until the Spirit's working be distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was; the Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were; the Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were wont to be; the congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times, except the Spirit of God work with us. In this thing we may quote the words of the psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." O friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance; it is well to strain every nerve, and put forth every effort; but all this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure, unless the Lord rend the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all do know, and what I trust you feel,

but it is what we are constantly forgetting; for many are they that go a warfare at their own charges, and so become both bankrupt and defeated; and many be they who would build God's house simply by stress of human effort, but they fail, because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more; supposing that in this our attempt at revival, we should not be favored with the presence of God; then prayer will be greatly dishonored. I take it, that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened; and this is a most serious evil, for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God's saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of prayer, is an injury to their spirituality; and thus upon the largest scale God's Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We must go on; it would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs. As a Church, we must now conquer or die. How can I again stir you up to supplication, if on this occasion your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master's faithfulness if he does not give you evidences of it. Ah! my brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith, unless that faith shall be confirmed just now by a shower divine mercy. To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument, either against the existence of God, or else against the reality of his promise. I hope such a thing as this will not occur. "Aha! aha!" saith the enemy, "see what has come of it all! The people cried, but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers; they approached the mercy-seat with tears and groans, but no result has come of it; there have been no more conversions than before, and God's strength has not been put forth." Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur. The true soldiers of the cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks, as that God's honor should thus be attained in the presence of his foes.

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure, — and fail it must without the presence of God, — leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before; because, if it should prove a failure, from the want of any stir at all; then God's people fall back into their former lethargy, with an excuse for continuing in it; or if a false stir be

made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival; and if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all, the mischief is still as great; God's people, being disappointed, have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action, become contented with their Laodicean lukewarmness, and it becomes impossible to bestir them again. If a revival should apparently have success and yet God be not in it, perhaps this is even worse. The wild-fire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church. I know, and speak not without book, when I declare that some churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons; so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh, and purge the church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons; the beginning anew being almost hopeless, because, after the paroxysm of passion about religion has passed, there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain. I had rather see a Church asleep, than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism: better that she should lie still than do mischief. O dear friends, we have felt in our souls, not that we may have revival, but that we must have it; and when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh, with this determination, that we will not let him go unless he bless us.

We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing, when we consider the blessings which are sure to flow from his presence. Ah! what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer; both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God. You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish, and that your prayers expire; instead thereof, every action shall be fraught with vigour, every thought shall glow with earnestness, every word shall be clothed with divine power. Let God

arise; and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding-places, as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn. Let the Lord visit you; and difficulties which frown like Alps, will sink to plains. Let him arise; and all your enemies shall flee before you, as the smoke before the wind; the heavens shall drop with showers of mercy; and even your sins and all the guilt thereof, shall shake as Sinai shook at the presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God's presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful; fair as the moon before the Lord, and clear as the sun in the eyes of men, she is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies.

If God shall be pleased to be with his Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation. We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a believer: but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened; but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain: they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions; but after ten or eleven years of ministry, they are just where they were, except that they have accumulated fresh guilt. Some desire to be Christians, but they harbour some darling lust. We know some who used to feel under the Word, but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet, now lulls them to sleep. Some have made a compromise; and one day they will serve God and another day they will serve their sins; like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master's presence, and we shall soon see these brought in; hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh; the iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel; Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against him, and there shall be shouting in heaven because the Lord hath gotten him the victory.

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed alone. If any one Church shall stand in the vigour of piety, other Churches shall take example therefrom, and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches, hills which God has blessed; but they, like ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out his Spirit here,



and the shower will not be confined to these fields, but will drop upon other pastures, and they shall rejoice on every side. Our testimony for God rings through this land; from one end of it to the other. Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word; and if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth, to load the moral atmosphere with a savor of Christ crucified. One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide: no tongue or language can separate us. If God bless France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent; if he should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel the power thereof. Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray. O, my brethren, the world grows old; man's faith is getting weary of long waiting; the false prophets begin again to appear, and cry lo here, and lo there; but the Lord must come; of this are we confident: in such an hour as we think not, he may appear. How would we have him find us at his coming? Would we have him find his servants sleeping? his stewards wasting his goods? his vinedressers with neglected vines? his soldiers with swords rusted into their scabbards? No, we would have him find us watching, standing upon the watch-tower, feeding his sheep, tending his lambs, succoring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed. Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord. If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear brethren and sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob, that when the Son of Man cometh, if he find no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least he may find it in you: if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may he find one live coal yet glowing in your bosom. For this we want his presence, for without it we can do nothing.

**II.** This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that **IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM.**

We must be agreed with God as to the end of our Christian existence. God hath formed us for himself, that we may show forth his praise. The main end of a Christian man is, that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ, and not unto himself. O brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this. I must say it, painful though it be, there are

many professors, and there are some in this Church, who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to heaven, to get as much money as they can on earth, and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die; I say, “to get to heaven,” for they selfishly include that as one of the designs of divine grace; but I question, if it were not for their happiness to go to heaven, whether they would care much about going, if it were only for God’s glory; for their way of living upon earth is always thus: “What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewithal shall I be clothed?” Religion never calls out their thoughtfulness. They can judge, and weigh, and plot, and plan to get money, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of truth, or to the spread of the Redeemer’s kingdom; they will so far condescend to consider religion, as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner, but nothing more. You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease; such a thing is just and right: but whenever this gets to be the main thought; and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget whose they are, and whom they serve; they are living to themselves; they have forgotten who it is that has said, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold.” Oh! I pray God that I may feel that I am God’s man, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to his cause; and I pray, brethren and sisters, that you may feel the same; that selfishness may clean die out of you; that you may be able to say without any straining of the truth, “I have nothing to care for, nor to live for in this world, but that I may glorify God, and spread forth the savor of my Savior’s name.” We cannot expect the Master’s blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God’s will: is it our will to-day? I know I have around me many faithful hearts, who will say, “My desire is, that whether I live or die, Christ may be glorified in me”: if we be all of that mind, God will walk with us; but every one who is of another mind, and of a divided heart, is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons, but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause, if this dead lumber were cast out. When the

body gets a piece of rotten bone into it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing: and so with the Church; the Church may be increased by dead members, but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth; and if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health's sake, we may thank God and take courage.

If we would have God with us we must be agreed as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls. God thinks souls to be very precious, and his own words are, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious, that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul, he would be a loser. Are we agreed with him there? In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem; watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears, too? have we compassion, too? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will wilfully perish in their sin? If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, "We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ," we are not agreed, God will not work with us; and such of you as feel this indifferentism, this cursed lethargy, are our bane, our burden, our hindrance. God forgive you, and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning. Are we agreed here?

If we would have the Lord with us, in the next place, we must be agreed as to the means to be used in revival. We are agreed that the first means is the preaching of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received — Christ lifted up upon his cross, as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which we, in this house of prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites; we abhor them, and pour contempt upon them; as for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a substitute for sinners, the great fact of the atonement, the glorious truth

that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners. I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which believers shall be saved. God's great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion, we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement; we want the Spirit's work, and the Spirit's work alone. I would not bend my knee once in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement; we have done without it, and we shall do without it by the grace of God; but I would give mine eyes, if I might but know that the Holy Spirit himself would come forth, and show what divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh. In this thing, I think, that we are agreed with God. But God's way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of all her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ's hand alone, "He gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples, to the multitude." Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness, and I will make this my boast this day, that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been. I have marvelled, and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ; what zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Savior's name. But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever, you have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead; you are very seldom at a prayer-meeting — even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business, but by sheer indifference to the cause of God. Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something; and for what you do we are grateful; but for what you do not do, over this we mourn, because we fear that we are restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Savior's kingdom, because as a Church we are not agreed in God's plan; and we shall be restrained until every man in the Church can say, "I will consecrate myself this day unto the Lord of hosts; if there is anything to be done, be it to be a door-keeper in the house of God, here am I.

*"There's not a lamb among his flock,  
I would disdain to feed;  
There's not a foe before whose face  
I'd fear his cause to plead."*

Yet again, dear friends, are we agreed this day as to our utter helplessness in this work? I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, “Your denomination during the past year did not increase: you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You were never so rich as now; your ministers were never so well educated; you never had such good chapels as now, and yet you never had so little success. What are you doing? — knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your brethren exercised with regard to this?” He comforted me much by the reply. He said, “It has driven us to our knees: we thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation, and I hope,” he said, “some of us have gone low enough to be blessed.” There is a great truth in that last sentence, “low enough to be blessed,” I do fear me that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, “Oh! yes, we are getting on very well, we do not want any revival that I know of,” I fear me he is not low enough to be blessed; and when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed. An humble Church will be a blessed Church; a Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures, and to lie at the foot of Christ’s cross, is in a position to be favored of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness, so that we look to him alone.

I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing, that if any good shall be done, any conversions shall occur, all the glory must be given to him. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a minister was the means of them, or else, as in the case of the North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done without ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity, and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad. God does not care to work for the honor of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches either; and if we should say, “Ah! well, I should like to see the presence of God with us that we may have many conversions, and put it in the Magazine, and say, that is how things are done at the Tabernacle,” why we should not have a blessing that way. Crowns! crowns! crowns!

but all for thy head Jesu! laurels and wreaths! but none for man, all for him whose own right hand and whose holy arm hath gotten him the victory. We must all be agreed on this point, and I hope we are.

**3. And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD.**

Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit his people, he always demands of them some preparatory purging, that they may be fit to behold his presence; for two cannot walk together, unless that which would make them disagree be purged out. A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately, but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping, we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart, and the daughter apart, all the families apart. So it must be here. Is there pride in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else thou canst not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends: he giveth grace to the humble; as for the proud, he knoweth them afar off, and will not let them come near to him. Am I slothful? do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but drinks no honey from any of them? or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights, would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, thou knowest my soul, thou understandest me. Am I doing little where I might do much? Hast thou had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself, instead of spending it for thee? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. "My Father worketh," saith Jesus, "and I work"; and you who stand in the market-place idle, may stand there with the devil, but you cannot stand there with God. Let every brother who is guilty of this, purge away his sloth.

Or am I guilty of worldliness. This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot

by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them; and which I would never indulge in, if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so, if I love the world, the love of the Father is not in me; consequently he cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I covetous? do I scrape and grind? is my first thought, not how I can honor God, but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth, do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me; I am a thief with his substance; I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant, and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but his; and that I must use it in his fear.

Again, am I of an angry spirit? Am I harsh towards my brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me, for he hates envy, and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to him. Is there any lust in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me; for chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, separate between a believer and his God: these things are not convenient to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread, a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house; and so anxious would he be, and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he take a candle and sweeps out every cupboard, no matter though there may have been no food put in there at any time, he is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house; and so, from the garret to the cellar, he clears the whole house through, to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so. I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine; but if my soul could speak to you, and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part, I cry unto my Master, that if there be anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, he would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness, if by serious calamities, if by slander and rebuke, more honor can be brought to him, then hail! and welcome! all these things; they shall be my joy; and to

receive them shall be delight. I pray you, utter the same desire: "Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying thee."

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

What! do you demur? Do you want for ever to go on in the old dead-and-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the present, and to hope for the future? O ye cravens, who dread the battle, slink to your beds; but ye who have your Master's spirit in you, and would long to see brighter and better days, lift up your heads with confidence in him who will walk with us if we be agreed.

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted: I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God, and who cannot walk with him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; and the most likely means to accomplish this, will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon's Sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" has now reached the 180th thousand; it is felt to be important that it should be still more widely circulated, and friends are urged to make an earnest effort to scatter it far and wide.]



# FROST AND THAW

## SERMON NO. 670

*“He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.”*

— *Psalm 147:16-18.*

LOOKING out of our window one morning we saw the earth robed in a white mantle; for in a few short hours the earth had been covered to a considerable depth with snow. We looked out again in a few hours and saw the fields as green as ever, and the ploughed fields as bare as if no single flake had fallen. It is no uncommon thing for a heavy fall of snow to be followed by a rapid thaw. These interesting changes are wrought by God, not only with a purpose toward the outward world, but with some design toward the spiritual realm. God is always a teacher. In every action that he performs he is instructing his own children, and opening up to them the road to inner mysteries. Happy are those who find food for their heaven-born spirits, as well as for their mental powers, in the works of the Lord's hand. I shall ask your attention, first, to the operations of nature spoken of in the text; and, secondly, to those operations of grace of which they are the most fitting symbols. I. Consider first, THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE. We shall not think a few minutes wasted if we call your attention to the hand of God in frost and thaw, even upon natural grounds.

**1.** Observe the directness of the Lord's work. I rejoice, as I read these words, to find how present our God is in the world. It is not written, “the laws of nature produce snow,” but “HE giveth snow,” as if every flake came directly from the palm of his hand. We are not told that certain natural regulations form moisture into hoarfrost; no, but as Moses took ashes of the furnace and scattered them upon Egypt, so it is said of the Lord “HE scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.” It is not said that the Eternal has set the world going, and by the operation of its machinery ice is produced. Oh no, but every single granule of ice descending in the hail is from God; “HE casteth forth his ice like morsels.” Even as the slinger

distinctly sends the stone out of his sling, so the path of every hailstone is marked by the Divine power. The ice is called, you observe, his ice; and in the next sentence we read of his cold. These words make nature strangely magnificent. When we look upon every hailstone as God's hail, and upon every fragment of ice as his ice, how precious the watery diamonds become! When we feel the cold nipping our limbs and penetrating through every garment, it consoles us to remember that it is his cold. When the thaw comes, see how the text speaks of it; — "he sendeth out his word." He does not leave it to certain forces of nature, but like a king, "He sendeth out his word and melteth them; he causeth HIS wind to blow." He has a special property in every wind: whether it comes from the north to freeze, or from the south to melt, it is his wind. Behold how in God's temple everything speaketh of his glory. Learn to see the Lord in all scenes of the visible universe, for truly he worketh all things. This thought of the directness of the Divine operations must be carried into providence. It will greatly comfort you if you can see God's hand in your losses and crosses; surely you will not murmur against the direct agency of your God. This will put an extraordinary sweetness into daily mercies, and make the comforts of life more comfortable still, because, they are from a Father's hand. If your table be scantily furnished it shall suffice for your contented heart, when you know that your Father spread it for you in wisdom and love. This shall bless your bread and your water; this shall make the bare walls of an ill-furnished room as resplendent as a palace, and turn a hard bed into a couch of down; — my Father doth it all. We see his smile of love even when others see nothing but the black hand of Death smiting our best beloved. We see a Father's hand when the pestilence lays our cattle dead upon the plain. We see God at work in mercy when we ourselves are stretched upon the bed of languishing. It is ever our Father's act and deed. Do not let us get beyond this; but rather let us enlarge our view of this truth, and remember that this is true of the little as well as of the great. Let the lines of a true poet strike you: — "If pestilence stalk through the land, ye say the Lord hath done it — Hath he not done it when an aphis creepeth upon the rosebud? If an avalanche tumbles from its Alp, ye tremble at the will of Providence — Is not that will as much concerned when the sere leaves fall from the poplar?" Let your hearts sing of everything, Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

**2.** Next, I beg you to observe, with thanksgiving, the ease of Divine working. These verses read as if the making of frost and snow were the simplest matter in all the world. A man puts his hand into a wool-pack and throws out the wool; God giveth snow as easily as that: “He giveth snow like wool.” A man takes up a handful of ashes, and throws them into the air, so that they fall around: “He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.” Rime and snow are marvels of nature: those who have observed the extraordinary beauty of the ice-crystals have been enraptured, and yet they are like morsels” — just as easily as we cast crumbs of bread outside the window to the robins during wintry days. When the rivers are hard frozen, and the earth is held in iron chains, then the melting of the whole — how is that done? Not by kindling innumerable fires, nor by sending electric shocks from huge batteries through the interior of the earth — no; “He sendeth forth his word, and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.” The whole matter is accomplished with a word and a breath. If you and I had any great thing to do, what puffing and panting, what straining and tugging there would be: even the great engineers, who perform marvels by machinery, make much noise and stir about it. It is not so with the Almighty One. Our globe spins round in four-and-twenty hours, and yet it does not make so much noise as a humming-top; and yonder ponderous worlds rolling in space track their way in silence. If I enter a factory I hear a deafening dropping over a wheel, there is a never-ceasing click-clack, or an undying hum; but God’s great wheels revolve without noise or friction: divine machinery works smoothly. This case is seen in providence as well as in nature. Your heavenly Father is as able to deliver you as he is to melt the snow, and he will deliver you in as simple a manner if you rest upon him. He openeth his hand, and supplies the want of every living thing as readily as he works in nature. Mark the ease of God’s working, — he does but open his hand.

**3.** Notice in the next place the variety of the Divine operations in nature. When the Lord is at work with frost as his tool he creates snow, a wonderful production, every crystal being a marvel of art; but then he is not content with snow — from the same water he makes another form of beauty which we call hoarfrost, and yet a third lustrous sparkling substance, namely glittering ice; and all these by the one agency of cold.

What a marvelous variety the educated eye can detect in the several forms of frozen water! The same God who solidified the flood with cold soon melts it with warmth; but even in thaw there is no monotony of manner: at one time the joyous streams rush with such impetuosity from their imprisonment that rivers are swollen and floods cover the plain; at another time by slow degrees, in scanty driblets, the drops regain their freedom. The same variety is seen in every department of nature. So in providence the Lord has a thousand forms of frosty trials with which to try his people, and he has ten thousand beams of mercy with which to cheer and comfort them. He can afflict you with the snow trial, or with the hoarfrost trial, or with the ice-trial if he will; and anon he can with his word relax the bonds of adversity, and that in countless ways. Whereas men are tied to two or three methods in accomplishing their will, God is infinite in understanding, and worketh as he wills by ways unguessed of mortal mind.

**4.** I shall ask you also to consider the works of God in nature in their swiftness. It was thought a wonderful thing in the days of Ahasuerus that letters were sent by post upon swift dromedaries. In our country we thought we had arrived at the age of miracles when the axles of our cars glowed with speed, and now that the telegraph is at work we stretch out our hands into infinity: but what is our rapidity compared with that of God's operations? Well does the text say, "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly." Forth went the word, "Open the treasures of snow," and the flakes descended in innumerable multitudes; and then it was said, "Let them be closed," and not another snow-feather was seen. Then spake the Master, "Let the south wind blow and the snow he melted": lo, it disappeared at the voice of his word. Believer, you cannot tell how soon God may come to your help. "He rode upon a cherub and did fly," says David; "yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." He will come from above to rescue his beloved. He will rend the heavens and come down; with such speed will he descend, that he will not stay to draw the curtains of heaven, but he will rend them in his haste, and make the mountains to flow down at his feet, that he may deliver those who cry unto him in the hour of trouble. That mighty God who can melt the ice so speedily can take to himself the same

eagle wings, and haste to your deliverance. Arise, O God! And let thy children be helped, and that right early.

**5.** One other thought: consider the goodness of God in all the operations of nature and providence. Think of that goodness negatively. “Who can stand before his cold?” You cannot help thinking of the poor in a hard winter — only a hard heart can forget them when you see the snow lying deep. But suppose that snow continued to fall! What is there to hinder it? The same God who sends us snow for one day could do the like for fifty days if he pleased. Why not? And when the frost pinches us so severely, why should it not be continued month after month? We can only thank the goodness which does not send “His cold” to such an extent that our spirits expire. Travellers towards the North Pole tremble as they think of this question, “Who can stand before his cold?” For cold has a degree of omnipotence in it when God is pleased to let it loose. Let us thank God for the restraining mercy by which he holds the cold in check. Not only negatively, but positively there is mercy in the snow. Is not that a suggestive metaphor? “He giveth snow like wool.” The snow is said to warm the earth; it protects those little plants which have just begun to peep above ground, and might otherwise be frost-bitten: as with a garment of down the snow protects them from the extreme severity of cold. Hence Watts sings, in his version of the hundred-and-forty-seventh Psalm, — “His flakes of snow like wool he send, And thus the springing corn defends.” It was an idea of the ancients that snow warmed the heart of the soil, and gave it fertility, and therefore they praised God for it. Certainly there is much mercy in the frost, for pestilence might run a far longer race if it were not that the frost cries to it. “Hetherto shalt thou come, but no farther.” Noxious insects would multiply until they devoured the precious fruits of the earth, if sharp nights did not destroy millions of them, so that these pests are swept from off the earth. Though man may think himself a loser by the cold, he is a great ultimate gainer by the decree of Providence which ordains winter. The quaint saying of one of the old writers that “snow is wool, and frost is fire, and ice is bread, and rain is drink,” is true, though it sounds like a paradox. There is no doubt that frost in breaking up the soil promotes fruitfulness, and so the ice becomes bread. Thus those agencies, which for the moment deprive our workers of their means of sustenance, are the means by which God supplies every living thing.

Mark, then, God's goodness as clearly in the snow and frost as in the thaw which clears the winter's work away. Christian, remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity. Rest assured that when God is pleased to send out the biting winds of affliction he is in them, and he is always love, as much love in sorrow as when he breathes upon you the soft south wind of joy. See the lovingkindness of God in every work of his hand! Praise him — he maketh summer and winter — let your song go round the year! Praise him — he giveth day and sendeth night — thank him at all hours! Cast not away your confidence, it hath great recompense of reward. As David wove the snow, and rain, and stormy wind into a song, even so combine your trials, your tribulations, your difficulties and adversities into a sweet psalm of praise, and say perpetually —

*“Let us, with a gladsome mind,  
Praise the Lord, for he is kind.”*

Thus much upon the operations of nature. It is a very tempting theme, but other fields invite me.

**II.** I would address you very earnestly and solemnly upon THOSE OPERATIONS OF GRACE, OF WHICH FROST AND THAW ARE THE OUTWARD SYMBOLS.

There is a period with God's own people when he comes to deal with them by the frost of the law. The law is to the soul as the cutting north wind. Faith can see love in it, but the carnal eye of sense cannot. It is a cold, terrible, comfortless blast. To be exposed to the full force of the law of God would be to be frost-bitten with everlasting destruction; and even to feel it for a season would congeal the marrow of one's bones, and make one's whole being stiff with affright. “Who can stand before his cold?” When the law comes forth thundering from its treasures, who can stand before it? The effect of law-work upon the soul is to bind up the rivers of human delight. No man can rejoice when the terrors of conscience are upon him. When the law of God is sweeping through the soul, music and dancing lose their joy, the bowl forgets its power to cheer, and the enchantments of earth are broken. The rivers of pleasure freeze to icy despondency. The buds of hope are suddenly nipped, and the soul finds no comfort. It was satisfied once to grow rich, but rust and canker are now upon all gold and silver. Every promising hope is frost-bitten, and the

spirit is winter-bound in despair. This cold makes the sinner feel how ragged his garments are. He could strut about, when it was summer weather, and think his rags right royal robes, but now the cold frost finds out every rent in his garment, and in the hands of the terrible law he shivers like the leaves upon the aspen. The north wind of judgment searches the man through and through. He did not know what was in him, but now he sees his inward parts to be filled with corruption and rottenness. These are some of the terrors of the wintry breath of the law. This frost of law and terrors only tends to harden. Nothing splits the rock or makes the cliff tumble like frost when succeeded by thaw, but frost alone makes the earth like a mass of iron, breaking the ploughshare which would seek to pierce it. A sinner under the influence of the law of God, apart from the gospel, is hardened by despair, and cries, "There is no hope, and therefore after my lusts will I go. Whereas there is no heaven for me after this life, I will make a heaven out of this earth; and since hell awaits me, I will at least enjoy such sweets as sin may afford me here." This is not the fault of the law; the blame lies with the corrupt heart which is hardened by it; yet, nevertheless, such is its effect. When the Lord has wrought by the frost of the law, he sends the thaw of the gospel. When the south wind blows from the land of promise, bringing precious remembrances of God's fatherly pity and tender lovingkindness, then straightway the heart begins to soften, and a sense of blood-bought pardon speedily dissolves it. The eyes fill with tears, the heart melts in tenderness, rivers of pleasure flow freely, and buds of hope open in the cheerful air. A heavenly spring whispers to the flowers that were sleeping in the cold earth; they hear its voice, and lift up their heads, for "the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." God sendeth his Word, saying, "Thy warfare is accomplished, and thy sin is pardoned;" and when that blessedly cheering word comes with power to the soul, and the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit acts like the warm south wind upon the heart, then the waters flow, and the mind is filled with holy joy, and light, and liberty.

*"The legal wintry state is gone,  
The frosts are fled, the spring comes on,  
The sacred turtle-dove we hear  
Proclaim the new, the joyful year."*

Having shown you that there is a parallel between frost and thaw in nature and law and gospel in grace, I would utter the same thoughts concerning grace which I gave you concerning nature.

**1.** We began with the directness of God's works in nature. Now, beloved friends, remark the directness of God's works in grace. When the heart is truly affected by the law of God, when sin is made to appear exceeding sinful, when carnal hopes are frozen to death by the law, when the soul is made to feel its barrenness and utter death and ruin — this is the finger of God. Do not speak of the minister. It was well that he preached earnestly: God has used him as an instrument, but God worketh all. When the thaw of grace comes, I pray you discern the distinct hand of God in every beam of comfort which gladdens the troubled conscience, for it is the Lord alone who bindeth up the broken in heart and healeth all their wounds. We are far too apt to stop in instrumentalities. Folly makes men look to sacraments for heart-breaking or heart-healing, but sacraments all say, "It is not in us." Some of you look to the preaching of the Word, and look no higher; but all true preachers will tell you, "It is not in us." Eloquence and earnestness at their highest pitch can neither break nor heal a heart. This is God's work. Ay, and not God's secondary work in the sense in which the philosopher admits that God is in the laws of nature, but God's personal and immediate work. He putteth forth his own hand when the conscience is humbled, and it is by his own right hand that the conscience is eased and cleansed. I desire that this thought may abide upon your minds, for you will not praise God else, nor will you be sound in doctrine. All departures from sound doctrine on the point of conversion arise from forgetfulness that it is a divine work from first to last; that the faintest desire after Christ is as much the work of God as the gift of his dear Son; and that our whole spiritual history through, from the Alpha to the Omega, the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. As you have evidently seen the finger of God in casting forth his ice and in sending thaw, so I pray you recognize the handiwork of God in giving you a sense of sin, and in bringing you to the Savior's feet. Join together in heartily praising the wonder-working God, who doeth all things according to the counsel of his will.



*“Our seeking thy face  
Was all of thy grace,  
Thy mercy demands and shall have all the praise:  
No sinner can be Beforehand with thee,  
Thy grace is preventing, almighty and free.”*

2. The second thought upon nature was the ease with which the Lord worked. There was no effort or disturbance. Transfer that to the work of grace. How easy it is for God to send law-work into the soul. You stubborn sinner, you cannot touch him, and even providence has failed to awaken him. He is dead — altogether dead in trespasses and sins. But if the glorious Lord will graciously send forth the wind of his Spirit, that will melt him. The swearing reprobate, whose mouth is blackened with profanity, if the Lord doth but look upon him and make bare his arm of irresistible grace, shall yet praise God, and bless his name, and live to his honor. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel. Persecuting Saul became loving Paul, and why should not that person be saved of whose case you almost despair? Your husband may have many points which make his case difficult, but no case is desperate with God. Your son may have offended both against heaven and against you, but God can save the most hardened. The sharpest frost of obstinate sin must yield to the thaw of grace. Even huge icebergs of crime must melt in the Gulf-stream of infinite love. Poor sinner, I cannot leave this point without a word to you. Perhaps the Master has sent the frost to you, and you think it will never end. Let me encourage you to hope, and yet more, to pray for gracious visitations. Miss Steele’s verses will just suit your mournful yet hopeful state. “Stern winter throws his icy chains, Encircling nature round: How bleak, how comfortless the plains, Late with gay verdure crown’d! The sun withdraws his vital beams, And light and warmth depart:

*And, drooping lifeless, nature seems  
An emblem of my heart —  
My heart, where mental winter reigns  
In night’s dark mantle clad,*

*Confined in cold, inactive chains;  
How desolate and sad!  
Return, O blissful sun, and bring  
Thy soul-reviving ray;  
This mental winter shall be spring,  
This darkness cheerful day.”*

It is easy for God to deliver you. He says, "I have blotted out like a thick cloud thy transgressions." I stood the other evening looking up at a black cloud which was covering all the heavens, and I thought it would surely rain; I entered the house, and when I came out again the sky was all blue — the wind had driven the cloud away. So may it be with your soul. It is an easy thing for the Lord to put away sin from repenting sinners. All obstacles which hindered our pardon were removed by Jesus when he died upon the tree, and if you believe in him you will find that he has cast your sins into the depths of the sea. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

**3.** The next thought concerning the Lord's work in nature was the variety of it. Frost produces a sort of trinity in unity — snow, hoarfrost, ice; and when the thaw comes its ways are many. So is it with the work of God in the heart. Conviction comes not alike to all. Some convictions fall as the snow from heaven: you never hear the flakes descend, they alight so gently one upon the other. There are soft-coming convictions: they are felt, but we can scarcely tell when we began to feel them. A true work of repentance may be of the gentlest kind. On the other hand, the Lord casteth forth his ice like morsels, the hailstones rattle against the window, and you think they will surely force their way into the room, and so to many persons convictions come beating down till they remind you of hailstones. There is variety. It is as true a frost which produces the noiseless snow as that which brings forth the terrible hail. Why should you want hailstones of terror? Be thankful that God has visited you, but do not dictate to him the way of his working. With regard to the gospel thaw. If you may but be pardoned by Jesus, do not stipulate as to the manner of his grace. Thaw is universal and gradual, but its commencement is not always discernible. The chains of winter are unloosed by degrees: the surface ice and snow melt, and by-and-by the warmth permeates the entire mass till every rock of ice gives way. But while thaw is universal and visible in its effects you cannot see the mighty power which is doing all this. Even so you must not expect to discern the Spirit of God. You will find him gradually operating upon the entire man, enlightening the understanding, freeing the will, delivering the heart from fear, inspiring hope, waking up the whole spirit, gradually and universally working upon the mind and producing the manifest effects of comfort, and hope, and

peace; but you can no more see the Spirit of God than you can see the south wind. The effect of his power is to be felt, and when you feel it, do not marvel if it be somewhat different from what others have experienced. After all, there is a singular likeness in snow and hoarfrost and ice, and so there is a remarkable sameness in the experience of all God's children; but still there is a great variety in the inward operations of divine grace.

**4.** We must next notice the rapidity of God's works. "His word runneth very swiftly." It did not take many days to get rid of the last snow. A contractor would take many a day to cart it away, but God sendeth forth his word, and the snow and ice disappear at once. So is it with the soul: the Lord often works rapidly when he cheers the heart. You may have been a long time under the operation of his frosty law, but there is no reason why you should be another hour under it. If the Spirit enables you to trust in the finished work of Christ, you may go out of this house rejoicing that every sin is forgiven. Poor soul, do not think that the way from the horrible pit is to climb, step by step, to the top. Oh no; Jesus can set your feet upon a rock ere the clock shall have gone round the dial. He can in an instant bring you from death to life, from condemnation to justification. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," was spoken to a dying thief, black and defiled with sin. Only believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

**5.** Our last thought upon the operation of God was his goodness in it all. What a blessing that God did not send us more law-work than he did! "Who can stand before his cold?" Oh! Beloved, when God has taken away from man natural comfort, and made him feel divine wrath in his soul, it is an awful thing. Speak of a haunted man; no man need be haunted with a worse ghost than the remembrance of his old sins. The childish tale of the sailor with the old man of the mountain on his back, who pressed him more and more heavily, is more than realized in the history of the troubled conscience. If one sin do but leap on a man's back, it will sink the sinner through every standing-place that he can possibly mount upon; he will go down, down, under its weight, till he sinks to the lowest depths of hell. There is no place where sin can be borne till you get upon the Rock of Ages, and even there the joy is not that you bear it, but that Jesus has borne it all for you. The spirit would utterly fail before the law, if it had full sway. Thank God, "he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east

wind." At the same time, how thankful we may be, that we ever felt the law-frost in our soul. The folly of self-righteousness is killed by the winter of conviction. We should have been a thousand times more proud, and foolish, and wordly, than we are if it had not been for the sharp frost with which the Lord nipped the growths of the flesh. But how shall we thank him sufficiently for the thaw of his lovingkindness? How great the change which his mercy made in us as soon as its beams had reached our soul! Hardness vanished, cold departed, warmth and love abounded, and the life-floods leaped in their channels. The Lord visited us, and we rose from our grave of despair, even as the seeds arise from the earth. As the bulb of the crocus holds up its golden cup to be filled with sunshine, so did our new-born faith open itself to the glory of the Lord. As the primrose peeps up from the sod to gaze upon the sun, so did our hope look forth for the promise, and delight itself in the Lord. Thank God that spring-tide has with many of us matured into summer, and winter has gone never to return. We praise the Lord for this every day of our lives, and we will praise him when time shall be no more in that sunny land —

*“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.  
A thread-like stream lone divides  
That heavenly land from ours.”*

Believe in the Lord, ye who shiver in the frost of the law, and the law of love shall soon bring you warm days of joy and peace. So be it. Amen.

# SPRING IN THE HEART

## SERMON NO. 675

*Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.” —  
Psalm 65:10*

THOUGH other seasons excel in fullness, spring must always bear the palm for freshness and beauty. We thank God when the harvest hours draw near, and the golden grain invites the sickle, but we ought equally to thank him for the rougher days of spring, for these prepare the harvest. April showers are mothers of the sweet May flowers, and the wet and cold of winter are the parents of the splendor of summer. God blesses the springing thereof, or else it could not be said, “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.” There is as much necessity for divine benediction in spring as for heavenly bounty in summer; and, therefore, we should praise God all the year round. Spiritual spring is a very blessed season in a church. Then we see youthful piety developed, and on every hand we hear the joyful cry of those who say, “We have found the Lord.” Our sons are springing up as the grass and as willows by the watercourses. We hold up our hands in glad astonishment and cry, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?” In the revival days of a Church, when God is blessing her with many conversions, she has great cause to rejoice in God and to sing, “Thou blessest the springing thereof.” I intend to take the text in reference to individual cases. There is a time of springing of grace, when it is just in its bud, just breaking through the dull cold earth of unregenerate nature. I desire to talk a little about that, and concerning the blessing which the Lord grants to the green blade of new-born godliness, to those who are beginning to hope in the Lord.

**I.** First, I shall have a little to say about THE WORK PREVIOUS TO THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

It appears from the text that there is work for God alone to do before the springing comes, and we know that there is work for God to do through us

as well. There is work for us to do. Before there can be a springing up in the soul of any, there must be ploughing, harrowing, and sowing. There must be a ploughing, and we do not expect that as soon as ever we plough we shall reap the sheaves. Blessed be God, in many cases, the reaper overtakes the ploughman, but we must not always expect it. In some hearts God is long in preparing the soul by conviction: the law with its ten black horses drags the ploughshare of conviction up and down the soul till there is no one part of it left unfurrowed. Conviction goes deeper than any plough to the very core and center of the spirit, till the spirit is wounded. The ploughers make deep furrows indeed when God puts his hand to the work: the soil of the heart is broken in pieces in the presence of the Most High. Then comes the sowing. Before there can be a springing up it is certain that there must be something put into the ground, so that after the preacher has used the plough of the law, he applies to his Master for the seed-basket of the gospel. Gospel promises, gospel doctrines, especially a clear exposition of free grace and the atonement, these are the handfuls of corn which we scatter broadcast. Some of the grain falls on the highway, and is lost; but other handfuls fall where the plough has been, and there abide. Then comes the harrowing work. We do not expect to sow seed and then leave it: the gospel has to be prayed over. The prayer of the preacher and the prayer of the Church make up God's harrow to rake in the seed after it is scattered, and so it is covered up within the clods of the soul, and is hidden in the heart of the hearer. Now there is a reason why I dwell upon this, namely, that I may exhort my dear brethren who have not seen success, not to give up the work but to hope that they have been doing the ploughing, and sowing, and harrowing work, and that the harvest is to come. I mention this for yet another reason, and that is, by way of warning to those who expect to have a harvest without this preparatory work. I do not believe that much good will come from attempts at sudden revivals made without previous prayerful labor. A revival to be permanent must be a matter of growth, and the result of much holy effort, longing, pleading, and watching. The servant of God is to preach the gospel whether men are prepared for it or not; but in order to large success, depend upon it there is a preparedness necessary amongst the hearers. Upon some hearts warm earnest preaching drops like an unusual thing which startles but does not convince; while in other congregations, where good gospel preaching has long been the rule, and much prayer has been

offered, the words fall into the hearers' souls and bring forth speedy fruit. We must not expect to have results without work. There is no hope of a church having an extensive revival in its midst unless there is continued and importunate waiting upon God, together with earnest laboring, intense anxiety, and hopeful expectation. But there is also a work to be done which is beyond our power. After ploughing, sowing, and harrowing, there must come the shower from heaven. "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it," says the Psalmist. In vain are all our efforts unless God shall bless us with the rain of his Holy Spirit's influence. O Holy Spirit! Thou, and thou alone, workest wonders in the human heart, and thou comest from the Father and the Son to do the Father's purposes, and to glorify the Son.

Three effects are spoken of. First, we are told he waters the ridges. As the ridges of the field become well saturated through and through with the abundant rain, so God sends his Holy Spirit till the whole heart of man is moved and influenced by his divine operations. The understanding is enlightened, the conscience is quickened, the will is controlled, the affections are inflamed; all these powers, which I may call the ridges of the heart, come under the divine working. It is ours to deal with men as men, and bring to bear upon them gospel truth, and to set before them motives that are suitable to move rational creatures; but, after all, it is the rain from on high which alone can water the ridges: there is no hope of the heart being savingly affected except by divine operations. Next, it is added, "Thou settlest the furrows," by which some think it is meant that the furrows are drenched with water. Others think there is an allusion here to the beating down of the earth by heavy rain till the ridges become flat, and by the soaking of the water are settled into a more compact mass. Certain it is that the influences of God's Spirit have a humbling and settling effect upon a man. He was unsettled once like the earth that is dry and crumbly, and blown about and carried away with every wind of doctrine; but as the earth when soaked with wet is compacted and knit together, so the heart becomes solid and serious under the power of the Spirit. As the high parts of the ridge are beaten down into the furrows, so, the lofty ideas, the grand schemes, and carnal boastings of the heart begin to level down, when the Holy Spirit comes to work upon the soul. Genuine humility is a very gracious fruit of the Spirit. To be broken in heart is the best means of preparing the soul for Jesus. "A broken and a contrite hear, O God, thou

wilt not despise.” Brethren, always be thankful when you see high thoughts of man brought down; this settling the furrows is a very gracious preparatory work of grace. Yet again, it is added, “Thou makest it soft with showers.” Man’s heart is naturally hardened against the gospel; like the Eastern soil, it is hard as iron if there be no gracious rain. How sweetly and effectively does the Spirit of God soften the man through and through! He is no longer towards the Word what he used to be: he feels everything, whereas once he felt nothing. The rock flows with water; the heart is dissolved in tenderness, the eyes are melted into tears. All this is God’s work. I have said already that God works through us, but still it is God’s immediate work to send down the rain of his grace from on high. Perhaps he is at work upon some of you, though as yet there is no springing up of spiritual life in your souls. Though your condition is still a sad one, we will hope for you that ere long there shall be seen the living seed of grace sending up its tender green shoot above the soil, and may the Lord bless the springing thereof.

## **II.** In the second place, let us deliver A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

After the operations of the Holy Spirit have been quietly going on for a certain season as pleaseth the great Master and Husbandman, then there are signs of grace. Remember the apostle’s words, “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” Some of our friends are greatly disturbed because they cannot see the full corn in the ear in themselves. They suppose that, if they were the subjects of a divine work they would be precisely like certain advanced Christians with whom it is their privilege to commune, or of whom they may have read in biographies. Beloved, this is a very great mistake. When first grace enters the heart, it is not a great tree covering with its shadow whole acres, but it is the least of all seeds, like a rain of mustard seed. When it first rises upon the soul, it is not the sun shining at high noon, but it is the first dim ray of dawn. Are you so simple as to expect the harvest before you have passed through the springing-time? I shall hope that by a very brief description of the earliest stage of Christian experience you may be led to say, “I have gone as far as that,” and then I hope you may be able to take the comfort of the text to yourselves: “Thou blessest the springing thereof.” What then is the springing up of piety in the heart? We think it is first seen in sincerely



earnest desires after salvation. The man is not saved, in his own apprehension, but he longs to be. That which was once a matter of indifference is now a subject of intense concern. Once he despised Christians, and thought them needlessly earnest; he thought religion a mere trifle, and he looked upon the things of time and sense as the only substantial matters; but now how changed he is! He envies the meanest Christian, and would change places with the poorest believer if he might but be able to read his title clear to mansions in the skies. Now worldly things have lost dominion over him, and spiritual things are uppermost. Once with the unthinking many, he cried, "Who will show us any good?" but now he cries, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." Once it was the corn and the wine to which he looked for comfort, but now he looks to God alone. His rock of refuge must be God, for he finds no comfort elsewhere. His holy desires, which he had years ago, were like smoke from the chimney, soon blown away; but now his longings are permanent, though not always operative to the same degree. At times these desires amount to a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, and yet he is not satisfied with these desires, but wishes for a still more anxious longing after heavenly things. These desires are among the first springings of divine life in the soul." The springing thereof" shows itself next in prayer. It is prayer now. Once it was the mocking of God with holy sounds unattended by the heart; but now, though the prayer is such that he would not like a human ear to hear him, yet God approves it, for it is the talking of a spirit to a Spirit, and not the muttering of lips to an unknown God. His prayers, perhaps, are not very long: they do not amount to more than this, "Oh!" "Ah!" "Would to God!" "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner!" and such-like short ejaculations; but, then, they are prayers. "Behold he prayeth," does not refer to a long prayer; it is quite as sure a proof of spiritual life within, if it only refers to a sigh or to a tear. These "groanings that cannot be uttered," are amongst "the springings thereof." There will also be manifest a hearty love for the means of grace, and the house of God. The Bible, long unread, which was thought to be of little more use than an old almanack, is now treated with great consideration; and though the reader finds little in it that comforts him just now, and much that alarms him, yet he feels that it is the book for him, and he turns to its pages with hope. When he goes up to God's house, he listens eagerly, hoping that there may be a message for him. Before, he

attended worship as a sort of pious necessity incumbent upon all respectable people; but now he goes up to God's house that he may find the Savior. Once there was no more religion in him than in the door which turns upon its hinges; but now he enters the house praying, "Lord, meet with my soul," and if he gets no blessing, he goes away sighing, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." This is one of the blessed signs of "the springing thereof." Yet more cheering is another, namely, that the soul in this state has faith in Jesus Christ, at least in some degree. It is not a faith which brings great joy and peace, but still it is a faith which keeps the heart from despair, and prevents its sinking under a sense of sin. I have known the time when I do not believe any man living could see faith in me, and when I could scarcely perceive any in myself, and yet I was bold to say, with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all thing, thou knowest that I love thee." What man cannot see, Christ can see. Many people have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are so much engaged in looking at it that they do not see it. If they would look to Christ and not to their own faith, they would not only see Christ but see their own faith too; but they measure their faith, and it seems so little when they contrast it with the faith of full-grown Christians, that they fear it is not faith at all. Oh, little one, if thou hast faith enough to receive Christ, remember the promise, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Poor simple, weak-hearted, and troubled one, look to Jesus and answer, Can such a Savior suffer in vain? Can such an atonement be offered in vain? Canst thou trust him, and yet be cast away? It cannot be. It never was in the Savior's heart to shake off one that did cling to his arm. However feeble the faith he blesses "the springing thereof." The difficulty arises partly from misapprehension and partly from want of confidence in God. I say misapprehension: now if like some Londoners you had never seen corn when it is green, you would cry out, "What! Do you say that yonder green stuff is wheat?" "Yes," the farmer says, "that is wheat." You look at it again and you reply, "Why, man alive, that is nothing but grass. You do not mean to tell me that this grassy stuff will ever produce a loaf of bread such as I see in the baker's window; I cannot conceive it." No, you could not conceive it, but when you get accustomed to it, it is not at all wonderful to see the wheat go through certain stages; first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Some of you have never seen growing grace, and do not

know anything about it. When you are newly converted you meet with Christians who are like ripe golden ears, and you say, "I am not like them." True, you are no more like them than that grassy stuff in the furrows is like full-grown wheat; but you will grow like them one of these days. You must expect to go through the blade period before you get to the ear period, and in the ear period you will have doubts whether you will ever come to the full corn in the ear; but you will arrive at perfection in due time. Thank God that you are in Christ at all. Whether I have much faith or little faith, whether I can do much for Christ or little for Christ is not the first question; I am saved, not on account of what I am, but on account of what Jesus Christ is; and if I am trusting to him, however little in Israel I may be, I am as safe as the brightest of the saints. I have said, however, that mixed with misapprehension there is a great deal of unbelief. I cannot put it all down to an ignorance that may be forgiven: for there is sinful unbelief too. O sinner, why do you not trust Jesus Christ? Poor quickened, awakened conscience, God gives you his word that he who trusts in Christ is not condemned, and yet you are afraid that you are condemned! This is to give God the lie! Be ashamed and confounded that you should ever have been guilty of doubting the veracity of God. All your other sins do not grieve Christ so much as the sin of thinking that he is unwilling to forgive you, or the sin of suspecting that if you trust him he will cast you away. Do not slander his gracious character. Do not cast a slur upon the generosity of his tender heart. He saith, "'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" Come in the faith of his promise, and he will receive you just now. I have thus given some description of "the springing thereof."

### **III.** Thirdly, according to the text, THERE IS ONE WHO SEES THIS SPRINGING.

Thou, Lord — thou blessest the springing thereof. I wish that some of us had quicker eyes to see the beginning of grace in the souls of men; for want of this we let slip many opportunities of helping the weaklings. If a woman had the charge of a number of children that were not her own, I do not suppose she would notice all the incipient stages of disease; but when a mother nurses her own dear children, as soon as ever upon the cheek or in the eye there is a token of approaching sickness, she perceives it at once. I wish we had just as quick an eye, because just as tender a heart,

towards precious souls. I do not doubt that many young people are weeks and even months in distress, who need not be, if you who know the Lord were a little more watchful to help them in the time of their sorrow. Shepherds are up all night at lambing time to catch up the lambs as soon as they are born, and take them in and nurse them; and we, who ought to be shepherds for God, should be looking out for all the lambs, especially at seasons when there are many born into God's great fold, for tender nursing is wanted in the first stages of the new life. God, however, when his servants do not see "the springing thereof," sees it all. Now, you silent, retired spirits, who dare not speak to father or mother, or brother or sister, this text ought to be a sweet morsel to you. Thou blessest the springing thereof," which proves that God sees you and your newborn grace. The Lord sees the first sign of penitence. Though you only say to yourself, "I will arise, and go to my Father," your Father hears you. Though it is nothing but a desire, your Father registers it. "Thou putttest my tears into thy bottle. Are they not in thy book?" He is watching your return; he runs to meet you, and puts his arms about you, and kisses you with the kisses of his accepting love. O soul, be encouraged with that thought, that up in the chamber or down by the hedge, or wherever it is that thou hast sought secrecy, God is there. Dwell on the thought, "Thou God seest me." That is a precious text, — "All my desire is before thee;" and here is another sweet one, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." He can see you when you only hope in his mercy, and he takes pleasure in you if you have only begun to fear him. Here is a third choice word, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me." Have you a concern about these things? Is it a matter of soul-concern with you to be reconciled to God, and to have an interest in Jesus' precious blood? It is only "the springing thereof," but he blesses it. It is written, "A bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory." There shall be victory for you, even before the judgment-seat of God, though as yet you are only like the flax that smokes and gives no light, or like the reed that is broken, and yields no music. God sees the first springing of grace.

**IV.** A few words upon a fourth point: WHAT A MISERY IT WOULD BE, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, TO HAVE THIS SPRINGING WITHOUT GOD'S BLESSING!

The text says, “Thou blessest the springing thereof.” We must, just a moment, by way of contrast, think of how the springing would have been without the blessing. Suppose we were to see a revival amongst us without God’s blessing. It is my conviction that there are revivals which are not of God at all, but are produced by excitement merely. If there be no blessing from the Lord, it will be all a delusion, a bubble blown up into the air for a moment, and then gone to nothing. We shall only see the people stirred, to become the more dull and dead afterwards; and this is a great mischief to the church. In the individual heart, if there should be a springing up without God’s blessing, there would be no good in it. Suppose you have good desires, but no blessing on these desires, they will only tantalize and worry you; and then after a time, they will be gone, and you will be more impervious than you were before to religious convictions; for, if religious desires are not of God’s sending, but are caused by excitement, they will probably prevent your giving a serious hearing to the Word of God in times to come. If convictions do not soften they will certainly harden. To what extremities have some been driven who have had springings of a certain sort which have not led them to Christ! Some have been crushed by despair. They tell us that religion crowds the madhouse: it is not true; but there is no doubt whatever that religiousness of a certain kind has driven many a man out of his mind. The poor souls have felt their wound but have not seen the balm. They have not known Jesus. They have had a sense of sin and nothing more. They have not fled for refuge to the hope which God has set before them. Marvel not if men do go mad when they refuse the Savior. It may come as a judicial visitation of God upon those men who, when in great distress of mind, will not fly to Christ. I believe it is with some just this — you must either fly to Jesus, or else your burden will become heavier and heavier until your spirit will utterly fail. This is not the fault of religion, it is the fault of those who will not accept the remedy which religion presents. A springing up of desires without God’s blessing would be an awful thing, but we thank him that we are not left in such a case.

**V.** And now I have to dwell upon THE COMFORTING THOUGHT THAT GOD DOES BLESS “THE SPRINGING THEREOF.”

I wish to deal with you who are tender and troubled; I want to show that God does bless your springing. He does it in many ways. Frequently he

does it by the cordials which he brings. You have a few very sweet moments: you cannot say that you are Christ's, but at times the bells of your heart ring very sweetly at the mention of his name. The means of grace are very precious to you. When you gather to the Lord's worship you feel a holy calm, and you go away from the service wishing that there were seven Sundays in the week instead of one. By the blessing of God the Word has just suited your case, as if the Lord had sent his servants on purpose to you: you lay aside your crutches for awhile, and you begin to run. Though these things have been sadly transient, they are tokens for good. On the other hand, if you have had none of these comforts, or few of them, and the means of grace have not been consolations to you, I want you to look upon that as a blessing. It may be the greatest blessing that God can give us to take away all comforts on the road, in order to quicken our running towards the end. When a man is flying to the City of Refuge to be protected from the man-slayer, it may be an act of great consideration to stay him for a moment that he may quench his thirst and run more swiftly afterwards; but perhaps, in a case of imminent peril, it may be the kindest thing neither to give him anything to eat or to drink, nor invite him to stop for a moment, in order that he may fly with undiminished speed to the place of safety. The Lord may be blessing you in the uneasiness which you feel. Inasmuch as you cannot say that you are in Christ, it may be the greatest blessing which heaven can give to take away every other blessing from you, in order that you may be compelled to fly to the Lord. You perhaps have a little of your self-righteousness left, and while it is so you cannot get joy and comfort. The royal robe which Jesus gives will never shine brilliantly upon us till every rag of our own goodness is gone. Perhaps you are not empty enough, and God will never fill you with Christ till you are. Fear often drives men to faith. Have you never heard of a person walking in the fields into whose bosom a bird has flown because pursued by the hawk. Poor timid thing, it would not have ventured there had not a greater fear compelled it. All this may be so with you; your fears may be sent to drive you more swiftly and more closely to the Savior, and if so, I see in these present sorrows the signs that God is blessing "the springing thereof." In looking back upon my own "springing" I sometimes think God blessed me then in a lovelier way than now. Though I would not willingly return to that early stage of my spiritual life, yet there were many joys about it. An apple tree when

loaded with apples is a very comely sight; but give me, for beauty, the apple tree in bloom. The whole world does not present a more lovely sight than an apple blossom. Now, a full-grown Christian laden with fruit is a comely sight, but still there is a peculiar loveliness about the young Christian. Let me tell you what that blessedness is; you have probably now a greater horror of sin than professors who have known the Lord for years; they might wish that they felt your tenderness of conscience. You have now a graver sense of duty, and a more solemn fear of the neglect of it than some who are further advanced. You have also a greater zeal than many: you are now doing your first works for God, and burning with your first love; nothing is too hot or too heavy for you: I pray that you may never decline, but always advance. And now to close. I think there are three lessons for us to learn. First, let older saints be very gentle and kind to young believers. God blesses the springing thereof — mind that you do the same. Do not throw cold water upon young desires: do not snuff out young believers with hard questions. While they are babes and need the milk of the Word, do not be choking them with your strong meat; they will eat strong meat by-and-bye, but not just yet. Remember, Jacob would not overdrive the lambs; be equally prudent. Teach and instruct them, but let it be with gentleness and tenderness, not as their superiors, but as nursing fathers for Christ's sake. God, you see, blesses the springing thereof — may he bless it through you! The next thing I have to say is, fulfill the duty of gratitude. Beloved, if God blesses the springing thereof we ought to be grateful for a little grace. If you have only seen the first shoot peeping up through the mold be thankful, and you shall see the green blade waving in the breeze; be thankful for the ankle-deep verdure and you shall soon see the commencement of the ear; be thankful for the first green ears and you shall see the flowering of the wheat, and by-and-by its ripening, and the joyous harvest. The last lesson is one of encouragement. If God blesses "the springing thereof," dear beginners, what will he not do for you in after days? If he gives you such a meal when you break your fast, what dainties will be on your table when he says to you, "Come and dine"; and what a banquet will he furnish at the supper of the Lamb! O troubled one! Let the storms which howl and the snows which fall, and the wintry blasts that nip your springing, all be forgotten in this one consoling thought, that God blesses your springing, and whom God blesses none can curse. Over your head, dear, desiring, pleading, languishing soul, the Lord of heaven

and earth pronounces the blessing of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Take that blessing and rejoice in it evermore. Amen.



# ORDER AND ARGUMENT IN PRAYER

## SERMON NO. 700

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 15TH, 1866,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.”*  
— Job 23:3,4

IN Job’s uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father’s face. His first prayer is not, “Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!” nor even, “Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!” but the first and uppermost cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find HIM — who is my God! that I might come even to his seat!” God’s children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. “He that hath made his refuge God,” might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him. You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief; but they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” They put salt into his wounds, they heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow, they added the gall of their upbraidings to the wormwood of his griefs. In

the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation, most ungenerous and undeserved. Alas for a man when his wine-cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveler turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earthborn hopes, and cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find my God!" My brethren, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the divine assurance, "Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable presence of God. This is the worst of all griefs; the text is one of Job's deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on account of the loss of his children and his property: "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's presence is always with his people in one sense, so far as secretly sustaining them is concerned, but his manifest presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the song, they seek their beloved by night upon their bed, they seek him but they find him not; and though they wake and roam through the city they may not discover him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to his heart as Jesus Christ himself, and yet for a small moment he may forsake you, and in a little wrath he may hide himself from you. But, dear friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God's light being withheld. Instead of

saying with proud lip, “Well, if he leaveth me I must do without him; if I cannot have his comfortable presence I must fight on as best may be,” the soul saith, “No, it is my very life; I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me.” The gracious soul addresseth itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to heaven more frequently and fervently. “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” Distance or labor are as nothing; if the soul only knew where to go she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would come even to his seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of heaven to reach her God, and though there were seven hells between me and him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach him, nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in his presence and feeling the delight of his love. That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us.

But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning’s discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job’s end, in desiring the presence of God, was that he might pray to him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God’s presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial Judge, before the very face of the all-wise God; he would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King’s Bench — the High Court of heaven — there, saith he, “I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.”

In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants; we are shown the art and mystery of pleading; we have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer, and if we can be bound apprentice to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job’s Master, we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God.

There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer — ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments. We shall speak of those

two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

**I. First, IT IS NEEDFUL THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD.**

There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to reach a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again; others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds, and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed. Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do now-a-days. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practiced exercise, in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the mercy seat to be a mine of untold treasures.

The ancient saints were wont, with Job, to order their cause before God; that is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great One to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with pre-meditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain. In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face. See yonder priest; he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand, but when he rises he washes his feet at the brazen laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments; then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided

according to the law, and is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he taketh the blood in a bowl and poureth it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar. Now this ritual is all superseded, but the truth which it taught remains the same; our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one's bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes first to hand; on the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David prayed when God had blessed him — he went in before the Lord. Understand that; he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down — for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer, let who will speak against it — and sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord he then began to pray, but not until first he had thought over the divine goodness, and so attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Ghost did he open his mouth. Oh that we oftener sought the Lord in this style! Abraham may serve us as a pattern; he rose up early — here was his willingness; he went three days journey — here was his zeal; he left his servants at the foot of the hill — here was his privacy; he carried the wood and the fire with him — here was his preparation; and lastly, he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife — here was the devout carefulness of his worship. David puts it, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up”; which I have frequently explained to you to mean that he marshalled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere; but after he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked — looked well — at the white of the target; kept his eye fixed on it, directing his prayer, and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly; and then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? “I will look up.” He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had; for he expected an answer to his prayers, and was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers; he marshalled up his faculties and went about the work in

a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plough carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves. To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best.

If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of divine authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form; for there are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testament. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us first to feel that we are now doing something that is real; that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present; whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves. Feeling the reality of God's presence, our mind will be led by divine grace into an humble state; we shall feel like Abraham, when he said, "I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes." Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere matter of rote, much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highwayman stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him; but we shall be humble yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Savior's blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable obedient child, honoring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father's will. When I feel that I am in the presence of God, and take my rightful position in that presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of grace, and I must recollect that God limits the channel through which he will give me mercy — he will give it to me through his dear Son. Let me

put myself then under the patronage of the great Redeemer. Let me feel that now it is no longer I that speak but Christ that speaketh with me, and that while I plead, I plead his wounds, his life, his death, his blood, himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for? It is most proper in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind, in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God — a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real petitioning, and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct, the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing, and therefore must plead for it. It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham's, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words, — "Ishmael might live before thee!" Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, "Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favor which thou bearest to those who," etc. Say "Ishmael," if you mean "Ishmael"; put it in plain words before the Lord. Some people cannot even pray for the minister without using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish beadle, or somebody whom it did not do to mention too particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear brethren, in the closet to ask for every supposable good thing; it is not necessary to rehearse the catalogue of every want that you may have, have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present need; ask for your daily bread — what you want now — ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity. Thou art before the Lord; let thy words be few, but let thy heart be fervent.

You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you want through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask; for some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better let alone. We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like, a selfish motive, which forgets God's glory and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet still we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the divine will. I like Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of thee at this time." "What!" say you, "Like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was, "I will have my will, for I know that my will is thy will." That is well spoken, Luther; but without the last words it would have been wicked presumption. When we are sure that what we ask for is for God's glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me": we may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the angel we may even put it to the wrestle and seek to give the angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is really for the Master's honor.

Put these three things together, the deep spirituality which recognises prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God — much distinctness which is the reality of prayer, asking for what we know we want — and withal much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary, and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer, and above all these complete submission, leaving it still with the Master's will; — commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to order your cause before the Lord.

Still prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer — pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because thou canst not pray, for it is when thou thinkest thou canst not pray that thou art most praying; and sometimes when thou hast no sort of comfort in thy



supplications, it is then that thy heart all broken and cast down is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

**II.** The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS — not filling the mouth with words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions, but filling the mouth with arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.

Why are arguments to be used at all? is the first enquiry; the reply being, Certainly not because God is slow to give, not because we can change the divine purpose, not because God needeth to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked: the arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not for his. He requires for us to plead with him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah saith, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed; the successful argument is always founded upon grace, and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by grace and by grace alone that a sinner obtaineth anything of the Lord. Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with more force still. The best prayers I have ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly. My brethren, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned, but what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half so useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for; for now we get a double blessing, a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking. The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray

is as it were to bathe one's-self in a cool purling stream, and so to escape from the heats of earth's summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into the clear heaven where God dwelleth. To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to enrich one's-self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp heaven in one's arms, to embrace the Deity within one's soul, and to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Ghost. Apart from the answer prayer is in itself a benediction. To pray, my brethren, is to cast off your burdens, it is to tear away your rags, it is to shake off your diseases, it is to be filled with spiritual vigor, it is to reach the highest point of Christian health. God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer.

The most interesting part of our subject remains; it is a very rapid summary and catalogue of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list; that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce. It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah his attributes. Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God's justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the patriarch grasped the Lord's left hand, and arrested it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall. But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches; and at last, when he could no longer lay hold upon justice, grasped God's right hand of mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but ten righteous there the city might be spared. So you and I may take hold at any time upon the justice, the mercy, the faithfulness, the wisdom, the long-suffering, the tenderness of God, and we shall find every attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering-ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God's promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and his

brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to suffer Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, surely I will do thee good." Oh the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word: "Thou saidst." The attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is yet a mightier holdfast. "Thou saidst." Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as thou hast said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man, and has he said, and shall he not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note his honor is engaged. He signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonors his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment; he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two tally from the first to the last; and many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised: all hath come to pass." My brother, if you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with a certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarce be any room for the caution about submission to his will. You know his will: that will is in the promise; plead it. Do not give him rest until he fulfill it. He meant to fulfill it, or else he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet our noise, and to keep us hopeful for awhile, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, he speaks because he means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses, the great name of God. How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! "What wilt thou do for thy great name? The Egyptians will say, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore he slew

them in the wilderness.” There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of his people. Sometimes in reliance upon a divine promise, a believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as his promise, not only is the believer deceived, but the wicked world looking on would say, “Aha! aha! Where is your God?” Take the case of our respected brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction, he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that, if he were driven to a point of want of means for the maintenance of those thousand or two thousand children, he might very well use the plea, “What wilt thou do for thy great name?” And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, “Lord, thou hast said, ‘In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven I will not forsake thee.’ I have told my friends and neighbors that I put my trust in thee, and if thou do not deliver me now, where is thy name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest thy honor be cast into the dust.” Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of the hard things said by the revilers. It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh’s letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? “Where are the gods of Arphad and Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you.” Does that have any effect? Oh! yes, it was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help his people. Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. “Now,” he says, “they have reviled the Lord himself; not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High himself. Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what wilt thou do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shalt not thou be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah himself has come into the fray? All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be by Christians used as an argument with God, why he should help the gospel. Lord; see how they reproach the gospel of Jesus! Pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom! O God, they defy thee! Anti-christ thrusts itself into the

place where thy Son once was honored, and from the very pulpits where the gospel was once preached Popery is now declared. Arise, O God, wake up thy zeal, let thy sacred passions burn! Thine ancient foe again prevails. Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-coloured beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah, come, Jehovah, and once again show what thy bare arm can do! This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for his great name's sake.

So also may we plead the sorrows of his people. This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and straitnesses in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon his suffering Zion; and ere long his plaintive cries are heard. Nothing so eloquent with the father as his child's cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan, — when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan? Ah! and when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance, and he is sure to show that he loveth his people. Dear friends, whenever you also are brought into the same condition you may plead your moanings, and when you see a church brought very low you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of his people.

Brethren, it is good to plead with God the past. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David's specimen of it: "Thou hast been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me." He pleads God's mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God, says, "Thou didst bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave thy work unfinished; thou hast begun to build, complete it. Thou hast fought the first battle; Lord, end the campaign! Go on till thou gettest a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble,

“Lord, thou didst deliver me in such and such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; thou hast never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in thy name. If thou hadst intended to leave me why hast thou showed me such things? Hast thou brought thy servant to this place to put him to shame?” Brethren, we have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what he has done in the past, because he never turns from his purpose, and cannot be thwarted in his design; the past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from him.

We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. “Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness.” David in one place pleads thus: “Lord, have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is great.” That is a very singular mode of reasoning; but being interpreted it means, “Lord, why shouldest thou go about doing little things? Thou art a great God, and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of thy grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of thy mercy. Let the greatness of thy love be seen in me.” Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show his great power in sparing his sinful people. The power with which God restrains himself is great indeed. O brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the throne, crouching low and crying, “O God, break me not — I am a bruised reed. Oh! tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Wilt thou hunt me? Wilt thou come out, as David said, “after a dead dog, after a flea?” Wilt thou pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Wilt thou watch me, as Job saith, as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale? Nay, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of thy mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me.”

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the prophet Elijah. On that august occasion, when he had bidden his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the prophet’s mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, “Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened.” And as they cut themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent

exertions, and their earnest but useless cries! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time; and then he says, "Do it a third time." And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that thou only art God." Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah's own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold prophet. But how well the prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood, and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches, for Jehovah God had answered his servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto him, "Oh, by thy Deity, by thine existence, if indeed thou be God, now show thyself for the help of thy people!"

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, thy dear Son deserves this of thee; do this unto me because of what he merits." But if we knew it we might go in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name." Suppose you should give a man your cheque-book signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose; that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the cheque, I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very justice of God hath become a debtor, and whose merits have

claims with the Most High, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When thou pleadest the name of Christ thou pleadest that which shakes the gates of hell, and which the hosts of heaven obey, and God himself feels the sacred power of that divine plea.

Brethren, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord his wounds, tell the Lord of his cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and his blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, thou canst not take a denial: such arguments as these will speed you.

**III.** If the Holy Ghost shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. Dear friend, thou hast thy mouth full this morning, has thou? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse thy mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail thee, and it will be bitter in thy bowels one of these days. Oh, have thy mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful, and you shall soon go away with whatsoever you have asked of God. Only delight thou thyself in him, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.

It is said — I know not how truly — that the explanation of the text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago — I remember the circumstance being reported — the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility, who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favorites. Now certainly whether that be an explanation of the text or not it is an illustration of it. God says, "Open thy mouth with arguments," and then he will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would



not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Oh! let us then open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our askings be great, and the supply shall be great too. You are not straitened in him; you are straitened in your own bowels. The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments.

What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man. God give thee to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Numbers 14:1-21.

# SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE

SERMON NO. 421

ON JULY 29, 1866

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” — 2 Timothy 1:9.*

If we would influence thoughtful persons it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be wrought upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings, but felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid doctrinal truth which he knew him to have believed.

This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people, and but seldom if ever instructing them; they carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings; this is most needful in its place, but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement, will necessarily be very flimsy and unsubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time.

The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals, as the harper touches the harpstrings; he will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument; but still as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and

instruct the understanding. And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the truth which the Holy Ghost teacheth? Scriptural doctrine must furnish us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians.

It seems to me that if we could by some unreasoning impulse move you to a certain course of action it might be well in its way, but it would be unsafe and untrustworthy, for you would be equally open to be moved in an opposite direction by other persons more skillful in such operations; but if God enables us by His Spirit to influence your minds by solid truth and substantial argument, you will then move with a constancy of power which nothing can turn aside.

The feather flies in the wind, but it has no inherent power to move, and consequently when the gale is over it falls to the ground — such is the religion of excitement; but the eagle has life within itself, and its wings bear it aloft and onward whether the breeze favors it or not — such is religion, when sustained by a conviction of the truth. The well-taught man in Christ Jesus stands firm where the uninstructed infant would fall or be carried away. “Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine,” says the apostle, and those are least likely to be so carried who are well established in the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is somewhat remarkable — at least it may seem so to persons who are not accustomed to think upon the subject — that the apostle, in order to excite Timothy to boldness, to keep him constant in the faith, reminds him of the great doctrine that the grace of God reigns in the salvation of men. He gives in this verse — this parenthetical verse as some call it, but which seems to me to be fully in the current of the passage — he gives in this verse a brief summary of the gospel, showing the great prominence which it gives to the grace of God, with the design of maintaining Timothy in the boldness of his testimony for Christ.

I do not doubt but that a far greater power for usefulness lies concealed within the doctrines of grace than some men have ever dreamed of. It has been usual to look upon doctrinal truth as being nothing more than unpractical theory, and many have spoken of the precepts of God’s Word as being more practical and more useful; the day may yet come when in clearer light we shall perceive that sound doctrine is the very root and vital

energy of practical holiness, and that to teach the people the truth which God has revealed is the readiest and surest way of leading them to obedience and persevering holiness.

May the Holy Spirit assist us while we shall, first, consider the doctrine taught by the apostle in this text; and, secondly, the uses of that doctrine.

**I.** Very carefully let us CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE IN THIS TEXT. Friends will remember that it is not our object to preach the doctrine which is most popular or most palatable, nor do we desire to set forth the views of any one person in the assembly; our aim is to give what we judge to be the meaning of the text. We shall probably deliver doctrine which many of you will not like, and if you should not like it we shall not be at all surprised, or even if you be vexed and angry we shall not be at all alarmed, because we never understood that we were commissioned to preach what would please our hearers, nor were expected by sensible, not to say gracious men, to shape our views to suit the notions of our audience. We count ourselves amenable to God and to the text; and if we give the meaning of the text, we believe we shall give the mind of God, and we shall be likely to have His favor, which will be sufficient for us, contradict us who may. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the truth, if it be clearly in the inspired Word.

**1.** The apostle in stating his doctrine in the following words, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” declares God to be the author of salvation — “Who hath saved us and called us.” The whole tenor of the verse is towards a strong affirmation of Jonah’s doctrine, that “salvation is of the Lord.” It would require very great twisting, involving more than ingenuity, it would need dishonesty, to make our salvation by man out of this text; but to find salvation altogether of God in it is to perceive the truth which lies upon the very surface. No need for profound inquiry, the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein; for the text says as plainly as words can say, “God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.”

The apostle, then, in order to bring forth the truth that salvation is of grace declares that it is of God, that it springs directly and entirely from Him and from Him only. Is not this according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit

in other places, where He affirms over and over again that the alpha and omega of our salvation must be found not in ourselves but in our God?

Our apostle is saying that God hath saved us refers to all the persons of the Divine Unity. The Father hath saved us. “God hath given to us eternal life” (1 John 5:2). “The Father himself loveth you.” It was He whose gracious mind first conceived the thought of redeeming His chosen from the ruin of the fall; it was His mind which first planned the way of salvation by substitution; it was from His generous heart that the thought first sprang that Christ should suffer as the covenant head of His people, as saith the apostle,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:3-6).

From the bowels of divine compassion came the gift of the only begotten Son: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The Father selected the persons who should receive an interest in the redemption of His Son, for these are described as “called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). The plan of salvation in all its details sprang from the Father’s wisdom and grace.

The apostle did not, however, overlook the work of the Son. It is most certainly through the Son of God that we are saved, for is not His name Jesus, the Savior? Incarnate in the flesh, His holy life is the righteousness in which saints are arrayed; while His ignominious and painful death has filled the sacred bath of blood in which the sinner must be washed that he may be made clean. It is through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus that the people of God become accepted in the Beloved. With one consent before the eternal throne they sing, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sin in his blood, unto him be glory;” and they chant that hymn

because He deserves the glory which they ascribe to Him. It is the Son of God who is the Savior of men, and men are not the saviors of themselves.

Nor did the apostle, I am persuaded, forget that Third Person in the blessed Unity — the Holy Spirit. Who but the Holy Spirit first gives us power to understand the gospel? for “the carnal mind understandeth not the things that be of God.” Doth not the Holy Spirit influence our will, turning us from the obstinacy of our former rebellion to the obedience of the truth? Doth not the Holy Ghost renew us, creating us in Christ Jesus unto good works? Is it not by the Holy Spirit’s breath that we live in the spiritual life? Is He not to us instructor, comforter, quickener, is He not everything, in fact, through His active operations upon our mind? The Father, then, in planning, the Son in redeeming, the Spirit in applying the redemption must be spoken of as the one God “who hath saved us.”

Brethren, to say that we save ourselves is to utter a manifest absurdity. We are called in Scripture “a temple” — a holy temple in the Lord. But shall any one assert that the stones of the edifice were their own architect? Shall it be said that the stones of the building in which we are now assembled cut themselves into their present shape, and then spontaneously came together, and piled this spacious edifice? Should any one assert such a foolish thing, we should be disposed to doubt his sanity; much more may we suspect the spiritual sanity of any man who should venture to affirm that the great temple of the church of God designed and erected itself. No: we believe that God the Father was the architect, sketched he plan, supplies the materials, and will complete the work.

Shall it also be said that those who are redeemed redeemed themselves? that slaves of Satan break their own fetters. Then why was a Redeemer needed at all? How should there be any need for Jesus to descend into the world to redeem those who could redeem themselves? Do you believe that the sheep of God, whom He has taken from between the jaws of the lion, could have rescued themselves? It were a strange thing if such were the case. Our Lord Jesus came not to do a work of supererogation, but if He came to save persons who might have saved themselves, He certainly came without a necessity for so doing. We cannot believe that Christ came to do what the sinners might have done themselves. No. “He hath trodden the

winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him,” and the redemption of His people shall give glory unto Himself only.

Shall it be asserted that those who were once dead have spiritually quickened themselves? Can the dead make themselves alive? Who shall assert that Lazarus, rotting in the grave, came forth to life of himself? If it be so said and so believed, then, nay, not even then, will we believe that the dead in sin have ever quickened themselves. Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture; but who ever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spake the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe. Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do? Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a creator, and it is clear that not being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in creation. The carnal mind does not assist the Spirit of God in new creating a man, but altogether regeneration is the work of God the Holy Ghost, and the work of renewal is from His unassisted power.

Father, Son, and Spirit we then adore, and putting these thoughts together, we would humbly prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of the august majesty, and acknowledge that if saved He alone hath saved us, and unto Him be the glory.

**2.** We next remark that grace is in this verse rendered conspicuous when we see that God pursues a singular method, “Who hath saved us and called us.” The peculiarity of the manner lies in three things — first, in the completeness of it. The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, “who hath saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state and may ultimately be saved, but they are already saved. This is not according to the common talk of professors now-a-days, for many of them speak of being saved when they come to die; but it is according to the usage of Scripture to speak of us who are saved. Be it known this morning that every man and woman here is either saved at this present moment or lost, and that salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised and enjoyed

now. God hath saved His saints, mark, not partly saved them, but perfectly saved them.

The Christian is perfectly saved in God's purpose; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the price which has been paid for him; for this is not in part but in whole. The substitutionary work which Christ has offered is not a certain proportion of the work to be done, but "it is finished" was the cry of the Savior ere He died. The believer is also perfectly saved in his covenant head, for as we were utterly lost as soon as ever Adam fell, before we had committed any actual sin, so every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work. The Savior completed His work, and in the sense in which Paul uses that expression, "He hath saved us." What! saved us before He called us? Yes, so the text says. But is a man saved before he is called by grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's purpose, in Christ's redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head; and he is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work.

In the olden times of imprisonment for debt, it would have been quite correct for you to step into the cell of a debtor and say to him, "I have freed you," if you had paid his debts and obtained an order for his discharge. Well, but he is still in prison. Yes; but you really liberated him as soon as you paid his debts. It is true he was still in prison, but he was not legally there, and no sooner did he know that the debt was paid, and that receipt was pleaded before proper authorities, than the man obtained his liberty. So the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debts of His people before they knew anything about it. Did He not pay them on the cross more than eighteen hundred years ago to the utmost penny? and is not this the reason why, as soon as He meets with us in a way of grace, He cries, "I have saved thee; lay hold on eternal life." We are, then, virtually, though not actually, saved before we are called. "He hath saved us and called us."

There is yet a third peculiarity, and that is in connection with the calling. God has called us with an holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the tree are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness; they leave their sins, they endeavor to be like Christ,



they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness, just as naturally as aforetime they delighted in sin. Whereas their old nature loved everything that was evil, their new nature cannot sin because it is born of God, and it loveth everything that is good. Does not the apostle mention this result of our calling in order to meet those who say that God calls His people because He foresees their holiness? Not so; He calls them to that holiness; that holiness is not a cause but an effect; it is not the motive of His purpose, but the result of His purpose. He neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellences which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself.

This second point brings out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. First: salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it; and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? In the next place, salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Salvation is completed by God, and therefore not of man, neither by man; salvation is wrought by God in an order which puts our holiness as a consequence and not as a cause, and therefore merit is for ever disowned.

**3.** When a speaker desires to strengthen his point and to make himself clear, he generally puts in a negative as to the other side. So the apostle adds a negative: — "Not according to our works." The world's great preaching is, "Do as well as you can, live a moral life, and God will save you." The Gospel preaching is this: "Thou art a lost sinner, and thou canst deserve nothing of God but His displeasure; if thou art to be saved, it must be by an act of sovereign grace. God must freely extend the silver scepter of His love to thee, for thou art a guilty wretch who deserves to be sent to the lowest hell. Thy best works are so full of sin that they can in no degree save thee; to the free mercy of God thou must owe all things."

"Oh," saith one, "are good works of no use?" God's works are of use when a man is saved, they are the evidences of his being saved; but good works do not save a man, good works do not influence the mind of God to save a man, for if so, salvation would be a matter of debt and not of grace.

The Lord has declared over and over in His Word, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified.” The apostle in the epistle to the Galatians is very strong indeed upon this point; indeed he thunders it out again, and again, and again. He denies that salvation is even so much as in part due to our works, for if it be by work then he declares it is not of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of grace it is not of works, otherwise work is no more work. Paul assures us that the two principles of grace and merit can no more mix together than fire and water; that if man is to be saved by the mercy of God, it must be by the mercy of God and not by works; but if man is to be saved by works, it must be by works entirely and not by mercy mixed therewith, for mercy and work will not go together. Jesus saves, but He does all the work or none. He is Author and Finisher, and works must not rob Him of His due. Sinner, you must either receive salvation freely from the hand of Divine Bounty, or else you must earn it by your own unassisted merits, which last is utterly impossible. Oh that you would yield to the first!

My brethren, this is the truth which still needs to be preached. This is the truth which shook all Europe from end to end when Luther first proclaimed it. Is not this the old thunderbolt which the great reformer hurled at Rome — “Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”? But why did God make salvation to be by faith? Scripture tells us — “therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” If it had been by works it must have been by debt; but since it is by faith, we can clearly see that there can be no merit in faith. It must be therefore by grace.

**4.** My text is even more explicit yet, for the eternal purpose is mentioned. The next thing the apostle says is this: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose.” Mark that word — “according to his own purpose. Oh how some people wriggle over that word, as if they were worms on a fisherman’s hook! but there it stands, and cannot be got rid of. God saves His people “according to his purpose,” nay, “according to His own purpose.”

My brethren and sisters, do you not see how all merit and the power of the creature are shut out here, when you are saved, not according to your purpose or merit, but “according to His own purpose”? I shall not dwell on this; it is not exactly the object of this morning’s discourse to bring out in full the great mystery of electing love, but I will not for a moment keep back the truth. If any man be saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to him. Have ye never read the Holy Spirit’s testimony: “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”? The Savior said to His apostles what He in effect says also to us, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye might bring forth fruit.” Some hold one and some another view concerning the freedom of the will, but our Savior’s doctrine is, “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” Ye will not come; your wills will never bring you; if ye do come, it is because grace inclined you. “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” “Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” is a great and precious general text, but it is quite consistent with the rest of the same verse — “All the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

Our text tells us that our salvation is “according to his own purpose.” It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose; we permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own, and especially in giving away their own goods; but my God is to be bound and fettered by men, and not permitted to do as He wills with His own. But be this known unto ye, O men that reply against God, that He giveth no account of His matters, but asks of you, “Can I not do as I will with mine own?” He ruleth in Heaven, and in the armies of this lower world, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What doest thou?”

**5.** But then the text, lest we should make any mistake, adds, “according to his own purpose and grace.” The purpose is not founded on foreseen merit, but upon grace alone. It is grace, all grace, nothing but grace from first to last. Man stands shivering outside, a condemned criminal, and God sitting upon the throne, sends the herald to tell him that He is willing to receive sinners and to pardon them. The sinner replies, “Well, I am willing to be pardoned if I am permitted to do something in order to earn pardon. If I can stand before the King and claim that I have done something to win

his favor, I am quite willing to come.” But the herald replies, “No: if you are pardoned, you must understand it is entirely and wholly as an act of grace on God’s part. He sees nothing good in you, He knows that there is nothing good in you; He is willing to take you just as you are, black, and bad, and wicked, and undeserving; He is willing to give you graciously what He would not sell to you, and what He knows you cannot earn of Him. Will you have it?” and naturally every man says, “No, I will not be saved in that style.”

Well, then, soul, remember that thou wilt never be saved at all, for God’s way is salvation by grace. You will have to confess if ever you are saved, my dear hearer, that you never deserved one single blessing from the God of grace; you will have to give all the glory to His holy name if ever you get to Heaven. And mark you, even in the matter of the acceptance of this offered mercy, you will never accept it unless He makes you willing. He does freely present it to every one of you, and He honestly bids you come to Christ and live; but come you never will, I know, except the effectual grace which first provided mercy shall make you willing to accept that mercy. So the text tells us it is His own purpose and grace.

**6.** Again, in order to shut out everything like boasting, the whole is spoken of as a gift. Do notice that; lest (for we are such straying sheep in this matter) — lest we should still slip out of the field, it is added, “purpose and grace which he gave us” — not “which He sold us,” “offered us,” but “which He gave us.” He must have a word here which shall be a death-blow to all merit, — “Which He gave us” — it was given; and what can be more free than a gift, and what more evidently of grace?

**7.** But the gift is bestowed through a medium which glorifies Christ. It is written, “which was given us in Christ Jesus.” We ask to have mercy from the well-head of grace, but we ask not even to make the bucket in which it is to be brought to us; Christ is to be the sacred vessel in which the grace of God is to be presented to our thirsty lips. Now where is boasting? Why surely there it sits at the foot of the cross and sings, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it not grace and grace alone?

**8.** Yet further, a period is mentioned and added — “before the world began.” Those last words seem to me forever to lay prostrate all idea of

anything of our own merits in saving ourselves, because it is here witnessed that God gave us grace “before the world began.” Where were you then? What hand had you in it “before the world began?” Why, fly back if you can in imagination to the ancient years when those venerable mountains, that elder birth of nature, were not yet formed; when world, and sun, and moon, and stars, were all in embryo in God’s great mind; when the unnavigated sea of space had never been disturbed by wings of seraph, and the awful silence of eternity had never been startled by the song of cherubim — when God dwelt alone. If you can conceive that time before all time, that vast eternity — it was then He gave us grace in Christ Jesus. What, O soul, hadst thou to do with that? Where were thy merits then? Where wast thou thyself? O thou small dust of the balance, thou insect of a day, where wert thou? See how Jehovah reigned, dispensing mercy as He would, and ordaining unto eternal life without taking counsel of man or angel, for neither man or angel then had an existence. That it might be all of grace He gave us grace before the world began.

I have honestly read out the doctrine of the text, and nothing more. If such is not the meaning of the text I do not know the meaning of it, and I cannot therefore tell you what it is, but I believe that I have given the natural and grammatical teaching of the text. If you do not like the doctrine, why I cannot help it. I did not make the text, and if I have to expound it I must expound it honestly as it is in my Master’s Word, and I pray you to receive what He says whatever you may do with what I say.

**II.** I shall want your patience while I try to SHOW THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE. The doctrine of grace has been put by in the lumber chamber. It is acknowledged to be true, for it is confessed in most creeds; it is in the Church of England articles, it is in the confessions of all sorts of Protestant Christians, except those who are avowedly Arminian, but how little is it ever preached! It is put among the relics of the past. It is considered to be a respectable sort of retired officer, who is not expected to see any other active service. Now I believe that it is not a superannuated officer in the Master’s army, but that it is full of force and vigor as ever.

But what is the use of it? Why, first then, it is clear from the connection that it has a tendency to embolden the man who receives it. Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed, and he gives this as a motive: — How can a

man be ashamed when he believes that God has given him grace in Christ Jesus before the world was? Suppose the man to be very poor. "Oh," says he, "what matters it? Though I have but a little oil in the cruse, and a little meal in the barrel, yet I have a lot and a portion in everlasting things. My name is not in Doomsday Book nor in Burke's Peerage; but it is in the book of God's election, and was there before the world began." Such a man dares look the proudest of his fellows in the face. This was the doctrine on which the brave old Ironsides fed; the men who, when they rode to battle with the war-cry of "The Lord of hosts!" made the cavaliers fly before them like chaff before the wind. No doctrine like it for putting a backbone into a man, and making him feel that he is made for something better than to be trodden down like straw for the dunghill beneath a despot's heel. Sneer who will, the elect of God derive a nobility from the divine choice which no royal patent can outshine.

I would that free grace were more preached, because it gives men something to believe with confidence. The great mass of professing Christians know nothing of doctrine; their religion consists in going a certain number of times to a place of worship, but they have no care for truth one way or another. I speak without any prejudice in this matter; but I have talked with a large number of persons in the course of my very extensive pastorate, who have been for years members of other churches, and when I have asked them a few questions upon doctrinal matters it did not seem to me that they were in error; they were perfectly willing to believe almost anything that any earnest man might teach them, but they did not know anything, they had no minds of their own, and no definite opinions. Our children, who have learned "The Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith," know more about the doctrines of grace and the doctrine of the Bible than hundreds of grown-up people who attend a ministry which very eloquently teaches nothing.

It was observed by a very excellent critic not long ago, that if you were to hear thirteen lectures on astronomy or geology, you might get a pretty good idea of what the science was, and the theory of the person who gave the lectures; but that if you were to hear thirteen hundred sermons from some ministers, you would not know at all what they were preaching about or what their doctrinal sentiments were. It ought not to be so. Is not this the reason why Puseyism spreads so, and all sorts of errors have such

a foothold, because our people as a whole do not know what they believe? The doctrines of the gospel, if well received, give to a man something which he knows and which he holds and which will become dear to him, for which he would be prepared to die if the first of persecution were again kindled.

Better still is it that this doctrine not only gives the man something to hold but it holds the man. Let a man once have burnt into him that salvation is of God and not of man, and that God's grace is to be glorified and not human merit, and you will never get that belief out of him; it is the rarest thing in all the world to hear of such a man ever apostatizing from his faith. Other doctrine is slippery ground, like the slope of a mountain composed of loose earth and rolling stones, down which the traveler may slide long before he can ever get a transient foothold; but this is like a granite step upon the eternal pyramid of truth; get your feet on this, and there is no fear of slipping so far as doctrinal standing is concerned. If we would have our churches in England well instructed and holding fast the truth, we must bring out the grand old verity of the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world began. Oh may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts!

Moreover, my brethren, this doctrine overwhelms as with an avalanche all the claims of priestcraft. Let it be told to men that they are saved by God, and they say at once, "Then what is the good of the priest?" If they are told it is God's grace then they say, "Then you do not want our money to buy masses and absolutions," and down goes the priest at once. Beloved, this is a battering ram that God uses with which to shake the gates of hell. How much more forcible than the pretty essays of many divines, which have no more power than bulrushes, no more light than smoking flax.

What do you suppose people used to meet in woods for in persecuting times, meet by thousands outside the town of Antwerp, and such-like places on the Continent, in jeopardy of their lives? Do you suppose they would ever have come together to hear that poor milk-and-water theology of this age, or to receive the lukewarm milk and water of our modern anti-Calvinists? Not they, my brethren. They needed stronger meat, and more savory diet to attract them thus. Do you imagine that when it was death to listen to the preacher, men under the shadows of night, and amid the wings

of tempest would then listen to philosophical essays, or to mere precepts, or to diluted, adulterated, soul-less, theological suppositions? No, there is no energy in that kind of thing to draw men together under fear of their lives.

But what did bring them together in the dead of night amidst the glare of lightning, and the roll of thunder — what brought them together? Why, the doctrine of the grace of God, the doctrine of Jesus, and of His servants Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin; for there is something in that doctrine which touches the heart of the Christian, and gives him food such as his soul loveth, savory meat, suitable to his heaven-born appetite. To hear this men braved death, and defied the sword. And if we are to see once again the scarlet hat plucked from the wearer's head, and the shaven crowns with all the gaudy trumpery of Rome sent back to the place from whence they came — and Heaven grant that they make take our Puseyite Established Church with them — it must be by declaring the doctrines of the grace of God. When these are declared and vindicated in every place, we shall yet again make these enemies of God and man to know that they cannot stand their ground for a moment, where men of God wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon by preaching the doctrines of the grace of God.

Brethren, let the man receive these truths; let them be written in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and they will make him look up. He will say, "God has saved me;" and he will walk with a constant eye to God. He will not forget to see the hand of God in nature and in providence; he will, on the contrary, discern the Lord working in all places, and will humbly adore Him. He will not give to laws of nature or schemes of state the glory due to the most High, but will have respect unto the unseen Ruler. "What the Lord saith to me that will I do," is the believer's language. "What is His will that will I follow; what is His Word, that will I believe; what is His promise, on that I will live." It is a blessed habit to teach a man to look up, look up to God in all things.

At the same time this doctrine makes a man look down upon himself. "Ah," saith he, "I am nothing, there is nothing in me to merit esteem. I have no goodness of my own. If saved, I cannot praise myself; I cannot in any way ascribe to myself honor; God has done it, God has done it."



Nothing makes the man so humble; but nothing makes him so glad; nothing lays him so low at the mercy seat, but nothing makes him so brave to look his fellow man in the face. It is a grand truth: would God ye all knew its mighty power!

Lastly, this precious truth is full of comfort to the sinner, and that is why I love it. As it has been preached by some it has been exaggerated and made into a bugbear. Why, there are some who preach the doctrine of election as though it were a line of sharp pikes to keep a sinner from coming to Christ, as though it were a sharp, glittering halbert to be pushed into the breast of a coming sinner to keep him from mercy. Now it is not so. Sinner, whoever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that salvation is by grace. Why, man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits, where would you drunkards be? where would you swearers be? you who have been unclean and unchaste, and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love Him, where would you be? But when it is all of grace, why then all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus.

Christ receiveth sinners, God has elected sinners; He has elected some of the blackest of sinners — why not you? He receives every one that comes to Him. He will not cast out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted him to His face, that have burned His servants alive, and have persecuted Him in His members, but as soon as even they have cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” He has given them mercy at once, and He will give it to you if you be led to seek it. If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His grace it were a sad look-out for you, but when it comes to you thus: black, there is washing for you! dead! there is life for you! naked! there is raiment for you! All undone and ruined! here is a complete salvation for you! O soul, mayest thou have grace to lay hold of it, and then thou and I together will sing to the praise of the glory of divine grace.

# IN THE HAY-FIELD

## SERMON NO. 349

*“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.” — Psalm 104:14.*

IN the appointed season all the world is busy with ingathering the grass crop, and you can scarcely ride a mile in the country without scenting the delicious fragrance of the new-mown hay, and hearing the sharpening of the mower’s scythe. There is a gospel in the hay-field, and that gospel we intend to bring out as we may be enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Our text conducts us at once to the spot, and we shall therefore need no preface. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle” — three things we shall notice; first, that grass is in itself instructive; secondly, that grass is far more so when God is seen in it; and thirdly, that by the growth of grass for the cattle, the ways of grace may be illustrated.

**I.** First, then, “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.” Here we have SOMETHING WHICH IS IN ITSELF INSTRUCTIVE. Scarcely any emblem, with the exception of water and light, is more frequently used by inspiration than the grass of the field.

In the first place, the grass may be instructively looked upon as the symbol of our mortality. “All flesh is grass.” The whole history of man may be seen in the meadow. He springs up green and tender, subject to the frosts of infancy, which imperil his young life; he grows, he comes to maturity, he puts on beauty even as the grass is adorned with flowers; but after a while his strength departs and his beauty is wrinkled, even as the grass withers and is followed by a fresh generation, which withers in its turn. Like ourselves, the grass ripens but to decay. The sons of men come to maturity in due time, and then decline and wither as the green herb. Some of the grass is not left to come to ripeness at all, but the mower’s scythe removes it, even as swift-footed death overtakes the careless children of Adam. “In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger,

and by thy wrath are we troubled.” “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” This is very humbling; and we need frequently to be reminded of it, or we dream of immortality beneath the stars. We ought never to tread upon the grass without remembering that whereas the green sod covers our graves, it also reminds us of them, and preaches by every blade a sermon to us concerning our mortality, of which the text is, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.”

In the second place, grass is frequently used in Scripture as an emblem of the wicked. David tells us from his own experience that the righteous man is apt to grow envious of the wicked when he sees the prosperity of the ungodly. We have seen them spreading themselves like green bay trees, and apparently fixed and rooted in their places; and when we have smarted under our own troubles, and felt that all the day long we were scourged, and chastened every morning, we have been apt to say, “How can this be consistent with the righteous government of God?” We are reminded by the Psalmist that in a short time we shall pass by the place of the wicked, and lo, he shall not be; we shall diligently consider his place, and lo, it shall not be; for he is soon cut down as the grass, and withereth as the green herb. The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away, and even so shall pass away for ever the glory of those who build upon the estate of time, and dig for lasting comfort in the mines of earth. As the Eastern husbandman gathers up the green herb, and, despite its former beauty, casts it into the furnace, such must be your lot, O vainglorious merriment? Where now your confidence? Where now your pride and your pomp? Where now your boastings and your loud-mouthed blasphemies? They are silent for ever; for, as thorns crackle under a pot, but are speedily consumed, and leave nothing except a handful of ashes, so shall it be with the wicked as to this life; the fire of God’s wrath shall devour them.

It is more pleasing to recollect that the grass is used in Scripture as a picture of the elect of God. The wicked are comparable to the dragons of the wilderness, but God’s own people shall spring up in their place, for it is written, “In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.” The elect are compared to grass, because of their number as they shall be in the latter days, and because of the rapidity of

their growth. You remember the passage, “There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.” O that the long expected day might soon come, when God’s people shall no longer be like a lone tuft of grass, but when they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses.” Grass and willows are two of the fastest growing things we know of: so shall a nation be born in a day, so shall crowds be converted at once; for when the Spirit of God shall be mightily at work in the midst of the church, men shall fly unto Christ as doves fly to their dovecotes, so that the astonished church shall exclaim, “These, where had they been?” O that we might live to see the age of gold, the time which prophets have foretold, when the company of God’s people shall be innumerable as the blades of grass in the meadows, and grace and truth shall flourish.

How like the grass are God’s people for this season, that they are absolutely dependent upon the influences of heaven! Our fields are parched if vernal showers and gentle dews are withheld, and what are our souls without the gracious visitations of the Spirit? Sometimes through severe trials our wounded hearts are like the mown grass, and then we have the promise, “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.” Our sharp troubles have taken away our beauty, and lo, the Lord visits us, and we revive again. Thank God for that old saying, which is a gracious doctrine as well as a true proverb. “Each blade of grass has its own drop of dew.” God is pleased to give his own peculiar mercies to each one of his own servants. “Thy blessing is upon thy people.”

Once again, grass is comparable to the food wherewith the Lord supplies the necessities of his chosen ones. Take the twenty-third Psalm, and you have the metaphor worked out in the sweetest form of pastoral song: “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” Just as the sheep has nourishment according to its nature, and this nourishment is abundantly found for it by its shepherd, so that it not only feeds, but then lies down in the midst of the fodder, satiated with plenty, and perfectly content and at ease; even so are the people of God when Jesus Christ leads them into the pastures of the covenant, and opens up to them the precious

truths upon which their souls shall be fed. Beloved, have we not proved that promise true, “In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”? My soul has sometimes fed upon Christ till I have felt as if I could receive no more, and then I have laid me down in the bounty of my God to take my rest, satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

Thus, you see, the grass itself is not without instruction for those who will incline their ear.

**II.** In the second place, GOD IS SEEN IN THE GROWING OF THE GRASS. He is seen first as a worker, “He causeth the grass to grow.” He is seen secondly as a care-taker, “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.”

**1.** First, as a worker, God is to be seen in every blade of grass, if we have but eyes to discern him. A blind world this, which always talks about “natural laws,” and “the effects of natural causes,” but forgets that laws cannot operate of themselves, and that natural causes, so called, are not causes at all unless the First Cause shall set them in motion. The old Romans used to say, God thundered; God rained. We say, it thunders; it rains. What “it”? All these expressions are subterfuges to escape from the thought of God. We commonly say, “How wonderful are the works of nature!” What is “nature”? Do you know what nature is? I remember a lecturer in the street, an infidel, speaking about nature, and he was asked by a Christian man standing by whether he would tell him what nature was. He never gave a reply. The production of grass is not the result of natural law apart from the actual work of God; mere law would be inoperative unless the great Master himself sent a thrill of power through the matter which is regulated by the law — unless, like the steam engine, which puts force into all the spinning-jennies and wheels of a cotton-mill, God himself were the motive power to make every wheel revolve. I find rest on the grass as on a royal couch, now that I know that my God is there at work for his creatures.

Having asked you to see God as a worker, I want you to make use of this — therefore I bid you to see God in common things. He makes the grass to grow — grass is a common thing. You see it everywhere, yet God is in it. Dissect it and pull it to pieces: the attributes of God are illustrated in

every single flower of the field, and in every green leaf. In like manner see God in your common matters, your daily afflictions, your common joys, your every-day mercies. Do not say, "I must see a miracle before I see God." In truth, everything teems with marvel. See God in the bread of your table and the water of your cup. It will be the happiest way of living if you can say in each providential circumstance, "My Father has done all this." See God also in little things. The little things of life are the greatest troubles. A man will hear that his house is burned down more quietly than he will see an ill-cooked joint of meat upon his table, when he reckoned upon its being done to a turn. It is the little stone in the shoe which makes the pilgrim limp. To see God in little things, to believe that there is as much the presence of God in a limb falling from the elm as in the avalanche which crushes a village; to believe that the guidance of every drop of spray, when the wave breaks on the rock, is as much under the hand of God as the steerage of the mightiest planet in its course: to see God in the little as well as in the great — all this is true wisdom.

Think, too, of God working among solitary things; for grass does not merely grow where men take care of it, but up there on the side of the lone Alp, where no traveler has ever passed. Where only the eye of the wild bird has beheld their lonely verdure, moss and grass display their beauty; for God's works are fair to other eyes than those of mortals. And you, solitary child of God, dwelling unknown and obscure, in a remote hamlet; you are not forgotten by the love of heaven. He maketh the grass to grow all alone, and shall he not make you flourish despite your loneliness? He can bring forth your graces and educate you for the skies in solitude and neglect. The grass, you know, is a thing we tread upon, nobody thinks of its being crushed by the foot, and yet God makes it grow. Perhaps you are oppressed and down-trodden, but let not this depress your spirit, for God executeth righteousness for all those that are oppressed: he maketh the grass to grow, and he can make your heart to flourish under all the oppressions and afflictions of life, so that you shall still be happy and holy though all the world marches over you; still living in the immortal life which God himself bestows upon you though hell itself set its heel upon you. Poor and needy one, unknown, unobserved, oppressed and down-trodden, God makes the grass to grow, and he will take care of you.

2. But I said we should see in the text God also as a great caretaker. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.” “Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?” “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,” shows that God has a care for the beasts of the field; but it shows much more than that, namely, that he would have those who work for him feed as they work. God cares for the beasts, and makes grass to grow for them. Then, my soul, though sometimes thou hast said with David, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,” yet God cares for thee. “He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry” — there you have an instance of his care for birds, and here we have his care for beasts; and thou you, my hearer, may seem to yourself to be as black and defiled as a raven, and as far from anything spiritually good as the beasts, yet take comfort from this text; he gives grass to the cattle, and he will give grace to you, though you think yourself to be as a beast before him.

Observe, he cares for these beasts who are helpless as to caring for themselves. The cattle could not plant the grass, nor cause it to grow. Though they can do nothing in the matter, yet he does it all for them; he causeth the grass to grow. You who are as helpless as cattle to help yourselves, who can only stand and moan out your misery, but know not what to do, God can prevent you in his lovingkindness, and favor you in his tenderness. Let the bleatings of your prayer go up to heaven, let the moanings of your desires go up to him, and help shall come to you though you cannot help yourselves. Beasts are dumb, speechless things, yet God makes the grass grow for them. Will he hear those that cannot speak, and will he not hear those who can? Since our God views with kind consideration the cattle in the field, he will surely have compassion upon his own sons and daughters when they desire to seek his face.

There is this also to be said, God not only cares for cattle, but the food which he provides for them is fit food — he causeth grass to grow for the cattle, just the sort of food which ruminants require. Even thus the Lord God provides fit sustenance for his people. Depend upon him by faith and wait upon him in prayer, and you shall have food convenient for you. You shall find in God’s mercy just that which your nature demands, suitable supplies for peculiar wants.

This “convenient” food the Lord takes care to reserve for the cattle, for no one eats the cattle’s food but the cattle. There is grass for them, and nobody else cares for it, and thus it is kept for them; even so God has a special food for his own people; “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.” Though the grass be free to all who choose to eat it, yet no creature careth for it except the cattle for whom it is prepared; and though the grace of God be free to all men, yet no man careth for it except the elect of God, for whom he prepared it, and whom he prepares to receive it. There is as much reserve of the grass for the cattle as if there were walls around it; and so, though the grace of God be free, and there be no bound set about it, yet it is as much reserved as if it were restricted.

God is seen in the grass as the worker and the caretaker: then let us see his hand in providence at all times. Let us see it, not only when we have abundance, but even when we have scant supplies; for the grass is preparing for the cattle even in the depth of winter. And you, ye sons of sorrow, in your trials and troubles, are still cared for by God; he will accomplish his own divinely gracious purposes in you: only be still and see the salvation of God. Every winter’s night has a direct connection with the joyous days of mowing and reaping, and each time of grief is linked to future joy.

### **III.** Our third head is most interesting. GOD’S WORKING IN THE GRASS FOR THE CATTLE GIVES US ILLUSTRATIONS CONCERNING GRACE.

I will soliloquize, and say to myself as I read the text, “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle. In this I perceive a satisfying provision for that form of creature. I am also a creature, but I am a nobler creature than the cattle. I cannot imagine for a moment that God will provide all that the cattle need and not provide for me. But naturally I feel uneasy: I cannot find in this world what I want — if I were to win all its riches I should still be discontented; and when I have all that heart could wish of time’s treasures, yet still my heart feels as if it were empty. There must be somewhere or other something that will satisfy me as a man with an immortal soul. God altogether satisfies the ox; he must therefore have something or other that would altogether satisfy me if I could get it. There is the grass, the cattle get it, and when they have eaten their share, they lie



down and seem perfectly contented; now, all I have ever found on earth has never satisfied me so that I could lie down and be satisfied; there must, then, be something somewhere that would content me if I could get at it." Is not this good reasoning? I ask both the Christian and the unbeliever to go with me so far; but then let us proceed another step: — The cattle do get what they want — not only is the grass provided, but they get it. Why should not I obtain what I want? I find my soul hungering and thirsting after something more than I can see with my eyes or hear with my ears: there must be something to satisfy my soul, why should I not find it? The cattle pasture upon that which satisfies them: why should not I obtain satisfaction too? Then I begin to pray, "O Lord, satisfy my mouth with good things, and renew my youth."

While I am praying I also meditate and think, — God has provided for cattle that which is consonant to their nature: they are nothing but flesh, and flesh is grass, there is therefore grass for their flesh. I also am flesh, but I am something else besides: I am spirit, and to satisfy me I need spiritual meat. Where is it? When I turn to God's word, I find there that though the grass withereth, the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and the word which Jesus speaks unto us is spirit and life. "Oh! then," I say, "here is spiritual food for my spiritual nature, I will rejoice therein. O may God help me to know what that spiritual meat is, and enable me to lay hold upon it, for I perceive that though God provides the grass for the cattle, the cattle must eat it themselves. They are not fed if they refuse to eat. I must imitate the cattle, and receive that which God provides for me? What do I find provided in Scripture? I am told that the Lord Jesus came into this world to suffer, and bleed, and die instead of me, and that if I trust in him I shall be saved; and, being saved, the thoughts of his love will give solace and joy to me and be my strength. What have I to do but to feed on these truths? I do not find the cattle bringing any preparation to the pasture except hunger, but they enter it and partake of their portion. Even so must I by an act of faith live upon Jesus. Lord, give me grace to feed upon Christ; make me hungry and thirsty after him; give me the faith by which I may be a receiver of him, that so I may be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

My text, though it looked small, grows as we meditate upon it. I want to introduce you to a few more illustrations of divine grace. Preventing grace

may here be seen in a symbol. Grass grew before cattle were made. We find in the first chapter of Genesis that God provided the grass before he created the cattle. And what a mercy that covenant supplies for God's people were prepared before they were born. God had given his Son Jesus Christ to be the Savior of his chosen before Adam fell; long before sin came into the world the everlasting mercy of God foresaw the ruin of sin, and provided a refuge for every elect soul. What a thought it is for me, that, before I hunger, God has prepared the manna; before I thirst, God has caused the rock in the wilderness to send forth crystal streams to satisfy the thirst of my soul! See what sovereign grace can do! Before the cattle come to the pasture the grass has grown for them, and before I feel my need of divine mercy, that mercy is provided for me. Then I perceive an illustration of free grace, for when the ox comes into the field, he brings no money with him. So I, a poor needy sinner, having nothing, come and receive Christ without money and without price. The Lord maketh the grass to grow for the cattle, and so doth he provide grace for my needy soul, though I have now no money, no virtue, no excellence of my own.

And why is it, my friends, why is it that God gives the cattle the grass? The reason is, because they belong to him. Here is a text to prove it. "The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." God provides grass for his own cattle, and grace is provided for God's people? Of every herd of cattle in the world, God could say, "They are mine." Long before the grazier puts his brand on the bullock God has set his creating mark upon it; so, before the stamp of Adam's fall was set upon our brow, the stamp of electing love was set there: "In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

God also feeds cattle because he has entered into a covenant with them to do so. "What! A covenant with the cattle!" says somebody. Ay! truly so, for when God spake to his servant Noah, in that day when all the cattle came out of the ark, we find him saying, "I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you." Thus a covenant was made with the cattle, and that covenant was that seed-time and harvest should not fail; therefore the earth brings forth for them, and for them the Lord causeth the grass to grow. Does Jehovah

keep his covenant with cattle, and will he not keep his covenant with his own beloved? Ah! It is because his chosen people are his covenanted ones in the person of the Lord Jesus, that he provides for them all things that they shall need in time and in eternity, and satisfies them out of the fullness of his everlasting love.

Once, again, God feeds the cattle, and then the cattle praise him. We find David saying, in the hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, "Praise the Lord . . . ye beasts and all cattle." The Lord feeds his people to the end that their glory may sing praise unto him and not be silent. While other creatures give glory to God, let the redeemed of the Lord especially say so, whom he has redeemed out of the hand of the enemy.

Nor even yet is our text exhausted. Turning one moment from the cattle, I want you to notice the grass. It is said of the grass, "He causeth the grass to grow": here is a doctrinal lesson, for if grass does not grow without God's causing it to grow, how could grace arise in the human heart apart from divine operations? Surely grace is a much more wonderful product of divine wisdom than the grass can be! And if grass does not grow without a divine cause, depend upon it grace does not dwell in us without a divine implantation. If I have so much as one blade of grace growing within me, I must trace it all to God's divine will, and render to him all the glory.

Again, if God thinks it worth his while to make grass, and take care of it, much more will he think it to his honor to cause his grace to grow in our hearts. If the great invisible Spirit, whose thoughts are high and lofty, condescends to look after that humble thing which grows by the hedge, surely he will condescend to watch over his own nature, which he calls "the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever!" Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, was much comforted when he took up a little piece of moss, and saw the wisdom and power of God in that lonely piece of verdant loveliness. So, when you see the fields ripe and ready for the mower, your hearts should leap for joy to see how God has produced the grass, caring for it all through the rigorous cold of winter, and the chill months of spring, until at last he sent the genial rain and sunshine, and brought the fields to their best condition. And so, my soul, though thou mayest endure many a frost of sorrow and a long winter of trial, yet the

Lord will cause thee to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

# JESUS, THE EXAMPLE OF HOLY PRAISE

## SERMON NO. 799

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 8TH, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.” — Psalm 22:22, 23.*

WE greatly esteem the dying words of good men, but what must be the value of their departing thoughts! If we could pass beyond the gate of speech, and see the secret things which are transacted in the silent chambers of their souls in the moment of departure, we might greatly value the revelation, for there are thoughts which the tongue could not and must not utter, and there are deep searchings of heart which are not to be expressed by syllables and sentences. If, by some means, we could read the inmost death-thoughts of holy men, we might be privileged indeed. Now, in the Psalm before us, and in the words of our text, we have the last thoughts of our Lord and Master, and they beautifully illustrate the fact that he was governed by one ruling passion: that ruling passion most strong in death, was the glory of God. When but a child, he said, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” Throughout his work-life he could say, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;” “It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me;” and now, at last, as he expires, with his hands and his feet nailed, and his body and soul in extreme anguish, the one thought is, that God may be glorified. In that last happy interval, before he actually gave up his soul into his Father’s hands, his thoughts rushed forward and found a blessed place of rest in the prospect that, as the result of his death, all the kindreds of the nations would worship before the Lord, and that by a chosen seed the Most High should be honored. O for the same concentration of all our powers upon

one thing, and that one thing, the glory of God! Would God that we could say with one of old, "This one thing I do," and that this one thing might be the chief end of our being, the glorifying of our Creator, our Redeemer, the liege Lord of our hearts.

My object, this morning, is to excite in you the spirit of adoring gratitude. I thought that as last Sabbath we spoke of Christ as the example of protracted prayer, it might seem seasonable at the end of a month of so much mercy to exhibit him to you as the example of grateful praise, and to ask you as a great congregation to follow him as your leader in the delightful exercise of magnifying the name of Jehovah.

*"Far away be gloom and sadness;  
Spirits with seraphic fire,  
Tongues with hymns, and hearts with gladness,  
Higher sound the chords and higher."*

I shall ask your attention, in considering these verses, first, to our Lord's example: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee;" and, secondly, I shall invite you to observe our Lord's exhortation; "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel."

### **I.** We begin with OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE.

The praise which our Jesus as our exemplar renders unto the eternal Father is twofold. First, the praise of declaration, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren;" and, secondly, the more direct and immediate thanksgiving, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

**1.** The first form of the praise which our blessed Mediator renders unto the eternal Father, is that of declaring God's name. This, my dear friends, you know he did in his teaching. Something of God had been revealed to men aforetime; God had spoken to Noah and Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, and especially to his servant Moses; he had been pleased to discover himself in divers types and ceremonies and ordinances. He was known as Elohim, Shaddai, and Jehovah, but never until Christ came did men begin to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." This was the loving word by which the Well beloved declared his Father's name unto his brethren. The sterner attributes of God had been discovered amidst the

thunders of Sinai, the waves of the Red Sea, the smoke of Sodom, and the fury of the deluge; the sublimities of the Most High had been seen, and wondered at by the prophets who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but the full radiance of a Father's love was never seen til it was beheld beaming through the Savior's face. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father;" but until they had seen him they had not seen God as the Father. "No man can come unto the Father," saith Jesus, "Except by me;" and as no man can come affectionately in the outgoings of his heart, or fiducially in the motions of his faith, so neither can any man come to God in the enlightenment of understanding except by Christ the Son. He who understands Christianity has a far better idea of God than he who only comprehends Judaism. Read the Old Testament through, and you shall value every sentence, and prize it above fine gold, but still you shall feel unrest and dissatisfaction, for the vision is veiled, and the light is dim; turn then to the New Testament, and you discern that in Jesus of Nazareth dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and the noontide of knowledge is around you, the vision is open and distinct. Jesus is the express image of his Father's person, and seeing him you have seen God manifest in the flesh. This sight of God you will assuredly obtain if you are one of the brethren to whom, through the Spirit, Jesus Christ in his teaching declares the name of the Father.

Our Lord, however, declared the Father more perhaps by his acts than by his words, for the life of Christ is a discovery of all the attributes of God in action. If you want to know the gentleness of God, you perceive Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them. If you would know his condescension, behold the loving Redeemer taking little children into his arms and blessing them. If you would know whether God is just, hear the words of a Savior as he denounces sin, and observe his own life, for he is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Would you know the mercy of God as well as his justice? Then see it manifested in the ten thousand miracles of the Savior's hands, and in the constant sympathy of the Redeemer's heart. I cannot stay to bring out all the incidents in the Redeemer's life, nor even to give you a brief sketch of it, but suffice it to say, that the life of Christ is a perpetual unrolling of the great mystery of the divine attributes, and you may rest assured that what Jesus is, that the Father is. You need not start back from the Father, as though he were

something strange and unrevealed, for you have seen the Father if you have seen Christ; and if you have studied well and drunk deep into the spirit of the history of the Man of sorrows, you understand, as well as you need to do, the character of God over all, blessed for ever.

Our Lord made the grandest declaration of the Godhead in his death.

*“Here his whole name appears complete,  
Nor wit can guess, nor reason trace,  
Which of the letters best is writ —  
The power, the wisdom, or the grace.”*

There at Calvary, where he suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God, we see the Godhead resplendent in noonday majesty, albeit that to the natural eye it seems to be eclipsed in midnight gloom. Would you see stern justice such as the Judge of all the earth perpetually exhibits (for shall not he do right)? Would you see the justice that will not spare the guilty, which smites at sin with determined enmity and will not endure it? Then behold the hands and feet, and side of the Redeemer, welling up with crimson blood! Behold his heart broken as with an iron rod, dashed to shivers as though it were a potter’s vessel! Hearken to his cries; mark the lines of grief that mar his face; behold the turmoil, the confusion, the whirlwinds of anguish which seethe like a boiling caldron within the soul of the Redeemer! Here is the vengeance of God revealed to men, so that they may see it and not die, may behold it and weep, but not with the tears of despair. At the same time, if you would see the grace of God, where shall you discover it as you will in the death of Jesus? God’s bounty gleams in the light, flashes in the rain and sparkles in the dew; it blossoms in the flowers that bestud the meadows, and it ripens in the golden sheaves of autumn. All God’s works are full of goodness and truth; even on the sea itself are the steps of the beneficent Creator; but all this does not meet the case of guilty, condemned man, and, therefore, to the eye of him who has learned to weep for sin, nature does not reveal the goodness of God in any such a light as that which gleams from the cross. Best of all is God seen as he that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” “For God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Your thoughtful minds will readily discover every one of the great qualities of Deity in our dying



Lord. You have only to linger long enough amidst the wondrous scenes of Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha, to observe how power and wisdom, grace and vengeance, strangely join —

*“Piercing his Son with sharpest smart,  
To make the purchased blessing mine.”*

Beloved, in the midst of the brethren, a dying Savior declares the name of the Lord, and thus magnifies the Lord as no other can. None of the harps of angels, nor the fiery, flaming, sonnets of cherubs can glorify God as did the wounds and pangs of the great Substitute when he died to make his Father’s grace and justice known.

Our Lord continued to declare God’s name among his brethren when he rose from the dead. He did so literally. Amongst the very first words he said were, “Go to my brethren;” and his message was, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” His life on earth after his resurrection was but brief, but it was very rich and instructive, and in itself a showing forth of divine faithfulness. He further revealed the faithfulness and glory of God, when he ascended on high, leading captivity captive. It must have been an august day when the Son of God actually passed the pearly gates to remain within the walls of heaven enthroned until his second advent! How must the spirits of just men made perfect have risen from their seats of bliss to gaze on him! They had not seen a risen one before. Two had passed into heaven without death, but none had entered into glory as risen from the dead. He was the first instance of immortal resurrection, “the first-fruits of them that slept.” How angels adored him! How holy beings wondered at him while

*“The God shone gracious through the man,  
And shed sweet glories on them all!”*

Celestial spirits saw the Lord that day as they had never seen before! They had worshipped God, but the excessive splendor of absolute Deity had forbidden the sacred familiarity with which they hailed the Lord in flesh arrayed. They were never so near Jehovah before, for in Christ the Godhead veiled its killing splendours, and wore the aspect of a fatherhood and brotherhood most near and dear. Enough was seen of glory, as much as finite beings could bear, but still the whole was so sweetly shrouded in

humanity, that God was declared in a new and more delightful manner, such as made heaven ring with newborn joy.

What if I say that methinks a part of the occupation of Christ in heaven is to declare to perfect spirits what he suffered, how God sustained him, to reveal to them the covenant, and all its solemn bonds, how the Lord ordained it, how he made it firm by suretyships, and based it upon eternal settlements, so that everlasting mercy might flow from it. What if it be not true that there is no preaching in heaven! What if Christ be the preacher there, speaking as never man spake, and for ever instructing his saints that they may make known unto principalities and powers yet more fully the manifold wisdom of God as revealed both in him and in them — in them the members, and in him the Head! Methinks, if it be so, it is a sweet fulfillment of this dying vow of our blessed Master, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.”

But, brethren, it is certain that at this hour our Lord Jesus Christ continues to fulfill the vow by the spreading of his gospel on earth. Do not tell me that the gospel does declare God, but that Jesus does not so. I would remind you that the gospel does not declare God apart from the presence of Jesus Christ with the gospel. “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” is the gospel’s true life and power. Take Christ’s presence away, and all the doctrines, and the precepts, and the invitations of the gospel would not declare God to this blind-eyed generation, this hard-hearted multitude, but where Jesus is by his Spirit, there by the word the Father is declared. And, my brethren, this great process will go on. All through the present dispensation, Christ will declare God to the sons of men, especially to the elect sons of men, to his own brethren. Then shall come the latter days of which we know so little, but of which we hope so much. Then, in that august period there will be a declaration, no doubt, of God in noonday light, for it shall be said, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell among them.” Of that age of light Jesus shall be the sun. The great revealer of Deity shall still be the Son of Mary, the Man of Nazareth, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; we shall each one of us tell abroad the savor of his name till he shall come, and then we shall have no need to say one to another, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know him, from the least to the

greatest; and know the Lord for this reason, because they know Christ, and have seen Jehovah in the person of Jesus Christ his Son.

I cannot leave this passage without bidding you treasure up that precious word of our Master, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren."

*"Our next of kin, our brother now,  
Is he to whom the angels bow;  
They join with us to praise his name,  
But we the nearest interest claim."*

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Savior's brethren are to know God in Christ; you who are one with Jesus, you who have been adopted into the same family, have been regenerated and quickened with his life, you who are joined together by an indissoluble union, you are to see the Lord. I said an indissoluble union, for a wife may be divorced, but there is no divorce of brethren. I never heard of any law, human or divine, that could ever unbrother a man; that cannot be done; if a man be my brother, he is and shall be my brother when heaven and earth shall pass away. Am I Jesus' brother? Then I am joint heir with him; I share in all he has, and all that God bestows upon him; his Father is my Father; his God is my God. Feast, my brethren, on this dainty meat, and go your way in the strength of it to bear the trials of earth with more than patience.

The example of our Lord, under this first head, I must hint at and leave. It is this: if the Lord Jesus Christ declares God, especially to his own brethren, be it your business and mine, in order to praise Jehovah, to tell out what we know of the excellence and surpassing glories of our God; and especially let us do it to our kinsfolk, our household, our neighbors, and, since all men are in a sense our brethren, let us speak of Jesus wherever our lot is cast. My brethren and sisters, I wish we talked more of our God.

*"But ah! how faint our praises rise!  
Sure 'tis the wonder of the skies,  
That we, who share his richest love,  
So cold and unconcern'd should prove."*

How many times this week have you praised the dear Redeemer to your friends? Have you done it once? I do it often officially; but I wish I did it more often, spontaneously and personally, to those with whom I may commune by the way. You have doubtless murmured this week, or spoken against your neighbors, or spread abroad some small amount of scandal, or, it may be, you have talked frothily and with levity. It is even possible that impurity has been in your speech; even a Christian's language is not always so pure as it should be. Oh, if we saved our breath to praise God with, how much wiser! If our mouth were filled with the Lord's praise and with his honor all the day, how much holier! If we would but speak of what Jesus has done for us, what good we might accomplish! Why, every man speaks of what he loves! Men can hardly hold their tongues about their inventions and their delights. Speak well, O ye faithful, of the Lord's name. I pray you, be not dumb concerning one who deserves so well of you; but make this the resolve of this Sabbath morning, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren."

**2.** Our Master's second form of praise in the text is of a more direct kind — "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Is it a piece of imagination, or does the text really mean this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, adores and worships the eternal God in heaven, and is, in fact, the great Leader of the devotions of the skies? Shall I err if I say that they all bow when he as Priest adores the Lord, and all lift up the voice at the lifting up of his sacred psalmody? Is he the chief Musician of the sky, the Master of the sacred choir? Does he beat time for all the hallelujahs of the universe? I think so. I think he means that in these words: "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." As God, he is praised for ever: far above all worshipping, he is himself for ever worshipped; but as Man, the Head of redeemed humanity, the everliving Priest of the Most High God, I believe that he praises Jehovah in heaven. Surely it is the office of the Head to speak and to represent the holy joys and devout aspirations of the whole body which he represents.

In the midst of the congregations of earth, too, is not Jesus Christ the sweetest of all singers? I like to think that when we pray on earth our prayers are not alone, but our great High Priest is there to offer our petitions with his own. When we sing on earth it is the same. Is not Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation, gathering up all the notes which

come from sincere lips, to put them into the golden censer, and to make them rise as precious incense before the throne of the infinite majesty? So that he is the great singer, rather than we. He is the chief player on our stringed instruments, the great master of true music. The worship of earth comes up to God through him, and he, he is the accepted channel of all the praise of all the redeemed universe.

I am anticipating the day — I hope we are all longing for it — when the dead shall rise and the sea and land shall give up the treasured bodies of the saints, and glorified spirits shall descend to enliven their renovated frames, and we who are alive and remain shall be changed and made immortal, and the King himself shall be revealed. Then shall be trodden under our feet all the ashes of our enemies; Satan, bound, shall be held beneath the foot of Michael, the great archangel, and victory shall be on the side of truth and righteousness. What a “Hallelujah” that will be which shall peal from land and sea and from islands of the far-off main — ”Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” Who will lead that song? Who shall be the first to praise God in that day of triumph? Who first shall wave the palm of victory? Who but he who was first in the fight and first in the victory, he who trod the winepress alone and stained his garments with the blood of his enemies, he that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah — surely he it is who in the midst of the exulting host, once militant and then triumphant, shall magnify and adore Jehovah’s name for ever and for ever. Hath he not himself said it, “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation”?

What means that expression so hard to be understood, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”? What means that dark saying, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son of God also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all”? Whatever it may mean, it seems to teach us the mediatorial crown and government are temporary, and intended only to last until all rule, and all authority and power, are put down by Jesus, and the rule of God shall be universally acknowledged. Jesus cannot renounce his Godhead, but his mediatorial sovereignty will be yielded up to him from whom it came, and that last solemn act, in which he shall hand back to his Father the all-subduing scepter, will be a praising of God to a most wonderful extent beyond

human conception. We wait and watch for it, and we shall behold it in the time appointed.

Beloved friends, we have in this second part also an example: let us endeavor to praise our God in a direct manner. We ought to spend at least a little time every day in adoring contemplation. Our private devotions are scarcely complete if they consist altogether of prayer. Should there not be praise? If possible, during each day, sing a hymn. Perhaps you are not in a position to sing it aloud, very loud, at any rate, but I would hum it over, if I were you. Many of you working men find time enough to sing a silly song, why cannot you find space for the praise of God? Every day let us praise him, when the eyelids of the morning first are opened, and when the curtains of the night are drawn, ay, and at midnight, if we wake at that solemn hour, let the heart put fire to the sacred incense and present it unto the Lord that liveth for ever and ever. In the midst of the congregation also, whenever we come up to God's house, let us take care that our praise is not merely lip language, but that of the heart. Let us all sing, and so sing that God himself shall hear. We need more than the sweet sounds which die upon mortal ears, we want the deep melodies which spring from the heart, and which enter into the ears of the immortal God. Imitate Jesus, then, in this twofold praise, the declaring of God, and the giving of direct praise to him.

**II.** My time almost fails me, while I have need of much of it, for now I come to the second head, OUR LORD'S EXHORTATION.

Follow me earnestly, my dear brethren and sisters, and then follow me practically also. The exhortations of the second verse are given to those who fear God, who have respect to him, who tremble to offend him, who carry with them the consciousness of his presence into their daily life, who act towards him as obedient children towards a father. The exhortation is further addressed to the seed of Jacob, to those in covenant with God, to those who have despised the pottage and chosen the birthright, to those who, if they have had to sleep with a stone for their pillow, have, nevertheless, seen heaven opened, and enjoyed a revelation of God, to those who know what prevalence in prayer means, to those who, in all their trouble, have yet found that all these things are not against them, but work their everlasting good, for Jesus is yet alive, and they shall

see him ere they die. It is, moreover, directed to the seed of Israel, to those who once were in Egypt, in spiritual bondage, who have been brought out of slavery, who are being guided through the wilderness, fed with heaven's manna, and made to drink of the living Rock, to those who worship the one God and him only, and put away their idols and desire to be found always obedient to the Master's will. Now, to them it is said, first, "Praise him." Praise him vocally. I wish that in every congregation every child of God would take pains to praise God with his mouth as well as with his heart. Do you know, I have noticed one thing — I have jotted this down in the diary of my recollection — that you always sing best when you are most spiritual. Last Monday night the singing was very much better than it was on Sabbath evening. You kept better time and better tune, not because the tune was any easier, but because you had come up to worship God with more solemnity than usual, and therefore there was no slovenly singing such as pains my ear and heart sometimes. Why, some of you care so little to give the Lord your best music, that you fall half a note behind the rest, others of you are singing quite a false note, and a few make no sound of any kind. I hate to enter a place of worship where half-a-dozen sing to the praise and glory of themselves, and the rest stand and listen. I like that good old plan of everybody singing, singing his best, singing carefully and heartily. If you cannot sing artistically, never mind, you will be right enough if you sing from the heart, and pay attention to it, and do not drawl out like a musical machine that has been set therefore runs on mechanically. With a little care the heart brings the art, and the heart desiring to praise will by-and-by train the voice to time and tune. I would have our service of song to be of the best. I care not for the fineries of music, and the prettinesses of chants and anthems. As for instrumental music, I fear that it often destroys the singing of the congregation, and detracts from the spirituality and simplicity of worship. If I could crowd a house twenty times as big as this by the fine music which some churches delight in, God forbid I should touch it; but let us have the best and most orderly harmony we can make — let the saints come with their hearts in the best humor, and their voices in the best tune, and let them take care that there be no slovenliness and discord in the public worship of the Most High.

Take care to praise God also mentally. The grandest praise that floats up to the throne is that which arises from silent contemplation and reverent thought. Sit down and think of the greatness of God, his love, his power, his faithfulness, his sovereignty, and as your mind bows prostrate before his majesty, you will have praised him, though not a sound shall have come from you.

Praise God also by your actions, your sacrifice to him of your property, your offering to him week by week of your substance. This is true praise, and far less likely to be hypocritical than the mere thanksgiving of words, “Ye that fear the Lord, praise him.”

The text adds, “Glorify him, ye seed of Jacob” — another form of the same thing. Glorify God, that is, let others know of his glory. Let them know of it from what you say, but specially let them know of it from what you are. Glorify God in your business, in your recreations, in your shops and in your households. In whatsoever ye eat and drink, glorify the Lord. In the commonest actions of life wear the vestments of your sacred calling, and act as a royal priesthood serving the Most High. Glorify your Creator and Redeemer. Glorify him by endeavoring to spread abroad the gospel which glorifies him. Magnify Christ by explaining to men how by believing they shall find peace in him. Glorify God by yourself boldly relying on his word, in the teeth of afflicting providence, and over the head of all suspicions and mistrust. Nothing can glorify God more than an Abrahamic faith which staggers not at the promise through unbelief. O ye wrestling seed of Jacob, see to it that ye fall not off in the matter of glorifying your God.

Lastly, the text says, “Fear him,” as if this were one of the highest methods of praise. Walk in his sight; constantly keep the Lord before you; let him be at your right hand. Sin not, for in so doing you dishonor him. Suffer rather than sin. Choose the burning fiery furnace rather than bow down before the golden image. Be willing to be yourself despised, sooner than God should be despised. Be content to bear the cross, rather than Jesus should be crucified afresh. Be put to shame, sooner than Jesus should be put to shame. Thus you will truly praise and magnify the name of the Most High.



I must close by a few remarks which are meant to assist you to carry out the spirit and teaching of this sermon. Beloved brethren and sisters, this morning I felt, before I came to this place, very much in the spirit of adoring gratitude. I cannot communicate that to you, but the Spirit of God can; and the thoughts that helped me to praise God were something like these — let me give them to you as applied to yourselves — glorify and praise God, for he has saved you, has saved you, saved you from hell, saved you for heaven. Oh, how much is comprehended in the fact that you are saved! Think of the election which ordained you to salvation, the covenant which secured salvation to you; think of the incarnation by which God came to you, and the precious blood by which you now have been made nigh to God. Hurry not over those thoughts though I must shorten my words. Linger at each one of these sacred fountains and drink, and when you have seen what salvation involves in the past, think of what it means in the future. You shall be preserved to the end; you shall be educated in the school of grace; you shall be admitted into the home of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. You shall have a resurrection most glorious, and an immortality most illustrious. When days and years are passed, a crown shall adorn your brow, a harp of joy shall fill your hand. All this is yours, believer; and will you not praise him? Make any one of them stand right out, as real to you personally, and methinks you will say, “Should I refuse to sing, sure the very stones would speak.” Your God has done more than this for you. You are not barely saved, like a drowning man just dragged to the bank; you have had more given you than you ever lost. You have been a gainer by Adam’s fall. You might almost say, as one of the fathers did, *O beata culpa*, “O happy fault,” which put me into the position to be so richly endowed as now I am! Had you stood in Adam, you had never been able to call Jesus “Brother,” for there had been no need for him to become incarnate; you had never been washed in the precious blood, for then it had no need to be shed. Jesus has restored that to you which he took not away. He has not merely lifted you from the dunghill to set you among men, but to set you among princes, even the princes of his people. Think of the bright roll of promises, of the rich treasure of covenant provision, of all that you have already had and all that Christ has guaranteed to you of honor, and glory, and immortality, and will you not in the midst of the congregation praise the Lord? Brethren and sisters, some of us have had especial cause for praising God, in the fact that we

have seen many saved during the last three weeks, and amongst them those dear to us. Mothers, can you hear the fact without joy? your children saved! Brothers, your sisters saved! Fathers, your sons and daughters saved! How many has God brought in during the last few weeks? And you Sunday-school teachers, who have been the instruments of this, you conductors of our classes, who have been honored of God to be spiritual parents, you elders and deacons, who have helped us so nobly, and who have now to share the joy of the pastor's heart in these conversions, will you not bless God? "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be praise." But oh! we cannot be silent; not one tongue shall silent be; we will all magnify and bless the Most High. Brethren and sisters, if these do not suffice to make us praise him, I would say, think of God's own glorious self! Think of Father, Son, and Spirit, and what the triune Jehovah is in his own person and attributes, and if you do not praise him, oh, how far must you have backslidden! Remember the host who now adore him. When we bless him, we stand not alone: angels and archangels are at our right hand, cherubim and seraphim are in the selfsame choir. The notes of redeemed men go not up alone, they are united to, and swollen by, the unceasing flood of praise which flows from the hierarchy of angels. Think, beloved, of how you will praise him soon! how, ere many days and weeks are passed, many of us will be with the glorious throng! This last week three of our number have been translated to the skies: more links to heaven, fewer bonds to earth. They have gone before us, we had almost said, "Would God it were our lot instead of theirs;" they have seen now what eye hath not seen, and heard what ear hath never heard, and their spirits have drunk in what they could not else have conceived. We shall soon be there! Meanwhile, let each one of us sing —

*"I would begin the music here,  
 And so my soul should rise:  
 Oh! for some heavenly notes to bear  
 My passions to the skies!  
 There ye that love my Savior sit,  
 There I would fain have place  
 Among your thrones, or at your feet,  
 So I might see his face."*

# THE WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER

## SERMON NO. 801

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22ND, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” — Luke 7:37-38.*

THIS is the woman who has been confounded with Mary Magdalene. How the error originated it would not be easy to imagine, but error it certainly is. There is not the slightest shadow of evidence that this woman, who was a sinner, had even the remotest connection with her out of whom Jesus cast seven devils. In delivering you a sermon a few Sabbaths ago, upon the life of Mary of Magdala, I think I showed you that it was hardly possible, and most improbable, that she could have been a sinner in the sense here intended, and now I venture to affirm that there is as much evidence to prove that the woman, in the narrative now before us, was the Queen of Sheba, or the mother of Sisera, as that she was Mary Magdalene: there is not a figment or fraction of evidence to be found. The fact is, there is no connection between the two.

Further, the sinner before us is not Mary of Bethany, with whom so many have confounded her. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did anoint our Savior, but this is a previous anointing, by quite a different person, and the two narratives are altogether distinct. There is a great likeness, certainly, between the two. The principal persons were both women, full of ardent love to Christ; they both anointed the Lord with ointment; the name of Simon is connected with both, and they both wiped the Savior’s feet with their hair. But it ought not to astonish you that there were two

persons whose intense affection thus displayed itself; the astonishment should rather be that there were not two hundred who did so, for the anointing of the feet of an honored friend was by no means so uncommon a token of respect among the Orientals as to be an unprecedented marvel. Loved as Jesus deserved to be, the marvel is that he was not oftener visited with these generous tokens of human love. It is a pity to fuse two occasions into one, as though we grudged a double unction to the Anointed of the Lord. That both events should happen in the houses of persons named Simon is not at all remarkable: be it remembered that the one was Simon the Pharisee, and the other Simon the leper; and that Simon is one of the commonest of Jewish names; and that in our days, a thing having happened in the house of a John, and another thing like it in the house of another John, would not be remarkable, since Johns are exceedingly common amongst us, as were Simons in the days of our Lord. But that the two, or perhaps I should say three, anointings (for I am inclined to think there were three) are not the same is evident from the following reasons: they differ in time; our Lord lived at least six months after his anointing by this woman, and if you follow the narrative, you read in the very next chapter, "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him." But when Mary anointed him at Bethany, he said, "She did it for my burial;" and our Lord was then within a very few days of his crucifixion. The anointing by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, took place at Bethany (Matthew 26:6), but this occurred in Galilee, which is quite another quarter. Moreover, the fact itself was really a very different one, for although both women anoint Christ with ointment, yet there was a peculiar preciousness and power of perfume about the spikenard of the wealthier Mary, which is not mentioned in the ointment of this woman of a lower position in life. Mary, according to John (John 12:3), poured out a whole pound of the costly nard, but such is not said of the humble offering of the woman that was a sinner. Matthew tells us that a woman poured the ointment on his head, but this poor penitent is only said to have anointed his feet: tears are not mentioned in connection with Mary by either Matthew, Mark, or John, while they make a conspicuous feature in the love of the gracious mourner now before us. After the transaction there was an objection raised in both cases, but mark the great difference! In this case, Simon the Pharisee

objected because she, being a sinner, was allowed to have such familiarity with the Lord; in the other case, no such objection was raised to the person, but Judas Iscariot objected to her having been so profuse and extravagant in the abundance and costliness of the anointing, and murmured, saying that this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor. If you confound these two occurrences, you not only make an egregious mistake, but you lose a precious lesson. This case now before us is the offering of a poor returning wanderer, who, under a deep sense of gratitude, brings the best she has to her Lord, and is accepted by his grace. In the case of Mary of Bethany, it was an advanced saint, one who had sat at Jesus' feet and heard of him, and had aforetime chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her, and she brings a costly tribute as the offering of her deep, sincere affection, which had grown and deepened by the receipt of many favors from his loving hand. The advanced believer is more bold than the new convert. She anoints his head when the other only anoints his feet, and she is not less loving, for if there be fewer tears there is a more costly spikenard. Jesus defended the penitent, and bade her go in peace; but in Mary's case there was no need to say, "Thy sins are forgiven," for she already possessed that priceless boon; our Lord, instead of merely defending, warmly eulogised her love, and declared, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Thus much will suffice to show you that "the woman which was a sinner" is neither to be confounded with Mary of Magdala on the one hand, or Mary of Bethany on the other. Let us learn to read our Bibles with our eyes open, to study them as men do the works of great artists, studying each figure, and even each sweet variety of light and shade.

Too long have we been controverting on the threshold of the text, let us now lift the latch. Lo, on the table I see two savory dishes, let us feed thereon. Here are two silver bells, let us ring them; their first note is Grace, and the second tone is Love.

**I.** GRACE, the most costly of spikenard: this story literally drips with it, like those Oriental trees which bleed perfume; or as the spouse when she rose up to open to her beloved, and her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. Grace,

that gentle dew of heaven, is here plenteously distilled, and falls like small rain upon the tender herb. Grace, sovereign, distinguishing, omnipotent, is exceedingly magnified in this narrative; lo, I see it exalted upon a glorious high throne, with the king's daughter waiting as an honorable woman among its courtiers.

**1.** First, grace is here glorified in its object. She was “a sinner” — a sinner not in the flippant, unmeaning, every-day sense of the term, but a sinner in the blacker, filthier, and more obnoxious sense. She had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God; she had sinned against the laws of purity, and had made herself as a defiled thing; she had fallen into that deep ditch concerning which it is written, “The abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.” According to our Lord's parable, she was in comparison with the Pharisee as a five-hundred- pence sinner, while the Pharisee was but as fifty. She was one of the scarlet sinners that we read of in Scripture — she sinned and made others to sin. Hers were offenses which provoke the Lord to jealousy, and stir up his wrath. Yet, oh, miracle of miracles, she was an object of distinguishing grace, ordained unto eternal life! Why was this? On what legal grounds was she selected? For what merit was she chosen? Was this an extraordinary and out-of-the-way instance? By no means, dear friends, for the grace of God has frequently chosen the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile. Recollect how, in the pedigree of our Lord, you find the name of the shameless Tamar, the harlot Rahab, and the unfaithful Bathsheba, as if to indicate that the Savior of sinners would enter into near relationship with the most degraded and fallen of our race. This is, in fact, one of the dearest titles of our Lord, though it was hissed at him from the lips of contempt, “A friend of publicans and sinners.” This is Jesus' character of which he is not ashamed: “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Free grace has made no distinction among men on account of merit, whether false or real, if real there be. The law has concluded us all in unbelief, and then the abounding grace of God looking upon us all as equally cast away and ruined both by Adam's fall and by our own personal transgression, has predestinated and called whomsoever it would. Do you not hear from the throne of mercy the echoes of that sovereign proclamation, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? Grace has pitched upon the most unlikely cases in

order to show itself to be grace; it has found a dwelling-place for itself in the most unworthy heart, that its freeness might be the better seen. Do I address one who has greatly fallen? Let this thought comfort thee, if thy heart bewails thy sin — let this give thee hope of mercy, that in the election of grace some of the grossest blasphemers, persecutors, thieves, fornicators, and drunkards, have been included, and in consequence thereof they have been forgiven, renewed, and made to live sober, righteous, and godly lives. Such as these have obtained mercy that in them first God might show forth all longsuffering as a comfort and encouragement to others to cry unto the Lord for mercy.

Grace reigns right majestically in the case before us, in that this particular sinner should be chosen; to choose a sinner was something, but to choose this one individual was even more astonishing. No doubt, she did in spirit ask herself, “Why me, Lord? why me?” Had she been here this morning, she would sing as heartily as any of us —

*“Oh, gift of gifts! Oh, grace of faith!  
My God, how can it be  
That thou, who has discerning love,  
Shouldst give that gift to me!  
How many hearts thou mightst have had  
More innocent than mine!  
How many souls more worthy far  
Of that pure touch of thine!  
Ah, Grace! into unlikeliest hearts  
It is thy boast to come;  
The glory of thy light to find  
In darkest spots a home.”*

At yonder table sits Simon the Pharisee, a good respectable body as he thinks himself to be, and yet no choice divine has fallen upon him — while this poor harlot is elected by distinguishing grace! How can we account for this? Many there were in the city like to herself, some worse, some better; but grace had marked her as its own. Oh, strange, yet admirable sovereignty! Now, it is possible that you may not be much taken with the glory of grace in selecting her, but I will ask you whether you are not delighted with the grace which separated you to be the Lord’s? O brethren, when once a man discovers that God has chosen him, when he feels that grace has broken his heart, has brought him to Christ, and has covered him with a perfect righteousness, then he breaks out in wondering

exclamations, "How couldst thou have chosen me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that I should be taken into such royal favor?" The more a believer looks within, the more he discovers reasons for divine wrath, and the less he believes in his own personal merit. How is the heart of a true believer filled with adoring gratitude that ever the Lord's boundless love should have been pleased to settle and fix itself upon him! This is not so much for me to descant upon as it is for your private meditations. I earnestly commend to you that precious thought, that Jehovah loved you from before the foundations of the world, and chose you when he might have left you, chose you when he passed over thousands of the great and the noble, the wise, and the learned. The doctrine is not a dogma to be fought over, as dogs over a bone, but to be rejoiced in, and turned to practical account as an incentive to reverent wonder and affectionate gratitude. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, and the "woman which was a sinner," is now before us a weeping penitent; the sinner "of the city," a public sinner, is now openly a follower of the holy One.

**2.** Grace is greatly magnified in its fruits. Who would have thought that a woman who had yielded her members to be servants of unrighteousness, to her shame and confusion, should have now become, what if I call her a maid of honor to the King of kings? — one of Christ's most favored servitors? Who offered hospitalities to Jesus which the Pharisee omitted, and offered them in an infinitely better spirit and style than the Pharisee could have done it even had he tried! Let us remark, that the grace of God brought this woman in a way of providence to listen to the Savior's discourses. In a former part of this chapter it appears he had been preaching the gospel, and more especially preaching it to the poor. Perhaps she stood in the street attracted by the crowd, and, as she listened to our Savior's talk, it seemed to hold her fast. She had never heard a man speak after that fashion, and when he spoke of abounding mercy, and the willingness of God to accept as many as would come to him, then the tears began to follow each other down her cheek; and when she listened again to that meek and lowly preacher, and heard him tell of the Father in heaven who would receive prodigals and press them to his loving bosom, then her heart was fairly broken, she relinquished her evil traffic, she became a new woman, desirous of better things, anxious to be freed from sin. But she



was greatly agitated in her heart with the question, could she, would she, be really forgiven? Would such pardoning love as she had heard of reach even to her? She hoped so, and was in a measure comforted. Her faith grew, and with it an ardent love. The Spirit of God still wrought with her till she enjoyed a feeble hope, a gleam of confidence; she believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, that he had appeared on earth to forgive sins, and she rested on him for the forgiveness of her sins, and longed for an opportunity to do him homage, and if possible to win a word direct from his mouth. The Lord of mercy came to the city where she lived. "Now," she thought, "here is my opportunity; that blessed prophet has come; the man who spake as never man spake is near me, and I have already derived such benefit from him that I love him better than all besides; I love him as my own soul. I will steal into the house of the Pharisee, that I may feast my eyes with the sight of him." Now, when she came to the door, the Savior was reclining at his meat, according to the Oriental custom, and his feet were towards the door; for the Pharisee had but little respect for Christ, and had not given him the best and innermost place at the feast; but there he lay with his uncovered feet towards the door, and the woman, almost unperceived, came close to him, and, as she looked and saw that the Pharisee had refused him the ordinary courtesy of washing his feet, and that they were all stained and travel-worn with his long journeys of love, she began to weep, and the tears fell in such plenteous showers that they even washed his feet. Here was holy water of a true sort. The crystal of penitence falling in drops, each one as precious as a diamond. Never were feet bedewed with a more precious water than those penitent eyes showered forth. Then, unbinding those luxurious tresses, which had been for her the devil's nets in which to entangle souls, she wiped the sacred feet therewith. Surely she thought that her chief adornment, the crown and glory of her womanhood, was all too worthless a thing to do service to the lowest and meanest part of the Son of God. That which once was her vanity now was humbled and yet exalted to the lowest office; she made her eyes a ewer and her locks a towel. "Never," says bishop Hall, "was any hair so preferred as this; how I envy those locks that were graced with the touch of those sacred feet."

There a sweet temptation overtook her, "I will even kiss those feet, I will humbly pay reverence to those blessed limbs." She spake not a word, but

how eloquent were her actions! better even than psalms and hymns were these acts of devotion. Then she bethought her of that alabaster box containing perfumed oil with which, like most Eastern women, she was wont to anoint herself for the pleasure of the smell and for the increase of her beauty, and now, opening it, she pours out the costliest thing she has upon his blessed feet. Not a word, I say, came from her; and, brethren, we would prefer a single speechless lover of Jesus, who acted as she did, to ten thousand noisy talkers who have no gifts, no heart, no tears. As for the Master, he remained quietly acquiescent, saying nothing, but all the while drinking in her love, and letting his poor weary heart find sweet solace in the gratitude of one who once was a sinner, but who was to be such no more.

Grace, my brethren, deserves our praise, since it does so much for its object. Grace does not choose a man and leave him as he is. My brethren and sisters, men rail at grace sometimes as though it were opposed to morality, whereas it is the great source and cause of all complete morality — indeed, there is no real holiness in the sight of God except that which grace creates, and which grace sustains. This woman, apart from grace, had remained black and defiled still to her dying day, but the grace of God wrought a wondrous transformation, removing the impudence of her face, the flattery from her lips, the finery from her dress, and the lust from her heart. Eyes which were full of adultery, were now fountains of repentance; lips which were doors of lascivious speech, now yield holy kisses — the profligate was a penitent, the castaway a new creature. All the actions which are attributed to this woman illustrate the transforming power of divine grace. She exhibited the deepest repentance. She wept abundantly. She wept out of no mere sentimentalism, but at the remembrance of her many crimes. She wept for sorrow and for shame as she thought over her early childhood, and how she had slighted a mother's training, how she had listened to the tempter's voice, and hurried on from bad to worse. Every part of her life-story would rise before her as a painfully vivid dream. The sight of those blessed feet helped her to remember the dangerous paths into which she had wandered; the sluices of grief were drawn up, and her soul flowed out in tears. O blessed Spirit of grace, we adore thee as we see the rock smitten and the waters gushing. "He causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow."

Note the woman's humility. She had once possessed a brazen face, and knew no bashfulness, but now she stands behind the Savior. She did not push herself in before his face; she was content to have the meanest standing-place. If she might not venture to anoint his head, yet, if she might do service to his feet, she blushed as she accepted the honor. Those who serve the Lord Jesus truly, have a holy bashfulness, a shrinking sense of their own unworthiness, and are content to fulfill the very lowest office in his household. That is no service for Christ when thou wouldst need ride the king's horse, and wear the king's garment, and have it said, "This is the man whom the king delighteth to honor." That is serving thyself rather than Christ, when thou covetest the chief place in the synagogue, and wouldst have men call thee Rabbi. But that is real service when thou canst care for the poor; when thou canst condescend to men of low estate, and become a teacher of the ignorant and an instructor of babes. He serves well who works behind his master's back, unknown and unperceived — toiling in the dark, unreported, unapplauded, and happy to have it so. See, beloved, how in a woman who was once so shameless, grace plants and makes to flourish the fair and modest flower of true humility.

Yet was the woman courageous, for she must have needed much courage to enter into a Pharisee's house. The look of a Pharisee to this woman must have been enough to freeze summer into howling winter. Those Pharisees had an insufferable contempt of everybody who was not of their own clique, who did not fast twice a week, and tithe their mint, anise, and cummin; they said, by every gesture, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." To a person of infamous character, the pompous Pharisee would be doubly contemptuous, and a woman conscious of unworthiness would be sorely wounded by his manners; besides, at a feast, her tears would be much out of place, and therefore she would be the more rudely rebuked; but how fearless she was, and how bravely she held her tongue when Simon railed! What will not men and women do when grace moves them to love, and love prompts them to courage! Ay, into the very jaws of hell the grace of God would make a believer dare to enter, if God commanded him. There is no mountain too high for a believing foot to scale, and no furnace too hot for a believing heart to bear. Let Rome and its amphitheatres, Piedmont and its snow, France and its galleys, Smithfield and its stakes, the Netherlands and their rivers of blood, all speak of what grace can do

when once it reigns in the heart, what heroes it can make of the very weakest and most timid of God's children, where it rules supreme.

I have said that in every part of this woman's action grace is honored, and it is so more especially in this respect, that what she did was practical. Hers was not pretense, but real and expensive service. The religion of some professors stops short at their substance; it costs them nothing, and, I fear, is worth nothing. They appear before the Lord empty. They buy no sweet cane with money, neither does the Lord receive the fat of their sacrifices. I must confess myself utterly at a loss to understand the piety of some people. I thank God I am not bound to understand it, and that I am not sent into the world to be a judge of my fellow creatures, but I do greatly wonder at the religion of many. There are to be found, and I have found them, persons whose love to Christ is of such a sort that they give to his cause the larger proportion of their substance, and do so gladly, thinking it a privilege; yea, I know some who pinch themselves — some of the poor and needy, who stint themselves that they may give to Christ. Such are doubtless blessed in the deed. I do not understand those men who have thousands upon thousands of pounds, perhaps hundreds of thousands, and profess to love Christ, and dole out their gifts to Jesus in miserable fragments. I must leave them to their Master, to be judged at the last, but I confess I do not understand them or admire them. If I did love Christ at all, I would love him so that I would give him all I could, and if I did not do that, I think I would say, "He is not worth it, and I will not be a sham professor. It is rank hypocrisy to profess love and then to act a miserly part. Let those who are guilty of it settle the account between God and their own souls. This woman's alabaster box was given freely, and if she had had more to give, she would have given it, after the spirit of that other woman, that memorable widow, who had two mites, which made a farthing, which were all her living, but she gave it all out of love to God. Grace reigns indeed with high control when it leads men who naturally would be selfish to practice liberality in the cause of the Redeemer. Let these gleanings suffice, the vintage of the fruits of grace is too great for us to gather it all this morning.

**3.** I would have you remark, in the third place, that grace is seen by attentive eyes in our Lord's acceptance of what this chosen vessel had to bring. Jesus knew her sin. The Pharisee wondered that Jesus did not shrink

from contact with her. You and I may wonder too. We sometimes feel it a task to have to commune with persons of a certain character even when they profess to repent: our Lord's sensitiveness of the guilt of sin was much keener than ours, yet he rested still upon the couch, and quietly accepted what she brought, permitted her the fond familiarity of kissing his feet again and again, and to bedew them with her tears — permitted all that, I say, and accepted all that, and herein made his grace to shine most brightly. Oh, that Jesus should ever accept anything of me, that he should be willing to accept my tears, willing to receive my prayers and my praises! We cheerfully accept a little flower from a child, but then the flower is beautiful, and we are not far above the child; but Jesus accepts from us that which is in its nature impure, and upbraids us not. O grace, how condescending thou art; see, believer, Jesus has heard thy prayers and answered them; he has blessed thy labors, given thee souls as thy reward, and at this moment that which is in thy heart to do for him he receives, and he raises no objection, but takes what thou bringest to him, takes it with joy. O grace, thou art grace indeed, when the offerings of unworthy ones become dear unto Jesus' heart.

**4.** Further, grace is displayed in this narrative when you see our Lord Jesus Christ become the defender of the penitent. Everywhere grace is the object of human cavil: men snap at it like evening wolves. Some attack it at the fountain head; they cannot endure the doctrine of election. Some professors almost foam at the mouth at the very mention of the word "predestination;" they cannot bear it, and yet it is God's truth, let them say what they will, and there shall it stand, let them kick against the pricks if they dare. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Would to God men would give up their rebellious questionings and bow before the King of kings. On this occasion, Simon cavilled at grace in that a sinful woman should be allowed to approach the Lord, he would have put her in quarantine at the least, if not in prison. Some object to grace in its perpetuity, they struggle against persevering grace; but others, like this Simon, struggle against the bounty of grace. How could such a woman as she was be permitted to draw so near to Christ? Certain captious spirits will demand, "How should Jesus give to such unworthy ones such acceptance, such manifestations of himself, such privileges?" Our Lord took upon himself to defend her, and

therefore she might well afford to hold her tongue. So shall it be with you. If Satan accuse you, and your enemies with loud-mouthed accusations cry out against you, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who will certainly plead your cause and clear you. Jesus by his defensive parable shows that he was justified in letting the woman approach, because great love prompted her. There was no sin in her approach, but much to commend, since her motive was excellent, and the motive is the true measure of a deed. She felt intense love and gratitude towards the person who had forgiven her; therefore, her acts were not to be forbidden, but commended. He justifies her and incidentally justifies himself. Had he not done well in having won a sinner's heart to penitence and love? Was not election justified in having chosen one to such holy devotedness and fervency? At the last great day, the Lord will justify his grace before the eyes of the whole universe, for he will allow the grace-wrought virtues of his chosen ones to be unveiled, and all eyes shall see that grace reigns through righteousness. Then shall they for ever be silenced who accused the grace of God of leading to licentiousness, for they shall see that in every case free forgiveness led to gratitude, and gratitude to holiness. The chosen shall be made choice men. Grace chose them notwithstanding all their deformities; but when it has cast about them a supernal beauty, they shall be the wonder and admiration of the universe, evidently made to be the noblest and best of mankind. Show me where grace ever created sin! You cannot, but lo, in what a manner has grace created holiness! It is not ashamed to let its chosen sheep appear before the great dividing Shepherd's throne, for of them all it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." Grace does not smuggle men into heaven, but brings them up to heaven's requirements through the Spirit and the blood.

**5.** Once more, my brethren, the grace of God is seen in this narrative in the bestowal of yet richer favors. Great grace saved her, rich grace encouraged her, unbounded grace gave her a divine assurance of forgiveness. It was proved that she was forgiven, for she loved much, but she had never received the full assurance of it. She was a hopeful penitent rather than a confirmed believer. But the Master said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;"

from that moment full assurance of faith must have occupied her soul. And then he gave her that choice dismissary benediction, “Go in peace,” by which the peace of God which passeth all understanding henceforth kept her mind, so that even when she had to go out of this world into the unknown realm, she heard in the midst of Jordan’s billows, the divine sentence, “Go in peace.” Ah! beloved, you know not what grace can do for you. God is not stinted in his grace. If he has lifted you up out of the miry clay he can do more, he can set your feet upon a rock. If on the rock you already stand, he can do more, he can put a new song into your mouth; and if already you lift the joyous hymn, he can do more yet, he can establish your goings. You do not know the exceeding bounty of your own heavenly Father yet. Unfathomable is his goodness. Arise and enjoy it. Behold the whole land is before you, from Dan unto Beersheba — all the provisions of the covenant of grace belong to you. Have but faith, and you shall yet comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Here, then, was grace in its object, grace in its fruit, grace in the acceptance of that fruit, grace in the defense which Jesus made of the gracious one, and grace in the blessings bestowed upon her. May grace deal thus bountifully with us.

**II.** We have but two or three moments left for what requires far more space, namely, LOVE. The word blossoms with roses, and suggests the voice of the turtle and the singing of birds. Our time, however, binds us to a narrow path, which we must not leave, although the beds of lilies on either hand invite us.

Love — its source: it bubbles up as a pure rill from the well-head of grace. She loved much, but it was because much had been forgiven. There is no such thing as mere natural love to God. The only true love which can burn in the human breast towards the Lord, is that which the Holy Ghost himself kindles. If thou truly lovest the God who made thee and redeemed thee, thou mayst be well assured that thou art his child, for none but his children have any love to him.

Its secondary cause is faith. The fiftieth verse tells us, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Our souls do not begin with loving Christ, but the first lesson is to trust. Many penitents attempt this difficult task; they aspire to reach

the stair-head without treading the steps; they would needs be at the pinnacle of the temple before they have crossed the threshold. First trust Christ for the pardon of thy sin: when thou hast done this, thy sins are forgiven, and then love shall flash to thy heart as the result of gratitude for what the Redeemer has done for thee. Grace is the source of love, but faith is the agent by which love is brought to us.

The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives, we should love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest hell, that Christ suffered what we ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquities, we should not be such coldhearted creatures as we are. We are perfectly monstrous in our want of love to Christ, but the true secret of it is a forgetfulness of our ruined and lost natural estate, and a forgetfulness of the sufferings by which we have been redeemed from that condition. O that our love might feed itself this day, and find a renewal of its strength in remembering what sovereign grace has done.

Love in the narrative before us shines in the fact that the service the woman rendered to our Lord was perfectly voluntary. No one suggested it, much less pressed it upon her. It takes the gloss off our service when we need to be dragged to it, or pushed forward by some energetic pleader. Brethren, the anointing was impromptu with her. Christ was there, and it was at her own suggestion that she anointed his feet. Mary of Bethany had not then set the example: the woman who was a sinner was an original in her service. In these days we have many inventors and discoverers for our temporal use and service, why should we not have inventors for Jesus who will bring out new projects of usefulness? We are most of us content to travel in the old rut, but if we had more love to Jesus we should be more eccentric, and should have a degree of freshness about our service which at present is all too rare. Lord, give us the love which can lead the way!

Her service to Jesus was personal. She did it all herself, and all to him. Do you notice how many times the pronoun occurs in our text? "She stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." She served Christ himself. It was neither service



to Peter, nor James, nor John, nor yet to the poor or sick of the city, but to the Master himself; and, depend upon it, when our love is in active exercise, our piety will be immediately towards Christ — we shall sing to him, pray to him, teach for him, preach for him, live to him. Forgetfulness of the personality of Christ takes away the very vitality of our religion. How much better will you teach, this afternoon, in your Sabbath-school class, if you teach your children for Christ! How much better will you go forth this evening to tell to others the way of salvation, if you go to do it for his sake! Then you court no man's smile — you fear no man's frown. It is enough for you that you have done it for the Master, and if the Master accepts it you have the reward in that very fact.

The woman's service showed her love in that it was fervent. There was so much affection in it — nothing conventional; no following chilly propriety, no hesitating enquiry for precedents. Why did she kiss his feet? Was it not a superfluity? What was the good of it? Did it not look sentimental, affected, sensuous, indelicate? Little did she care how it looked; she knew what she meant. She could not do otherwise. Her whole soul went out in love, she acted naturally as her heart dictated, and, brethren, she acted well. O for more of this guileless piety, which hurls decorum and regulation to the winds. Ah, throw your souls into the service of Christ; let your heart burn in his presence, and let all your soul belong to Jesus. Serve not your Master as though you were half asleep, do not work with drooping hands and half-closed eyes, but wake up the whole of your powers and passions: for such love as he has shown to you, give the most awakened and quickened love in return. O for more of this love! If I might only pray one prayer this morning, I think it should be that the flaming torch of the love of Jesus should be brought into every one of our hearts, and that all our passions should be set ablaze with love to him.

One thought more, and I am done. This woman's love is a lesson to us in the opportunity which she seized. She was evidently but just pardoned: she was rather a weeper than one who had learned to rejoice, and yet for all that, she would serve him at the first dawn of her spiritual life. Now, you young converts, no longer say, "We will do something for Christ in a few years' time, when we have made our calling and election sure; we will wait till we have grown in grace, and then try to do what we can." No, no,

but as soon as you are washed, bring your offering to Jesus. The very day of your conversion, enlist in his army, for speedy obedience is beautiful. Perhaps if this woman had lingered, she had never anointed the Lord at all; but in the hot flush of her first love, she did well to perform at once this zealous, fervent act. Young converts maintain, by God's grace, the warmth of the blood which circulates in the church's veins. Old churches generally become diseased churches when they cease to grow. I do not know a church in all England without conversions which is at all in a happy spiritual state. The fact is, the fresh comers stir us all up by their fervor, their simplicity, their childlike confidence. Now, beloved ones, we encourage you to show this. For our sakes, for your own sakes, for Christ's sake, do not hesitate — if there be anything you can do, though you are uneducated in the divine school, do it. Though there may be a dozen blunders in the method, yet do it, for Christ will accept it. The Pharisee may cavil — well, perhaps it may keep his tongue from other mischief — let him cavil, you can bear it, Christ will defend you, Jesus will accept you; and as a reward for doing what you can, he may be pleased to give you grace to do more, and may breathe over you a full assurance of faith, which had you been idle you might not for years have attained; and he may give you a peace of conscience in serving him which, had you sat still, might never have come to you. I beseech all of you who love Jesus, do not hide the light you have under a bushel, but come out and show it. If you have but a little faith, use it; if you have only a grain of faith, turn it to account. Put the one talent out at interest, and use it for the Master at once, and the Lord bless you in such a work, by increasing your faith and love, and making you to be as this woman was, a highly favored servant of this blessed Master. May the Lord give every one of you his blessing, for Jesus' sake.

# GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS

## SERMON NO. 802

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 12TH, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*  
— Acts 6:7.

CERTAIN things preceded this prosperity — the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church; some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavor to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who should distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightway the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. Well might great grace rest upon them all, for they loved each other with a pure heart fervently. Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there be divisions amongst you, and one shall say, “I am for this,” and another, “I am for that,” how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, should be present with you, and working among you? But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I

think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order, where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren conscientiously to disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a rent, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of any one that evening, contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us; surely he will bless us yet more abundantly than aforetime."

Moreover, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of eighty or ninety; in fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other, that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens. If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist churches met together to pray, I should have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be!" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday, and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless all our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? The Lord send prosperity. Amen, say we, amen

from our hearts. And amen we hope all God's saints will say. May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country; and, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? My dear brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth: fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability — their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that loved him. The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savor of Jesus Christ's name: our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of his grace shall be displayed. Keep together, brethren, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured for such churches as do not enjoy it now; secondly, we shall have a word or two upon the results of such prosperity; and then, thirdly, upon the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.

## I. What Are the Means by Which This Prosperity May Be Procured?

If we want to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. We must never begin our catalogue of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all thy quickening powers.”*

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon thee we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, there must be much plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck lately in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching about the gospel, but preaching the gospel. So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach “Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” And it was the same with Luther. Luther’s preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are ye saved, and by faith alone.” They spake this, and they spake it again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they labored with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; of

rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And, my brethren, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the gospel of Christ. We must keep to this. This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified! Look to him — not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church-goings or your chapel-goings, but to Christ Jesus exalted. Look to him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you his children, and for ever to glorify you with himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday School teachers, you must teach this same gospel. I know you do, but full many Sunday School teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way — "Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath; do not buy sweets on a Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to heaven"! — which is not true, and is not the gospel; for the same gospel is for little children as for grown-up men — not "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes, the

gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we must have much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to enquire this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well-skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands. As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king, and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that, though I hate heresy — I hope your majesty does not suspect me on that account — yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." Now, this was what made the gospel victorious in those days — the stern integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no grace and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind. Oh! to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practiced amongst professors that would have at once to be given up. As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all his power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And



why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it; you must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it. Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be holy living as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice, if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add individual, personal exertion. I am so full with one theme today, that if I plough in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it had got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticise it and pull it to pieces. But this was not orthodox; according to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valor and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But on a sudden they said in the council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home? We should be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armor be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no

province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armor once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it in practice.

Combined with this there must be much earnest prayer. The prayer of faith! have we not held it in high esteem, have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith — a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to this church in a month, ought we ever to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. I tell you, sirs, he can find ministers for his truth — ay, if he willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if he pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what he did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus.

He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell — the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God? The Lord can find his men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham;" and as he could then, so he can now. Let us not despair. If we will but pray for it, our heavenly Father will deny his children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase, and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? then we must all get more intense glowing spiritual life. Do you understand me. There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, with the sluggard —

*"You have woke me too soon, I must slumber again,"*

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality! Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! you are glad to get this second man to be your servant; he is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might

almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so. On the other hand, we see another kind of man — one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind; though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master; and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for him who has bought him with his precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord multiply the number of such; yea, may he make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself. It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other; wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring; the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth. If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I should preach indeed, and move your souls, I think. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the

thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work — the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

**II.** Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, The Results Which Flow from This Prosperity — souls are saved.

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for twelve months, in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless, that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength. Richard Knill once said, that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul. And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?

*“Let him be crowned with majesty,  
Who bowed his head in death,  
And let his praise be sounded high,  
By all things that have breath.”*

If you have not forgotten what he suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of his soul’s travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of his kingdom, the honor of his fame, the growing enthusiasm of his subjects — to make his excellency apparent, and his praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in

your prayers and your efforts, that the number of his disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be to build up the church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of his bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighborhood are thereby favoring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion, because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some object, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

**III.** But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, The Alternative Which I Think Stands Before This Church and Every Other Church.

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring. One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced; and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was — the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited; not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses, but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. “No,” the good deacon says, “you know our pew-rents keep up very well; we have not a seat to let in the gallery!”

“Ah!” and says the minister, “And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners; at least, if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them.” That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpus is left to rot as it may, and to decay as many churches do. Now, were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days; but speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be. You will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle; after I die you will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it. This is the tendency, however, of every church, it matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people have got to be too great for the gospel, and too proud to receive the truth in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen so long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit amongst us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity, which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly-coloured, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way; ay, and churches too, that were

once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then “of course” they must go to church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system; the love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together; he is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple truth. “Give me that,” says he, “and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I want it; but on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus; let me hear the story of the cross; let me see sinners led to Calvary — it is all I want, and I am well content if I have this.”

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder perhaps what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O ye unconverted women, it is about you that we are concerned. And you, ye unconverted men, it is about you that we are anxious; we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you, and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ. Now look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice, it is said that “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ. They were once the bigoted enemies of the gospel, but they became obedient to the faith. Why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived in immorality, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah! well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. A young woman wrote to me the other day — I do not know who she is, but she said, “I cannot tell



anybody, but I have done so-and-so, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it it would break her heart.” I do not know here, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she says, “Can I be saved?” Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the gospel, and yet sinned. Oh! well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are. Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at his feet. Trust him! Trust him! Do him the honor to believe that he can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been. Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe him; trust him, and he will be as good as ever you can think him to be; for when you think your highest thoughts of him, he is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost. The priests were obedient to the faith; why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved; why should not you be like them? Did you notice how it is described? They were “obedient to the faith.” Then it seems that the gospel is all summed up in that word “faith.” To be obedient to the faith; to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; to trust him because he has suffered in your stead; to believe that the divine justice is satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith. We sang at the Lord’s Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well: —

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

Yes, just as you are come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf. We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should

stand neglected, that his cross should be despised, that his blood should be trampled on. O come to him! He will not reject you. Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. Breathe a silent prayer to him now. Cast your soul upon him, sink or swim.

*“Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude,  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

But he can do it. Rely on him, and eternal life is yours.

Brethren and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it be our cry before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve him who served us even to the death. You will never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when constrained by the love of Christ, he said, “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church. The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us, the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times. Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether he will not hear you, and you shall find he will to your soul’s comfort. Amen.

# APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

## SERMON NO. 804

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5TH, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” — Acts 3:19.*

After the notable miracle of healing the lame man, when the wondering people clustered round about Peter and John, they were not at all at a loss for a subject upon which to address them. Those holy men were brimful of the gospel, and therefore they had but to run over spontaneously, speaking of that topic which laid nearest to their hearts. To the Christian minister it should never be difficult to speak of Christ; and in whatever position he may be placed, he should never have to ask himself, “What is an appropriate subject for this people?” for the gospel is always in season, always appropriate, and if it be but spoken from the heart, it will be sure to work its way. Turning to the assembled multitude, Peter began at once to preach to them the gospel without a single second’s hesitation. Oh! blessed readiness of a soul on fire with the Spirit, Lord, grant it to us evermore. Observe how earnestly Peter turns aside their attention from himself and his brother John to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” The object of the Christian minister should always be to withdraw attention from himself to his subject, so that it should not be said, “How well he spake!” but, “Upon what weighty matters he treated!” They are priests of Baal, who, with their gaudy dresses, and their pretensions to a mysterious power, would have you look to themselves as the channels of grace, as though by their priestcraft, if not by their holiness, they could work miracles; but they are true messengers of God who continually say, “Look not on us as though we could do anything: the

whole power to bless you lies in Jesus Christ, and in the gospel of his salvation.”

It is noteworthy that Peter, in addressing this crowd, came at once to the very essence and bowels of his message. He did not beat the bush; he did not shoot his arrow far afield, but he hit the very center of the target. He preached not merely the gospel of good news, but Christ, the person of Christ; Christ crucified — crucified by them, Christ risen, Christ glorified of his Father. Depend upon it, this is the very strength of the Christian ministry, when it is saturated with the name and person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Christ away, and you un-gospelise the gospel, you do but pour out husks such as swine do eat, while the precious kernel is removed, seeing you have taken away the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there was ever an occasion when a preacher of the gospel might have forgotten to speak of Christ, it was surely the occasion on which Peter spake so boldly of him. For, might it not have been said, “Talk not of Jesus; they have just now haled him to the death: the people are mad against him; preach the truth, but do not mention his name; deliver his doctrine, but withhold the mention of his person, for you will excite them to madness; you will put your own life in jeopardy; you will scarcely do good while they are so prejudiced, and you may do much mischief”? But, instead of this, let them rage as they would, Peter would tell them about Jesus Christ, and about nothing else but Jesus Christ. He knew this to be the power of God unto salvation, and he would not flinch from it; so to them, even to them, he delivered the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a pungency as well as a simplicity scarcely to be rivalled. Notice how he puts it: “Ye” have slain him; “ye” have crucified him; “ye” have preferred a murderer. He is not afraid of being personal; he does not shirk the touching of men’s consciences; he rather thrusts his hand into their hearts and make them feel their sin; he labours to open a window into the darkness of their spirits, to let the light of the Holy Ghost shine into their soul. Even thus, my brethren, when we preach the gospel, must we do: affectionately but graciously must we deal with men. Far hence be all trimming and mincing of matters. Accursed let him be that takes away from the gospel of Jesus Christ that he may win popular applause, or who bates his breath and smoothes his tongue that he may please the unholy throng. Such a man may have for a moment the approbation of fools, but,

as the Lord his God liveth, he shall be set as a target for the arrows of vengeance in the day when the Lord cometh to judge the nations. Peter, then, boldly and earnestly preached the gospel — preached the Christ of the gospel — preached it personally and directly at the crowd who were gathered around him.

Nor did Peter fail, when he had enunciated the gospel, to make the personal application by prescribing its peculiar commands. Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the gospel to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the gospel is, and of the result of dying unsaved, but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, “Believe,” or “Repent.” To this school Peter did not belong — into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now, he would not be joined. For, having first told his hearers of Christ, of his life and death and resurrection, he then proceeds to plunge the sword, as it were, up to the very hilt in their consciences by saying, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” There, I say, in that promiscuous crowd, gathered together by curiosity, attracted by the miracle which he had wrought, Peter felt no hesitation, and asked no question; he preached the same gospel as he would have preached to us today if he were here, and preached it in the most fervent and earnest style, preached the angles and the corners of it, and then preached the practical part of it, addressing himself with heart, and soul, and energy, to every one in that crowd, and saying, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Now there are four remarks which will make up the discourse of this morning, when they are enlarged.

**I.** And the first is this, that **THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED.** Of this our text is proof enough without our going afield for other instances. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one’s mind. It has been translated, “after-wit,” or “after-wisdom;” it is the man’s finding out that he was wrong, and rectifying his judgment. But although that be the meaning of the root, the word has come in scriptural use to mean a great deal more. Perhaps there is no better

definition of repentance than that which is given in our little children's hymnbook —

*“Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.”*

Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. Conversion, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to — a turning from sin, a turning to holiness — a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to heaven, from self to Jesus — a complete turning. The word here used, though translated in the English, “Repent and be converted,” is not so in the Greek; it is really, “Repent and convert,” or, rather, “Repent and turn.” It is an active verb, just as the other was. “Repent and turn.” When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him — I may compare that to repentance; but when he put on his garments, and was no longer naked and filthy, but was said to be clothed and in his right mind, I may compare that to conversion. When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and on a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was repentance. When he set out and left the far country, and went to his father's house, that was conversion. Repentance is a part of conversion. It is, perhaps, I may say, the gate or door of it. It is that Jordan through which we pass when we turn from the desert of sin to seek the Canaan of conversion. Regeneration is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is, a faith in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.

The apostle Peter, addressing the crowd, said to them, “Change your minds; be sorry for what you have done; forsake your old ways; be turned; become new men.” That was his message as I have now put it into other words.

Now, brethren, it has been said, and said most truly, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You do not need that I should stop to prove that doctrine. We have preached it to you a thousand times, and we are prepared to prove that if anything be taught in Scripture,

that is. There never was any genuine repentance in this world which was not the work of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose our Lord Jesus has gone on high: "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." All true conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost. You may rightly pray in the words of the prophet, "Turn thou us, and we shall be turned;" for until God turn us, turn we never shall; and unless he convert us, our conversion is but a mistake. Hear it as a gospel summons —

*"True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace which brings us nigh;  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."*

"And yet," say you, "and yet the apostle Peter actually says to us, 'Repent, and be converted!' That is, you tell us with one breath that these things are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then with the next breath you read the text, 'Repent, and be converted.'" "Ay, I do, I do, and thank God I have learned to do so. But you will say, "How reconcile you these two things?" I answer, it is no part of my commission to reconcile my Master's words: my commission is to preach the truth as I find it — to deliver it to you fresh from his hand. I not only believe these things to be agreeable to one another, but I think I see wherein they do agree, but I utterly despair of making the most of what is written in Scripture, and to accept it all, whether we can see the agreement of the two sets of truths or no — to accept them both because they are both revealed. With that hand I hold as firmly as any man living, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching that it is the duty of men to repent and to believe, and the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." If men will not receive truth till they understand it, there are many things which they never will receive. Ay, there are many facts, common facts in nature, which nobody would deny but a fool, which yet must be denied if we will not believe them till we understand them. There is a fish fresh taken from the sea: you take it to the cook to serve it on the table. You eat salt with it, do you? What for? You will have it dried and salted, but what for? Did not it always live in the salt sea? Why then is it not salt? It is as fresh as though it had lived in the purling brooks of the upland country — not a particle of salt about it — yet it has lived wholly in the salt sea! Do you understand

that? No, you cannot. But there it is, a fresh fish in a salt sea! And yonder are an ox and a sheep, and they are eating in the same meadow, feeding precisely on the same food, and the grass in one case turns to beef, in the other case to mutton, and on one animal there is hair and on the other wool. How is that? Do you understand it? So there may be two great truths in Scripture, which are both truths, and yet all the wise men in the world might be confounded to bring those two truths together. I do not understand, I must confess, why Moses was told to cut down a tree and put it in the bitter waters of Marah; I cannot see any connection between a tree and the water, so that the tree should make it sweet, but yet I do believe that when Moses put the tree into the water the bitterness of Marah departed, and the stream was sweet. I do not know why it is that Elisha, when he went to Jericho, and found the water nauseous, said "Bring me a cruse of salt;" I do not know why his putting the salt into the stream should make it sweet — it looks to me as if it would operate the other way; but I believe the miracle, namely, that the salt was put in, and that it was sweetened. So I do not understand how it is that my bidding impenitent sinners to repent should in any way be likely to make them do so, but I know it does — I see it every day. I do not know why a poor weak creature saying to his fellow men, "Believe," should lead them to believe, but it does so, and the Holy Spirit blesses it, and they do believe and are saved; and if we cannot see how, if we see the fact, we will be content and bless God for it. Perhaps you may be aware that an attempt has been made by ingenious expositors to get rid of the force of this text. Some of our Hyper-Calvinist friends, who are so earnest against anything like exhortations and invitations, have tried by some means to disembowel this text if they could, to take something out and put something else in; they have said that the repentance to which men are here exhorted is but an outward repentance. But how is it so, when it is added, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"? Does a merely outward repentance bring with it the blotting out of sin? Assuredly not. The repentance to which men are here exhorted is a repentance which brings with it complete pardon — "that your sins may be blotted out." And, moreover, it seems to me to be a shocking thing to suppose that Peter and John went about preaching up a hollow, outward repentance, which would not save men. My brethren who make that remark would themselves be ashamed to preach up outward repentance. I am sure they would think



they were not ministers of God at all if they preached up any merely outward virtue. It shows to what shifts they must be driven when they twist the Scriptures so horribly with so little reason. Brethren, it was a soul-saving repentance, and nothing less than that, which Peter commanded of these men. Now, let us come to the point. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in them to do so, for we know them to be dead in trespasses and sins; not because we depend upon any power in our earnestness or in our speech to make them do so, for we understand that our preaching is less than nothing apart from God; but because the gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Ghost operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live — while we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious energy makes his ankle-bones to receive strength — while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a divine power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out and the man is restored. The power lies not in the sinner, not in the preacher, but in the Holy Spirit, which works effectually with the gospel by divine decree, so that where the truth is preached the elect of God are quickened by it, souls are saved, and God is glorified. Go on, my dear brethren, preaching the gospel boldly, and be not afraid of the result, for, however little may be your strength, and though your eloquence may be as nought, yet God has promised to make his gospel the power to save, and so it shall be down to the world's end.

See then, ye that are unsaved, before I leave this point, see what it is we are bound to require of you this morning. It is, that ye repent and be converted. We are not satisfied with having your ear, nor your eyes; we are not content with having you gathered in the house of worship — it is all in vain that you have come here, except you repent and be converted. We are not come to tell you that you must reform a little, and mend your ways in some degree: except you put your trust in Christ, forsake your old way of life, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you must perish. This — nothing short of this — is the gospel requirement. No church-going, no chapel-going, will save you; no bowing of the knee, no outward form of worship, no pretensions and professions to godliness- ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and if ye do not this, neither

shall your sins be blotted out. Thus much, then, on the first point: the apostle commanded men to repent and be converted.

## **II.** In the second place, THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND.

The text says, “Repent ye therefore.” The apostle was logical: he had a reason for his exhortation. It was not mere declamation, but sound reasoning. “Repent ye therefore.” What, then, was the argument? Why, first, because you, like the Jews, have put Jesus Christ to death. This was literally true of the people to whom he spake: they had had a share in Christ’s execution. And this is spiritually true of you to whom I speak this morning. Every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God. Do you comprehend me? Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, so far as you can, put God out of his throne, and disown the authority which belongs to his Godhead; you do in intent, so far as you can, kill God. That is the drift of sin — sin is a God-killing thing. Every violation of law is treason in its essence — it is rebellion against the lawgiver. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree by sinners, sin only did then literally and openly what all sin really does in a spiritual sense. Do you understand me? Those offendings of yours which you have thought so little of, have been really a stabbing at the Deity. Will you not repent, if it be so? While you thought your sins to be mere trifles, light things to be laughed at, you would not repent; but now I have shown you (and I think your conscience will bear me out) that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world, that every sin is saying, “Let there be no God.” Oh! then there is cause enough to repent of it. Come hither and reason with me, thou who hast broken God’s law. Suppose the principle of thy disobedience were carried out to the full, would not all laws be disregarded, and moral government subverted? And why not, since what one may do another has clearly the same right to do? What, then, if the authority of God should be no more owned in the universe — where should we all be? What a hell above ground would this world become! What a moral chaos and den of beasts! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Repent and turn from it. If you can really believe this morning that though you did not nail Christ to the cross, nor plait the crown of thorns and put it on his head, nor stand and mock him there, yet that every sin is a real crucifixion of Christ, and a mockery

of Christ, and a slaughter of Christ. Then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it.

The apostle also used another argument, namely, that he whom they had slain was a most blessed person — one so blessed that God the Father had exalted him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of love to men; and yet men put him to death! Now, every sin is an insult against the good and kind God. God does not deserve that we should rebel against him. If he were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery, there might be some excuse for our sin, but when he acts like a tender father to us, supplying our wants day by day, and forgiving our offenses, it is a shame, a cruel shame, that we should live in daily revolt against him. You who have not believed in Christ, have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in him, seeing he is so good and kind. What hurt has he ever done you that you should curse at him? What injury has Jesus done to any one of you that you should despise him? You deny his Deity, perhaps; or, at any rate, you despise the great salvation which he came into this world to work out. Does he deserve this of you? Prince of life and glory, King of angels, the adored of seraphs, art thou despised of men for whom thy blood was shed? Oh, what an accursed thing, then, sin must be, since it treats so badly so kind and blessed a person! This ought to make us melt, this should make us shed the drops of pity and of grief; we ought, indeed, to turn from our idle and evil ways when against Jesus we have so offended.

Moreover, Peter used another plea, that while they had rejected the blessed Christ they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, thou hast despised Christ, and what is it thou hast chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Oh, what a bestial thing to prefer to Christ! Or has it been thy lust? What a devilish thing to set in the place of Christ! Man, what have thy sins done to thee that thou shouldst prefer them to Jesus? Have you lived in them for years? then what wages have you had? what profit have you had? Tell me now, you that have gone the farthest in sin, tell me now, are you satisfied with the service? Would you wish to go over again the days you have lived, and to reap in your own bodies the fruit of your misdeeds? Nay, but you serve a hard master; a murderer from the beginning is that devil to whom you surrender your lives. Oh, then, this is a thing to be repented of — that you have cast Christ away, but have chosen a

murderer. "Not this man," say you, "but Barabbas." You will take this murderous world, this killing sin, but the blessed Savior, you let him go. Is not there good argument here for repentance and conversion? Surely there is.

Peter clenches his reasoning with another argument, bringing down, if I may so say, the big hammer this time upon the head of the nail. It is this, that the Lord Christ, whom you have hitherto despised, is able to do great things for you. "His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know." Christ then, by faith in him, is able to do for you all that you want. If you will trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out; the past shall not be remembered; the present shall be rendered safe, and the future blessed. If thou trustest in Christ, there is no sin which he will not forgive thee, no evil habit the power of which he will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which he cannot remove. Believing in him, he can make thee blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that thou shouldst have slighted one who can do thee so much good? With hands loaded with love he stands outside the door of your heart. Is not this good reason for opening the door and letting the heavenly stranger in, when he can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction? What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the heaven which shall be yours if you will have my Master? Will you choose the doom from which none but he can rescue you, and let go the glory to which none but he can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is indeed abundant cause for repentance that you should not have closed with him long ago, and accepted him to be your all in all. Thus you see the apostle argued with them by that word "Therefore."

There was one other plea which he used, which I would employ this morning. He said, "Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." As if he would say, "Now that ye have more light, repent of what you did in the dark." So might I say to some here present. You had not heard the gospel, you did not know that sin was so bad a thing, you did not understand that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost them that came unto God by him. Well, now you do understand it. The times of your ignorance God winks at, but now, "commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Greater light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to

your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you; for if you do in the light what once you did in the darkness, he who winked at you when you knew no better, may lift his hand, and swear that you shall never enter into his rest, because you sinned presumptuously, and did despite to the Spirit of his grace. I charge every unconverted man here to mind what he is at in future. If he did not know that Jesus was able to save him before, he knows it now; if he was in the dark till this morning, he is not in the dark any longer. "Now ye have no cloak for your sin." Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the light, I say as Peter did, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

**III.** But now, our third remark shall be given with brevity, and it is this, **THAT WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION, SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED.**

The expression used in the text, "blotted out," in the original may be better explained in this way. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets of wax, they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil, and just flattened down the wax, and the account entirely disappeared. That was the form of "blotting out" in those days. Now, he that repents and is pardoned, is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven, that there is no record of his sin left. It is as though the stylus had levelled the marks in the wax, and there was no record left. What a beautiful picture of the forgiveness of sin! It is all gone, not a trace left. If we blot out an account from our books, there is the blot: the record is gone, but there is the blot; but on the wax tablet there was no blot — it was all gone, and the wax was smooth. So is it with the sin of God's people when removed by Jesus' blood, it is all gone and gone for ever. But rest assured it cannot be removed except there be repentance and conversion as the result of faith in Jesus. This must be so, for this is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? Where is the honor and dignity of the throne of God, if men are to be pardoned while as yet they will not confess their sin? In the next place, it would not be moral; it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them. What, a thief pardoned and continue to thief! A harlot forgiven and remain unchaste!

The drunkard forgiven and yet delight in his tankards! Truly, then, the gospel would be the servant of unrighteousness, and against us who preach it morality should make a law. But it is not so, impenitent sinners shall be damned, let them boast what they will about grace. My hearer, thou must hate thy sin, or God will hate thee. Thou must turn or burn. Thou canst not have thy sins and go to heaven. Which shall it be? Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or hold thy sins and go to hell? Which shall it be, for it must be one or the other; there must be a divorce between us and sin, or there cannot be a marriage between us and Christ. Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, "You can hope to be saved and yet live as you list." Some have said this — I query if any have believed it. No, no, no, blind as conscience is, and though its voice be often very feeble, yet there is enough of sight about conscience to see that continuance in sin and pardon cannot consist, and that there must be a forsaking of iniquity if there is to be a forgiving of it. But, my hearer, whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says it; "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy," but there is no promise for the unrepenting. God declares that he that repents shall be forgiven. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" but for haughty Pharaoh, who says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" there is nothing but eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. He who goeth on in his iniquity and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Ah! I have no pardons to preach to you who settle your minds to continue in sin, no gentle notes of love at all, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. But ah! if you loathe your sins, if God's Holy Spirit has made you hate your past lives, if you are anxious to be made new men in Christ Jesus, I have nothing but notes of love for you. Believe in Jesus, cast yourself on him, for he has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The door is shut and fast bolted to every man who will keep his sin, but it is wide open even to the biggest sinner out of hell, if he will not leave his sin and lay hold of Jesus and put his trust in him.

**IV.** The last remark is this — REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE

FUTURE, for my text says, “That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

A very difficult passage indeed. Its meaning is scarcely known. Three or four meanings have been attached to it. In the first place, I think it means this — he that repents and is converted, shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. After a man has been thoroughly broken down on account of sin, God deals with him very tenderly. Amongst the very happiest parts of human life are the hours immediately after conversion. You know how we sing —

*“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?”*

When the broken bone begins to heal, David puts it, “Thou makest the bones which thou hast broken to rejoice.” When the prisoner first gets out of prison, when the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground! when the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty, and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ! But you do not know, and cannot tell how sweet it is to be washed in the precious blood, and wrapped about with the fair white linen, and to have the kiss of the heavenly Father on your cheek! O “repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Perhaps these “times of refreshing” may also relate to times of revival in the Christian church. The only way in which you, dear friends, can share in the refreshment of a revival, is by your own repenting and being converted. A revival is a great refreshment to the church. I pray that a mighty wave may sweep over Great Britain, for much we need it. But of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a corpse — it can bring no genial warmth therewith. If you repent, and be converted, then, amidst the general joy of the revival, you shall have this joy, that your sins have been blotted out. What a mournful cry is that, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” I think I hear that cry from some in the Tabernacle this morning. Oh, that blessed month of February and the beginning of March!

It was to us like a harvest and a summer. What prayers, what tears, what cries! How full this house was to pray! How all day long from before the daystar shone til long after sunset we continued in prayer! But you are not saved, some of you. The harvest and the summer is ended, and you are not saved. Ah! I have been praying to God that you may yet be saved now. I am unable to achieve a purpose which has been hot upon my heart — to go and preach to a greater congregation in the Agricultural Hall during the next month: I find myself restrained by the Master's hand. Ill-health has returned to me, and most probably there are months of weariness and pain awaiting me; but I have prayed that if I may not cast the net in the greater place, I may have the more of you here. We cannot have a larger congregation, but I would fain have more conversions. It is hard preaching, it is dull working, unless there be results. We must have conversions. As that woman of old said, "Give me children or I die," so is it with the preacher: he must have sinners saved, or he prays to die. Dear hearer, if these times of refreshing may come, our prayer is that you may repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and so may partake to the full in the priceless blessings of the season.

Once more, the text means, according to the context, the second advent. Jesus is yet to come a second time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall his coming be. His church shall revive and be refreshed; she shall once again lift up her head from her lethargy, and her body from her sepulcher. But woe unto you who are not saved when Christ cometh, for the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you. When Christ cometh to the unconverted, "the day shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi." Oh, if ye repent and be converted, ye shall stand fully absolved in the day of his coming, when heaven and earth do reel, when the solid rock begins to melt, and the stars, like fig-leaves withered, fall from the tree, when the trumpet sounds exceeding loud and long, "Awake, ye dead and come to judgment," when the grand assize is sitting, and the Judge shall be there — the Judge of quick and dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked. The Lord have mercy upon you in that day; and so he shall if his grace shall make



you obedient to the words of our text, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

# THE APPROACHABLENESS OF JESUS

## SERMON NO. 809

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 3RD, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.”  
— Luke 15:1.*

THE MOST depraved and despised classes of society formed an inner ring of hearers around our Lord. I gather from this that he was a most approachable person, that he was not of repulsive manners, but that he courted human confidence and was willing that men should commune with him.

Upon that one thought I shall enlarge, this evening, and may the Holy Spirit make it a loadstone to draw many hearts to Jesus. Eastern monarchs affected great seclusion, and were wont to surround themselves with impassable barriers of state. It was very difficult for even their most loyal subjects to approach them. You remember the case of Esther, who, though the monarch was her husband, yet went with her life in her hand when she ventured to present herself before the king Ahasuerus, for there was a commandment that none should come unto the king except they were called, at peril of their lives. It is not so with the King of kings. His court is far more splendid; his person is far more worshipful; but you may draw near to him at all times without let or hindrance. He hath set no men-at-arms around his palace gate. The door of his house of mercy is set wide open. Over the lintel of his palace gate is written, “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

Even in our own days great men are not readily to be come at. There are so many back stairs to be climbed before you can reach the official who might have helped you, so many subalterns to be parleyed with, and servants to be passed by, that there is no coming at your object. The good men may be affable enough themselves, but they remind us of the old Russian fable of the hospitable householder in a village, who was willing enough to help all the poor who came to his door, but he kept so many big dogs loose in his yard that nobody was able to get up to the threshold, and therefore his personal affability was of no service to the wanderers. It is not so with our Master. Though he is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, he has been pleased to put out of the way everything which might keep the sinner from entering into his halls of gracious entertainment. From his lips we hear no threatenings against intrusion, but hundreds of invitations to the nearest and dearest intimacy. Jesus is to be approached, not now and then, but at all times, and not by some favored few, but by all in whose hearts his Holy Spirit has enkindled the desire to enter into his secret presence.

The philosophical teachers of our Lord's day affected very great seclusion. They considered their teachings to be so profound and eclectic that they were not to be uttered in the hearing of the common multitude. "Far hence, ye profane," was their scornful motto. Like Simon Stylites, they stood upon a lofty pillar of their fancied self-conceit, and dropped down now and then a stray thought upon the vulgar herd beneath, but they did not condescend to talk familiarly with them, considering it to be a dishonor to their philosophy to communicate it to the multitude. One of the greatest philosophers wrote over his door, "Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter here;" but our Lord, compared with whom all the wise men are but fools, who is, in fact, the wisdom of God, never drove away a sinner because of his ignorance, never refused a seeker because he was not yet initiated, and had not any thirsty spirit to be chased away from the crystal spring of truth divine. His every word was a diamond, and his lips dropped pearls, but he was never more at home than when speaking to the common people, and teaching them concerning the kingdom of God.

You may thus contrast and compare our Lord's gentle manners with those of kings, and nobles, and sages, but you shall find none to equal him in condescending tenderness. To this attractive quality of our Lord I intend,

this evening, as God shall help me, to ask your earnest attention. First, let us prove it; secondly, illustrate it; and, thirdly, enforce or improve it.

**I.** First, let us PROVE THE APPROACHABLENESS OF CHRIST, though it really needs no proof, for it is a fact which lies upon the surface of his life.

**1.** You may see it conspicuously in his office. Those offices are too many for us to take them all tonight. We will just cull a handful; say three. Our Lord Jesus is said to be the Mediator between God and man. Now, observe, that the office of mediator implies at once that he should be approachable. A daysman, as Job says, is one who can put his hand upon both; but if Jesus will not familiarly put his hand on man, certainly he is no daysman between God and man. A mediator is not a mediator of one — he must be akin to both the parties between whom he mediates. If Jesus Christ shall be a perfect mediator between God and man, he must be able to come to God so near that God shall call him his fellow, and then he must approach to man so closely that he shall not be ashamed to call him brother. This is precisely the case with our Lord. Do think of this, you who are afraid of Jesus. He is a mediator, and as a mediator you may come to him. Jacob's ladder reached from earth to heaven, but if he had cut away half-a-dozen of the bottom rounds, what would have been the good of it? Who could ascend by it into the hill of the Lord? Jesus Christ is the great conjunction between earth and heaven, but if he will not touch the poor mortal man who comes to him, why then, of what service is he to the sons of men? You do need a mediator between your soul and God; you must not think of coming to God without a mediator; but you do not want any mediator between yourselves and Christ. There is a preparation for coming to God — you must not come to God without a perfect righteousness; but you may come to Jesus without any preparation, and without any righteousness, because as mediator he has in himself all the righteousness and fitness that you require, and is ready to bestow them upon you. You may come boldly to him even now; he waits to reconcile you unto God by his blood.

Another of his offices is that of priest. That word "priest" has come to smell very badly nowadays; but, for all that, it is a very sweet word as we find it in Holy Scripture. The word "priest" does not mean a gaudily-dressed pretender, who stands apart from other worshippers within the

gate, two steps higher than the rest of the people, who professes to have power to dispense pardon for human sin, and I know not what beside. The true priest was truly the brother of all the people. There was no man in the whole camp so brotherly as Aaron. So much were Aaron and the priests who succeeded him the first points of contact with men, on God's behalf, that when a leper had become too unclean for anybody else to draw near to him, the last man who touched him was the priest. The house might be leprous, but he talked with him, and examined him, the last of Israel's tribes who might be familiar with the wretched outcast; and if afterwards that diseased man was cured, the first person who touched him must be a priest. "Go, show thyself to the priest," was the command, to every recovering leper; and until the priest had entered into fellowship with him, and had given him a certificate of health, he could not be received into the Jewish camp. The priest was the true brother of the people, chosen from among themselves, at all times to be approached; living in their midst, in the very center of the camp, ready to make intercession for the sinful and the sorrowful. So is it with our Lord. I read just now, in your hearing, that he can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Surely, you will never doubt that if Jesus perfectly sustains the office of priest, as he certainly does, he must be the most approachable of beings, approachable by the poor sinner, who has given himself up to despair, whom only a sacrifice can save; approachable by the foul harlot who is put outside the camp, whom only the blood can cleanse; approachable by the miserable thief who has to suffer the punishment of his crimes, whom only the great High Priest can absolve. No other man may care to touch you, O trembling outcast, but Jesus will. You may be separated from all of human kind, justly and righteously, by your iniquities, but you are not separated from that great friend of sinners who at this very time is willing that publicans and sinners should draw near unto him.

As a third office let me mention that the Lord Jesus is our Savior; but I see not how he can be a Savior unless he can be approached by those who need to be saved. The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side when the bleeding man lay in the road to Jericho; they were not saviors, therefore, and could not be, but he was the savior who came to know where the man was, stooped over him, and took wine and oil and poured

them into the gaping fissures of his wounds, and lifted him up with tender love and set him on his own beast, and led him to the inn. He was the true savior; and, O sinner, Jesus Christ will come just where you are, and your wounds of sin, even though they are putrid, shall not drive him away from you. His love shall overcome the nauseating offensiveness of your iniquity, for he is able and willing to save such as you are. I might mention many other of the offices of Christ, but these three will suffice. Certainly if the Spirit blesses them, you will be led to see that Jesus is not hard to reach.

**2.** Consider a few of his names and titles. Frequently Jesus is called the “Lamb.” Blessed name! I do not suppose there is any one here who was ever afraid of a lamb; that little girl yonder, if she saw a lamb, would not be frightened. Every child seems almost instinctively to long to put its hand on the head of a lamb. O that you might come and put your hand on the head of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

*“Oh see how Jesus trusts himself  
Unto our childish love,  
As though by his free ways with us  
Our earnestness to prove!  
His sacred name a common word  
On earth he loves to hear;  
There is no majesty in him  
Which love may not come near.”*

Again, you find him called a Shepherd: no one is afraid of a shepherd. If you were travelling in the East, and you saw Bedouins or Turkish soldiery in the distance, you might be alarmed; but if some one said, “Oh, it is only a few shepherds,” you would not be afraid of them. The sheep are not at all timid when near the shepherd. O poor wandering sheep, you, perhaps, have come to be afraid of Christ, but there is no reason why you should be, for this heavenly Shepherd says, “I will seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

*“See Israel’s gentle Shepherd stands With all engaging charms.”*

Timid, foolish, and wandering though you may be, there is nothing in the good Shepherd to drive you away from him, but everything to entice you to come to him. Then, again, he is called our Brother, and one always feels

that he may approach his brother. I have no thought of trouble or distress which I would hesitate to communicate to my brother here, for he is so good and kind. I do not think I could be in any trouble which I should not expect him to do his best to help me out of. I never feel that there is any distance between him and me, nor do you, I hope, feel so with regard to your brothers. Even so, is it with this Brother born for adversity. Believer, how is it that you are sometimes so backward and so cold towards Jesus? Christ is approachable.

*“The light of love is round his feet,  
His paths are never dim;  
And he comes nigh to us when we  
Dare not come nigh to him.”*

You need not think that your troubles are too trifling to bring to him; he has an open ear for the little daily vexations of life. Brethren, you can come to the good elder Brother at all hours; and when he blames you for coming, let me know. He is called, too, a Friend; but he would be a very unfriendly friend who could not be approached by those he professed to love. If my friend puts a hedge around himself, and holds himself so very dignified that I may not speak with him, I would rather be without his friendship; but if he be a genuine friend, and I stand at his door knocking, he will say, “Come in, and welcome; what can I do for you?” Such a friend is Jesus Christ. He is to be met with by all needy, seeking hearts.

**3.** There is room enough for enlargement here, but I have no time to say more, therefore I will give you another plea. Recollect his person. The person of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims this truth with a trumpet voice. I say his person, because he is man, born of woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, but if he were God only, you might well stand at a distance, and shudder at the splendor of his majesty. But he is man as well as God, and so it comes to pass, as Dr. Watts puts it —

*“Till God in human flesh I see,  
 My thoughts no comfort find;  
 The holy, just, and sacred Three  
 Are terrors to my mind.  
 But if Immanuel’s face appear,  
 My hope, my joy begins;  
 His name forbids my slavish fear,  
 His grace removes my sins.”*

When I see Christ in the manger where the horned ox fed, or hanging on a woman’s breast, or obedient to his parents, or “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” a poor man without a place whereon to lay his head, then I feel that I can freely come to him. Think of him as being precisely such as you are, in all and everything except sin, and then you will never have a thought that he will chide you for drawing near, or drive you away when you venture to supplicate him. But I want especially to say to you that if you could but see my Master’s person as he was when here on earth, you would have henceforth and for ever the thought that you might not come to him expelled from your mind. I know not what may have been his beauties, or what may have been the appearance of his lovely countenance, but of this I am persuaded, that if he could but come here tonight, and I could vacate this platform for him whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose, you who groan under a sense of unworthiness would not run away. If Moses stood here with his flaming countenance, you would shade your eyes, and ask that if you must look upon him he might wear a veil; but if Christ were here, oh! how you longing seeking ones would gaze upon him! There would be no drooping of the eyelids, no covering of the face, no alarm, no anguish — his face is too sweet for that. And if the Master should walk down the aisles, the most timid of you would long to touch the hem of his garment and to kiss the floor whereon he had set his feet. I know you would not fear to look into that face. And then that voice, how would you be charmed, you poor trembling seekers, if you heard him say, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;” you would discover such meekness and lowliness in him, that you would not think of starting back. Oh! if your eyes could but see him, I feel persuaded that, graciously drawn by his charms, your hearts would hasten to him. Well, believer, come to him, come to him; come close to him. Come with your troubles and tell him all about them. Come with your sins and ask to have them washed away anew.



*“Let us be simple with him, then,  
Not backward, stiff, or cold,  
As though our Bethlehem could be  
What Sinai was of old.”*

And you, poor trembling sinner, come to him; come to him now, for he has said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Oh! if your eyes were opened to behold him, you would perceive that the glory of his person lies not in the splendor which repels, but in the majesty which divinely attracts.

**4.** If this suffice not, let me here remind you of the language of Christ, He proclaims his approachability in such words as these, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Ye horny-handed sons of toil, ye smiths and carpenters, ye ploughers and diggers, come unto me, yea, come all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” He invites men to come; he pleads with them to come; and when they will not come he gently upbraids them with such words as these, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” And, again, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” It is not “I would not,” but “ye would not.” Why, the whole of Scripture in its invitations, may be said to be the language of Christ, and therein you find loving, pleading words of this kind, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” All our blessed Lord’s sermons were so many loving calls to poor aching hearts to come and find what they needed in him. I pray that the Holy Spirit may give an effectual call to many of you tonight. It would glad the heart of the Redeemer in the skies if you would come to him for salvation, for you may come, since there is no barrier between you and the Savior of men. What is it keeps you back? I repeat it with tears, what is it keeps you back?

The old proverb truly saith that “actions speak louder than words,” and therefore let us review the general ways and manners of the Redeemer. You may gather that he is the most approachable of persons from the actions of his life. He was always very busy, and busy about the most important of matters, and yet he never shut the door in the face of any applicant. Her Majesty’s cabinet have to discuss most important political matters just now, but compared with the work which filled the Savior’s hands and heart, their discussions are mere trifles. Our Master might well have claimed seclusion, but he did not. He sought it but he found none, save only at midnight, when he watched and prayed. No sort of appeal for audience did Jesus frown upon. There were certain mothers in the land, poor simple-minded women, and they took it into their heads one day that they would like to have the Master’s hands put upon the heads of their little ones. So they came, bringing their boys and girls, but some of the disciples said, “The Master must not be disturbed by children; go ye your ways, and take your children back.” But what said he? How different from his followers! he rebuked their harshness, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” You see he is a child’s friend. Dear young people, think of that. Jesus does not drive you away, but though he is so great and glorious that all the angels of God worship him, yet he stoops to hear the prayers and praises of little children. Seek him now, for those who seek him early shall find him. Let me tell you another story. There was a woman in the city who was a sinner. You know the meaning, the dark sad meaning of that title in her case; I need not explain that. Poor soul! Her sin had caused her to be despised and shunned by everyone, but she had been forgiven, and in gratitude she poured the precious ointment on her beloved Savior’s feet, and then wiped them with the hairs of her head; and when the Pharisee Simon would have had her rebuked, the loving Master said, “She loves much because she has had much forgiven.” He is approachable by all, then, even by the worst; even the harlot need not fear to draw near to him — his touch can make her pure. I have noted one thing in Christ’s life, and noted it with delight. Our Lord was always preaching, and he often grew weary, as we do, and therefore he wanted a little retirement, but the multitude came breaking in upon his solitude, following him on foot when he had sailed away to escape them; this was troublesome, and to us it would have been irritating, yet he never uttered an angry, fretful syllable. There was no

rest for him, because of the eager crowd; but did he ever say, “How these people tease me; how they worry me”? No, never; his big heart made him forget himself. He was approachable to all at all hours; even his meals were disturbed, but he was gentle towards those thoughtless intruders. Not once was he harsh and repulsive. His whole life proves the truth of the prophecy, “The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench.” He graciously receives the weak and the feeble ones who come to him, and sends none empty away.

**6.** But, if you want the crowning argument, look yonder. The man who has lived a life of service, at last dies a felon’s death! Look upon his head girt with the crown of thorns! Mark well his cheeks whence they have plucked off the hair! See the spittle from those scornful mouths, staining his marred countenance! Mark the crimson rivers which are flowing from his back where they have scourged him! See his hands and his feet which are pierced with the nails, and from which ensanguined rills are flowing! Look to that face so full of anguish, listen to his cry, “I thirst, I thirst;” and as you see him there expiring, can you think that he will spurn the seeker? As you see him turn his head and say to the dying thief by his side, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise,” you dare not belie him so much as to deem that you may not come to him. You will outrage your reason if you start back from Jesus crucified. The cross of Christ should be the hope, the anchorage of faith. You may come, sinner, black, vile, hellish sinner, you may come and have life even as the dying thief had it when he said, “Lord, remember me.”

*“There is life in a look at the crucified One.”*

Surely, you need not be afraid to come to him who went to Calvary for sinners. Why linger? Why hesitate? Why those blushes, sobs, and tears?

*“Why art thou afraid to come,  
And tell him all thy case?  
He will not pronounce thy doom,  
Nor frown thee from thy face.  
Wilt thou fear Immanuel?  
Or dread the Lamb of God,  
Who, to save thy soul from hell,  
Has shed his precious blood?”*

Did I hear a whisper, did anybody say that Christ is now in heaven, and that he may have changed? Ah, groundless insinuation! Do you know what he is doing in heaven at this moment? He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. What a help that is to those who are coming to him! This repentance is the greatest want of coming sinners, and he from the skies supplies it. Moreover, “he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” His occupation in the skies is to plead for those sinners whom he redeemed with his blood, and hence he is able to save them unto the uttermost. Since he is the intercessor for souls, there is no reason why you should start back, but every reason why you should boldly come to the throne of the heavenly grace, because you have a High Priest who is passed into the heavens.

*“Compell’d by bleeding love,  
Ye wandering sheep draw near;  
Christ calls you from above —  
His charming accents hear!  
Let whosoever will now come,  
In mercy’s breast there still is room.”*

Here I leave this part of the subject. Some of you little know how heavily this sermon is hanging on my mind. I preach my very soul to you this day. I wish I knew how to preach so as to win some of you for my Lord, this evening; I should be glad to go even to the school of affliction if I might learn to preach more successfully. But I can do no more. May the Eternal Spirit, in answer to the prayers of his people, which I hope are going up now, be pleased to make you feel the sweet attractions of the cross of Christ, and may you come to him, so that it may be said again tonight, “Then drew near unto him publicans and sinners.”

**II.** I now shall proceed, with as great brevity as I can command, To ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT TRUTH.

I illustrate it, in the first place, by the way which Christ opens up for sinners to himself. What is the way for a sinner to come to Christ? It is simply this — the sinner, feeling his need of a Savior, trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the perplexity of my boyhood, but it is so simple now. When I was told to go to Christ, I thought “Yes, if I knew where he was, I would go to him — no matter how I wearied myself, I would trudge on till I found him.” I never could understand how I could get

to Christ till I understood that it is a mental coming, a spiritual coming, a coming with the mind. The coming to Jesus which saves the soul is a simple reliance upon him, and if, tonight, being sensible of your guilt, you will rely upon the atoning blood of Jesus, you have come to him, and you are saved. Is he not, then, approachable indeed, if there is so simple a way of coming? No good works, ceremonies, or experiences are demanded, a childlike faith is the royal road to Jesus.

This truth is further illustrated by the help which he gives to coming sinners, in order to bring them near to himself. He it is who first makes them coming sinners. It is his Eternal Spirit who draws them unto himself. They would not come to him of themselves, they are without desires towards him, but it is his work to cast secret silken cords around their hearts, which he draws with his strong hand, and brings them near to himself. Depend upon it, he will never refuse those whom he himself draws by his Spirit. Rest assured he will never shut the door in the face of any soul that comes to feed at the gospel banquet, moved to approach by the power of his love. He said once, "Compel them to come in," but he never said, "Shut the door in their faces and bolt them out."

I might further illustrate this to the children of God, by reminding you of the way in which you now commune with your Lord. How easy it is for you to reach his ear and his heart! A prayer, a sigh, a tear, a groan, will admit you into the King's chambers. You may be in a very sad frame of mind, but when you come to him, how soon he makes your soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Dark may be your midnight, but as soon as you draw nigh to him your night is over. "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." While he acts thus with you, the sinner may very well believe that he will receive him too.

The approachableness of Christ may also be seen in the fact of his receiving the poor offerings of his people. The very holiest deeds which you and I can do for Christ are poor and faulty at the best. As I sat studying at my table last night, there was before me a little withered flower — a sprig of wall-flower — which has been lying for some weeks on my table. It comes from a very, very poor child of God, many miles away, who gets a blessing from reading my sermons, and she has nothing in the world besides to give me, but she sends me this flower, and I value it

because it is a token of Christian affection and gratitude. So is it with our Master. The very best sermons that we preach, and the largest contributions we give to his treasury, are only just like that poor little withered wall-flower; but the Master puts our service in his bosom, and keeps it there, and thinks much of it because he loves us. Does not that prove how generous, how condescending, how tender he must be? Believe him to be so, ye fearful souls, and come to him.

The ordinances wear upon their forefront the impress of an ever approachable Savior. Baptism in outward type sets forth our fellowship with him in his death, burial, and resurrection — what can be nearer than this? The Lord's Supper in visible symbol invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood: this reveals to us most clearly how welcome we are to the most intimate intercourse with Jesus. The heaven of heavens shall afford us yet another illustration. There are tens of thousands now in the skies who came to Jesus just as they were, in all the filth and deshabelle of the lost estate, and he received every one of them into his heart of love and arms of power. There are many thousands on earth, there are some thousands now in this Tabernacle, who can testify that they have found Jesus to be a very tender and generous friend. Now, if he has received us, why should he not receive you? Be encouraged to believe that inasmuch as he has received others he has open arms for you also.

Let me joyfully remind you that Jesus never has rejected a seeking sinner. There is not to be found in all the kingdoms of the universe a single instance of a sincere seeker after Christ being cast away, and there never shall be, for he hath not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain," but he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Beloved, if there had been a single soul cast away we should have known of it by now. It is eighteen hundred and sixty-eight years now, and if a solitary penitent had been rejected, we should have heard of it before now, for I will tell you of one who would have spread it abroad, and that is the devil. If he could get a single instance of a soul who had repented and trusted Christ, but found that Christ would have nothing to do with him, it would be a standing scandal against the cross which Satan would delight to publish. I know, poor sinners, what the devil will tell you when you are coming to Christ — he will describe Jesus as a hard master, but do you tell

him he is a liar from the beginning, and a murderer, and that he is trying to murder your soul by making you swallow his poisonous lies.

**III.** In the third place, we come TO ENFORCE THIS TRUTH; or, as the old Puritans used to say, improve it.

The first enforcement I give is this: let those of us who are working for the Master in soul-winning, try to be like Christ in this matter, and not be, as some are apt to be, proud, stuck-up, distant, or formal. Oh, dear, dear! the lofty ministerial airs that one has seen assumed by men who ought to have been meek and lowly. What a grand set of men some of the preachers of the past age thought themselves to be! I trust those who played the archbishop have nearly all gone to heaven, but a few linger among us who use little grace and much starch. The grand divines never shook hands with anybody, except, indeed, with the deacons, and a little knot of evidently superior persons. Amongst Dissenters it was almost as bad as it is in most church congregations, where you feel that the good man, by his manner, is always saying, "I hope you know who I am, Sir; I am the rector of the parish." Now, all that kind of stuck-upishness is altogether wrong. No man can do good in that way; and no good at all comes of assuming superiority and distance. The best teacher for boys is the man who can make himself a boy; and the best teacher for girls is the woman who can make herself a girl among girls. I often regret that I have so large a congregation; you will say, "Why?" Why, when I had a smaller congregation at Park Street, there were too many even then, but I did get a shake of the hand sometimes; but now there are so many of you that I scarcely know you, good memory as I have, and I seldom have the pleasure of shaking hands with you — I wish I did. If there is anybody in the wide world whose good I wish to promote, it is yours; therefore I wish to be at home with you: and if ever I should affect the airs of a great man, and set myself above you all, and separate myself by proud manners from your sympathy, I hope the Lord will take me down and make me right again. We may expect souls to be saved when we do as Christ did, namely, get publicans and sinners to draw near to us. Now, that is a practical point which, though you have smiled about it, will not I hope be forgotten by you.

There is this to be said to you who are unconverted — if Jesus Christ be so approachable, oh! how I wish, how I wish that you would approach him. There are no bolts upon his doors, no barred iron gates to pass, no big dogs to keep you back. If Christ be so approachable by all needy ones, then needy one, come, and welcome. Come just now! What is it keeps you back? You think that you do not feel your need enough, or that you are not fit to come — both of which suspicions are self-righteousness in different shapes. O that you did know but your need of Jesus, in order to be able even to do so much as feel your need. You are a poor, miserable bankrupt before God, and Christ alone can enrich you. Do not talk of fitness; there is no such thing: —

*“All the fitness he requireth,  
Is to feel your need of him:  
This he gives you;  
‘Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”*

Come, then. There is such mercy to be had; there is such a hell to be escaped from; there is such a heaven to be opened for you; delay not, but believe at once. Come, come, come!

*“Come, and welcome;  
Come, and welcome, sinner, come!”*

I stand at mercy’s door tonight, and say to every passerby, in the name of the Master, “My oxen and fatlings are killed; come, come, come to the supper!” O that you would come this very night!

Some of us are coming to the Lord’s Table to celebrate his love because we have first come to himself. I do not ask you who are not saved to come to that table — you ought not to come; you must first come to Jesus, and then you may come to this ordinance. Meanwhile, the best thing you can do is to come to Christ, and let me ask you to remember this, that in proportion as Christ is accessible, so your guilt will be increased if you do not come to him. If it be easy to come to him, what excuse can there be for you if you refuse to accept him? I have tried to tell you what the way of salvation is. If I knew how to use better language, or even coarser language, if that would suit you, it should be alike to me if I might but touch your consciences, break your hearts, and bring you to Christ. But I protest before you that if you will not come to my Master, I can do no more. I



shall be clear of your blood at the last, and in the day of judgment your ruin must be upon your own heads. But let it not be so. Jesus bids you come. O you needy ones, let your need impel you to come at once, that you may find eternal life in him.

The last word is — if Jesus be such a Savior as we have described him, let saints and sinners join to praise him. How marvelous that our dear Lord should be so condescending to us unworthy ones as to come all the way from heaven to earth for us! Oh, matchless love that made him stoop to grief and death! Oh, unspeakable condescension, to come thus to poor sinners' hearts, bearing mercies in both his hands, and freely giving them to undeserving rebels! For this unspeakable grace let us praise him! You who are coming to his table, draw near with praises in your mouths. Come praising the condescending love in which you have participated, and which has saved you from eternal death. Even you who sit as spectators, I do trust will have you your mind filled with grateful thoughts.

*“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill  
He receives poor sinners still.*

Blessed be his name, world without end!

# JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH — ILLUSTRATED BY ABRAM'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

SERMON NO. 844

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 6TH, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” —  
Genesis 15:6.*

You will remember that last Lord's-day morning we spoke upon the calling of Abram, and the faith by which he was enabled to enter upon that separated life at the bidding of the Most High. We shall today pass from the consideration of his calling to that of his justification, that being most remarkably next in order in his history, as it is in point of theology in the New Testament; for, “whom he called, them he also justified.”

Referring to the chapter before us for a preface to our subject, note that after Abram's calling his faith proved to be of the most practical kind. Being called to separate himself from his kindred and from his country, he did not therefore become a recluse, a man of ascetic habits, or a sentimentalist, unfit for the battles of ordinary life — no; but in the noblest style of true manliness he showed himself able to endure the household trouble and the public trial which awaited him. Lot's herdsmen quarrelled with the servants of Abram, and Abram with great disinterestedness gave his younger and far inferior relative the choice of pasturage, and gave up the well-watered plain of Sodom, which was the best of the land. A little while after, the grand old man who trusted in his God showed that he could play the soldier, and fight right gloriously against terrible odds. He gathered together his own household servants,

and accepted the help of his neighbors, and pursued the conquering hosts of the allied kings, and smote them with as heavy a hand as if from his youth up he had been a military man. Brethren, this every-day life faith is the faith of God's elect. There are persons who imagine saving faith to be a barren conviction of the truth of certain abstract propositions, leading only to a quiet contemplation upon certain delightful topics, or a separating ourselves from all sympathy with our fellow creatures; but it is not so. Faith, restricted merely to religious exercise, is not Christian faith, it must show itself in everything. A merely religious faith may be the choice of men whose heads are softer than their hearts, fitter for cloisters than markets; but the manly faith which God would have us cultivate, is a grand practical principle adapted for every day in the week, helping us to rule our household in the fear of God, and to enter upon life's rough conflicts in the warehouse, the farm, or the exchange. I mention this at the commencement of this discourse, because as this is the faith which came of Abram's calling, so also does it shine in his justification, and is, indeed, that which God counted unto him for righteousness.

Yet the first verse shows us that even such a believer as Abram needed comfort. The Lord said to him, "Fear not." Why did Abram fear? Partly because of the reaction which is always caused by excitement when it is over. He had fought boldly and conquered gloriously, and now he fears. Cowards tremble before the fight, and brave men after the victory. Elias slew the priests of Baal without fear, but after all was over, his spirit sank and he fled from the face of Jezebel. Abram's fear also originated in an overwhelming awe in the presence of God. The word of Jehovah came to him with power, and he felt that same prostration of spirit which made the beloved John fall at the feet of his Lord in the Isle of Patmos, and made Daniel feel, on banks of Hiddekel that there was no strength in him. "Fear not," said the Lord to the patriarch. His spirit was too deeply bowed. God would uplift his beloved servant into the power of exercising sacred familiarity. Ah, brethren, this is a blessed fear — let us cultivate it; for until it shall be cast out by perfect love, which is better still, we may be content to let this good thing rule our hearts. Should not a man, conscious of great infirmities, sink low in his own esteem in proportion as he is honored with communion with the glorious Lord?

When he was comforted, Abram received an open declaration of his justification. I take it, beloved friends, that our text does not intend to teach us that Abram was not justified before this time. Faith always justifies whenever it exists, and as soon as it is exercised; its result follows immediately, and is not an aftergrowth needing months of delay. The moment a man truly trusts his God he is justified. Yet many are justified who do not know their happy condition; to whom as yet the blessing of justification has not been opened up in its excellency and abundance of privilege. There may be some of you here today who have been called by grace from darkness into marvelous light; you have been led to look to Jesus, and you believe you have received pardon of your sin, and yet, for want of knowledge, you know little of the sweet meaning of such words as these, "Accepted in the Beloved," "Perfect in Christ Jesus," "Complete in him." You *are* doubtless justified, though you scarcely understand what justification means; and you are accepted, though you have not realized your acceptance; and you are complete in Jesus Christ, though you have today a far deeper sense of your personal incompleteness than of the all-sufficiency of Jesus. A man may be entitled to property though he cannot read the title-deeds, or has not as yet heard of their existence; the law recognizes right and fact, not our apprehension thereof. But there will come a time, beloved, when you who are called will clearly realize your justification, and will rejoice in it; it shall be intelligently understood by you, and shall become a matter of transporting delight, lifting you to a higher platform of experience, and enabling you to walk with a firmer step, sing with a merrier voice, and triumph with an enlarged heart.

I intend now, as God may help me, first to note *the means of Abram's justification*; then, secondly, *the object of the faith which justified him*; and then, thirdly, *the attendants of his justification*.

## **I.** First, brethren, HOW WAS ABRAM JUSTIFIED?

We see in the text the great truth, which Paul so clearly brings out in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that Abram was *not justified by his works*. Many had been the good works of Abram. It was a good work to leave his country and his father's house at God's bidding; it was a good work to separate from Lot in so noble a spirit; it was a good work to follow after the robber-kings with undaunted courage; it was a grand work

to refuse to take the spoils of Sodom, but to lift up his hand to God that he would not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet; it was a holy work to give to Melchisedec tithes of all that he possessed, and to worship the Most High God; yet none of these are mentioned in the text, nor is there a hint given of any other sacred duties as the ground or cause, or part cause of his justification before God. No, it is said, “He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.” Surely, brethren, if Abram, after years of holy living, is not justified by his works, but is accepted before God on account of his faith, much more must this be the case with the ungodly sinner who, having lived in unrighteousness, yet believeth on Jesus and is saved. If there be salvation for the dying thief, and others like him, it cannot be of debt, but of grace, seeing they have no good works. If Abram, when full of good works, is not justified by them, but by his faith, how much more we, being full of imperfections, must come unto the throne of the heavenly grace and ask that we may be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and saved by the free mercy of God!

Further, this justification came to Abram *not by obedience to the ceremonial law* any more than by conformity to the moral law. As the apostle has so plainly pointed out to us, Abram was justified before he was circumcised. The initiatory step into the outward and visible covenant, so far as it was ceremonial, had not yet been taken, and yet the man was perfectly justified. All that follows after cannot contribute to a thing which is already perfect. Abram, being already justified, cannot owe that justification to his subsequent circumcision — this is clear enough; and so, beloved, at this moment, if you and I are to be justified, these two things are certain: it cannot be by the works of the moral law; it cannot be by obedience to any ceremonial law, be it what it may — whether the sacred ritual given to Aaron, or the superstitious ritual which claims to have been ordained by gradual tradition in the Christian church. If we be indeed the children of faithful Abraham, and are to be justified in Abraham’s way, it cannot be by submission to rites or ceremonies of any kind. Harken to this carefully, ye who would be justified before God: baptism is in itself an excellent ordinance, but it cannot justify nor help to justify us; confirmation is a mere figment of men, and could not, even if commanded by God, assist in justification; and the Lord’s-supper, albeit that it is a divine institution, cannot in any respect whatsoever minister to

your acceptance or to your righteousness before God. Abram had no ceremonial in which to rest; he was righteous through his faith, and righteous only through his faith; and so must you and I be if we are ever to stand as righteous before God at all. Faith in Abram's case was the alone and unsupported cause of his being accounted righteous, for note, although in other cases Abram's faith produced works, and although in every case where faith is genuine it produces good works, yet the particular instance of faith recorded in this chapter was unattended by any works. For God brought him forth under the star-lit heavens, and bade him look up. "So shall thy seed be," said the sacred voice. Abram did what? Believed the promise — that was all. It was before he had offered sacrifice, before he had said a holy word or performed a single action of any kind that the word immediately and instanter went forth, "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Always distinguish between the truth, that living faith always produces works; and the lie, that faith and works co-operate to justify the soul. We are made righteous only by an act of faith in the work of Jesus Christ. That faith, if true, always produces holiness of life, but our being righteous before God is not because of our holiness in life in any degree or respect, but simply because of our faith in the divine promise. Thus saith the inspired apostle: "His faith was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

I would have you note that *the faith which justified Abram was still an imperfect faith*, although it perfectly justified him. It was imperfect beforehand, for he had prevaricated as to his wife, and bidden Sarai, "Say thou art my sister." It was imperfect after it had justified him, for in the next chapter we find him taking Hagar, his wife's handmaid, in order to effect the divine purpose, and so showing a want of confidence in the working of the Lord. It is a blessing for you and for me that we do not need perfect faith to save us. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." If thou hast but the faith of a little child, it shall save thee. Though thy faith be not always at the same pitch as the patriarch's when

he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet if it be simple and true, if it confide alone in the promise of God — it is an unhappy thing that it is no stronger, and thou oughtest daily to pray, “Lord, increase my faith” — but still it shall justify thee through Christ Jesus. A trembling hand may grasp the cup which bears a healing draught to the lip — the weakness of the hand shall not lessen the power of the medicine.

So far, then, all is clear, Abram was not justified by works, nor by ceremonies, nor partly by works, and partly by faith, nor by the perfection of his faith — he is counted righteous simply because of his faith in the divine promise.

I must confess that, looking more closely into it, this text is too deep for me, and therefore I decline, at this present moment, to enter into the controversy which rages around it; but one thing is clear to me, that if faith be, as we are told, counted to us for righteousness, it is not because faith in itself has merit which may make it a fitting substitute for a perfect obedience to the law of God, nor can it be viewed as a substitute for such obedience. For, brethren, all good acts are a duty: to trust God is our duty, and he that hath believed to his utmost hath done no more than it was his duty to have done. He who should believe without imperfection, if this were possible, would even then have only given to God a part of the obedience due; and if he should have failed, in love, or reverence, or aught beside, his faith, as a virtue and a work, could not stand him in any stead. In fact, according to the great principle of the New Testament, even faith, as a work, does not justify the soul. We are not saved by works at all or in any sense, but alone by grace, and the way in which faith saves us is not by itself as a work, but in some other way directly opposite thereto.

Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ. If any man should say, “My faith is my righteousness,” then it is evident that he is confiding in his faith; but this is just the thing of all others which it would be unsafe to do, for we must look altogether away from ourselves to Christ alone, or we have no true faith at all. Faith must look to the atonement and work of Jesus, or else she is not the faith of Scripture. Therefore to say that faith in and of itself becomes our righteousness, is, it seems to me, to tear out the very bowels of the gospel, and to deny the faith which has been once delivered to the

saints. Paul declares, contrary to certain sectaries who rail against imputed righteousness — that we are justified and made righteous by the righteousness of Christ; on this he is plain and positive. He tells us (Romans 5:19) that,

“as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

The Old Testament verse before us as a text this morning, gives us but as it were the outward aspect of justification; it is brought to us by faith, and the fact that a man has faith entitles him to be set down as a righteous man; in this sense God accounts faith to a man as righteousness, but the underlying and secret truth which the Old Testament does not so clearly give us is found in the New Testament declaration, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and justified because of the obedience of Christ. Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the obedience of Christ. “As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so *by the righteousness of one* the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” To the same effect is that verse in the second epistle general of Peter (first chapter, first verse), which runs in our version as follows: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Now, everybody who is at all familiar with the original knows that the correct translation is “through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The righteousness which belongs to the Christian is the righteousness of our God and Savior, who is “made of God unto us righteousness.” Hence the beauty of the old prophetic title of the Messiah, “The Lord our Righteousness.” I do not wish to enter into controversy as to imputed righteousness this morning, we may discuss that doctrine another time; but we feel confident that this text cannot mean that faith in itself, as a grace or a virtue, becomes the righteousness of any man. The fact is, that faith is counted to us for righteousness because she has Christ in her hand; she comes to God resting upon what Christ has done, depending alone upon the propitiation which God has set forth; and God, therefore, writes down every believing man as being a righteous man, not because of what he is in himself, but for what he is in Christ. He may have a thousand sins, yet shall he be righteous if he have faith. He may painfully transgress like



Samson, he may be as much in the dark as Jephtha, he may fall as David, he may slip like Noah; but, for all that, if he have a true and living faith, he is written down among the justified, and God accepteth him. While there be some who gloat over the faults of believers, God spieth out the pure gem of faith gleaming on their breast; he takes them for what they want to be, for what they are in heart, for what they would be if they could; and covering their sins with the atoning blood, and adorning their persons with the righteousness of the Beloved, he accepts them, seeing he beholds in them the faith which is the mark of the righteous man wherever it may be.

**II** .Let us pass on to consider THE PROMISE UPON WHICH HIS FAITH RELIED when Abram was justified.

Abram's faith, like ours, rested upon *a promise received direct from God*. "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Had this promise been spoken by any other, it would have been a subject of ridicule to the patriarch; but, taking it as from the lip of God, he accepts it, and relies upon it. Now, brethren, if you and I have true faith we accept the promise, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" as being altogether divine. If such a declaration were made to us by the priests of Rome, or by any human being on his own authority, we could not think it true; but, inasmuch as it comes to us written in the sacred word as having been spoken by Jesus Christ himself, we lean upon it as not the word of man, but the word of God. Beloved, it may be a very simple remark to make, but after all it is needful, that we must be careful that our faith in the truth is fixed upon the fact that God has declared it to be true, and not upon the oratory or persuasion of any of our most honored ministers or most respected acquaintances. If your faith standeth in the wisdom of man, it is probably a faith in man; it is only that faith which believes the promise because God spake it which is real faith in God. Note that and try your faith thereby.

In the next place, Abram's faith was *faith in a promise concerning the seed*. It was told him before that he should have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He recognized in this the selfsame

promise which was made to Eve at the gates of Paradise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." "Abraham saw my day," says our Lord, "he saw it and was glad." In this promise Abram saw the one seed, as saith the apostle in Galatians 3:16,

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

He saw Christ by the eye of faith, and then he saw the multitude that should believe in him, the seed of the father of the faithful. The faith which justifies the soul concerns itself about Christ and not concerning mere abstract truths. If your faith simply believeth this dogma and that, it saveth you not; but when your faith believes that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses; when your faith turns to God in human flesh and rests in him with its entire confidence, then it justifies you, for it is the faith of Abram. Dear hearer, have you such a faith as this? Is it faith in the promise of God? Is it faith that deals with Christ and looks alone to him?

Abram had faith in *a promise which it seemed impossible could ever be fulfilled*. A child was to be born of his own loins, but he was nearly a hundred years old, and Sarai also was said to be barren years before. His own body was now dead as it were, and Sarai, so far as childbearing was concerned, was equally so. The birth of a son could not happen unless the laws of nature were reversed; but he considered not these things, he put them all aside; he saw death written on the creature, but he accepted the power of life in the Creator, and he believed without hesitation. Now, beloved, the faith that justifies us must be of the same kind. It seems impossible that I should ever be saved; I cannot save myself; I see absolute death written upon the best hopes that spring of my holiest resolutions; "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing;" I can do nothing; I am slain under the law; I am corrupt through my natural depravity; but yet for all this I believe that through the life of Jesus I shall live, and inherit the promised blessing. It is small faith to believe that God will save you when graces flourish in your heart, and evidences of salvation abound, but it is a grand faith to trust in Jesus in the teeth of all your sins, and notwithstanding the accusations of conscience. To believe in him that justifieth not merely the godly but *the ungodly* (Romans 4:5).

To believe not in the Savior of saints, but in the Savior of sinners; and to believe that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; this is precious, and is counted unto us for righteousness.

This justifying faith was faith which dealt with *a wonderful promise, vase and sublime*. I imagine the patriarch standing beneath the starry sky, looking up to those innumerable orbs. He cannot count them. To his outward eye, long accustomed in the land of the Chaldees to midnight observation, the stars appeared more numerous than they would to an ordinary observer. He looked and looked again with elevated gaze, and the voice said, "So shall thy seed be." Now he did not say, "Lord, if I may be the father of a clan, the progenitor of a tribe, I shall be well content; but it is not credible that countless hosts can ever come of my barren body." No, he believed the promise; he believed it just as it stood. I do not hear him saying, "It is too good to be true." No; God hath said it — and nothing is too good for God to do. The greater the grace of the promise, the more likely it is to have come from him, for good and perfect gifts come from the Father of Lights. Beloved, does your faith take the promise as it stands in its vastness, in its height, and depth, and length, and breadth? Canst thou believe that thou, a sinner, art nevertheless a child, a son, an heir, an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Canst thou believe that heaven is thine, with all its ecstasies of joy, eternity with its infinity of bliss, God with all his attributes of glory? Oh! This is the faith that justifies, far-reaching, wide-grasping faith, that diminishes not the word of promise, but accepts it as it stands. May we have more and more of this large-handed faith!

Once more, Abram showed faith in *the promise as made to himself*. Out of his own bowels a seed should come, and it was in *him* and in his seed that the whole world should be blessed. I can believe all the promises in regard to other people. I find faith in regard to my dear friend to be a very easy matter, but oh! When it comes to close grips, and to laying hold for yourself, here is the difficulty. I could see my friend in ten troubles, and believe that the Lord would not forsake him. I could read a saintly biography, and finding that the Lord never failed his servant when he went through fire and through water, I do not wonder at it; but when it comes to one's own self, the wonder begins. Our heart cries, "Whence is this to me?"

What am I, and what my father's house, that such mercy should be mine? *I washed in blood and made whiter than snow today!* Is it so? *Can it be? I made righteous, through my faith in Jesus Christ, perfectly righteous!* O can it be? What! For me the everlasting love of God, streaming from its perennial fountain? For me the protection of a special providence in this life, and the provision of a prepared heaven in the life to come? For me a harp, a crown, a palm branch, a throne! For me the bliss of for ever beholding the face of Jesus, and being made like to him, and reigning with him! It seems impossible. And yet this is the faith that we must have, the faith which lays on Christ Jesus for itself, saying with the apostle, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." This is the faith which justifies; let us seek more and more of it, and God shall have glory through it.

### **III.** In the third place, let us notice THE ATTENDANTS OF ABRAM'S JUSTIFICATION.

With your Bibles open, kindly observe that after it is written his faith was counted to him for righteousness, it is recorded that the Lord said to him, "I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." When the soul is graciously enabled to perceive its complete justification by faith, then *it more distinctly discerns its calling*. Now, the believer perceives his privileged separation and discerns why he was convinced of sin, why he was led away from self-righteousness and the pleasures of this world, to live the life of faith; now he sees his high calling and the prize of it, and from the one blessing of justification he argues the blessedness of all the inheritance to which he is called. The more clear a man is about his justification the more will he prize his calling, and the more earnestly will he seek to make it sure by perfecting his separation from the world and his conformity to his Lord. Am I a justified man? Then will I not go back to that bondage in which I once was held. Am I now accepted of God through faith? Then will I live no longer by sight, as I once did as a carnal man, when I understood not the power of trusting in the unseen God. One Christian grace helps another, and one act of divine grace casts a refulgence upon another. Calling gleams with double glory side by side with the twin star of justification.

Justifying faith receives more vividly the promises. "I have brought thee," said the Lord, "into this land to inherit it." He was reminded again of the

promise God made him years before. Beloved, no man reads the promises of God with such delight and with such a clear understanding as the man who is justified by faith in Christ Jesus. "For now," saith he, "this promise is mine, and made to me. I have the pledge of its fulfillment in the fact that I walk in the favor of God. I am no longer obnoxious to his wrath; none can lay anything to my charge, for I am absolved through Jesus Christ; and, therefore, if when I was a sinner he justified me, much more, being justified, will he keep his promise to me. If when I was a rebel condemned, he nevertheless in his eternal mercy called me and brought me into this state of acceptance, much more will he preserve me from all my enemies, and give me the heritage which he has promised by his covenant of grace. A clear view of justification helps you much in grasping the promise, therefore seek it earnestly for your soul's comfort.

Abram, after being justified by faith, was *led more distinctly to behold the power of sacrifice*. By God's command he killed three bullocks, three goats, three sheep, with turtle doves and pigeons, being all the creatures ordained for sacrifice. The patriarch's hands are stained with blood; he handles the butcher's knife, he divides the beasts, he kills the birds he places them in an order revealed to him by God's Spirit at the time; there they are. Abram learns that there is no meeting with God except through sacrifice. God has shut every door except that over which the blood is sprinkled. All acceptable approaches to God must be through an atoning sacrifice, and Abram sees this. While the promise is still in his ears, while the ink is yet wet in the pen of the Holy Spirit, writing him down as justified, he must see a sacrifice, and see it, too, in emblems which comprehend all the revelation of sacrifice made to Aaron. So, brethren, it is a blessed thing when your faith justifies you, if it helps you to obtain more complete and vivid views of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The purest and most bracing air for faith to breathe is on Calvary. I do not wonder that your faith grows weak when you fail to consider well the tremendous sacrifice which Jesus made for his people. Turn to the annals of the Redeemer's sufferings given us in the Evangelists; bow yourself in prayer before the Lamb of God, blush to think you should have forgotten his death, which is the center of all history; contemplate the wondrous transaction of substitution once again, and you will find your faith revived. It is not the study of theology, it is not reading books upon points of

controversy, it is not searching into mysterious prophecy which will bless your soul, it is looking to Jesus crucified. That is the essential nutriment of the life of faith, and mind that you keep to it. As a man already justified, Abram looked at the sacrifice, all day long and till the sun went down, chasing away the birds of prey as you must drive off all disturbing thoughts. So must you also study the Lord Jesus, and view him in all his characters and offices, be not satisfied except you grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Perhaps even more important was the next lesson which Abram had to learn. He was led to behold *the covenant*. I suppose that these pieces of the bullock, the lamb, the ram, and the goat, were so placed that Abram stood in the midst with a part on this side and a part on that. So he stood as a worshipper all through the day, and towards nightfall, when a horror of great darkness came over him, he fell into a deep sleep. Who would not feel a horror passing over him as he sees the great sacrifice for sin, and sees himself involved therein? There in the midst of the sacrifice he saw, moving with solemn motion, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, answering to the pillar of cloud and fire, which manifested the presence in later days to Israel in the wilderness. In these emblems the Lord passed between the pieces of the sacrifice to meet his servant, and enter into covenant with him. This has always been the most solemn of all modes of covenanting; and has even been adopted in heathen nations on occasions of unusual solemnity. The sacrifice is divided and the covenanting parties meet between the divided pieces. The profane interpretation was, that they imprecated upon each other the curse that if they broke the covenant they might be cut in pieces as these beasts had been; but this is not the interpretation which our hearts delight in. It is this. It is only in the midst of the sacrifice that God can enter into a covenant relationship with sinful man. God cometh in his glory like a flame of fire, but subdued and tempered to us as with a cloud of smoke in the person of Jesus Christ; and he comes through the bloody sacrifice which has been offered once for all through Jesus Christ on the tree. Man meets with God in the midst of the sacrifice of Christ. Now, beloved, you who are justified, try this morning to reach this privilege which particularly belongs to you at this juncture of your spiritual history. Know and understand that God is in covenant bonds with you. He has made a covenant of grace with you which never

can be broken: the sure mercies of David are your portion. After this sort does that covenant run, “A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” That covenant is made with you over the slaughtered body of the Son of God. God and you cross hands over him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. The Lord accepts us, and we enter with him into sacred league and amity, over the victim whose wounds and death ratify the compact. Can God forget a covenant with such sanctions? Can such a federal bond so solemnly sealed be ever broken? Impossible. Man is sometimes faithful to his oath, but God is always so; and when that oath is confirmed for the strengthening of our faith by the blood of the Only-begotten, to doubt is treason and blasphemy. God help us, being justified, to have faith in the covenant which is sealed and ratified with blood.

Immediately after, God made to Abram (and here the analogy still holds) a *discovery*, that all the blessing that was promised, though it was surely his, would not come without an interval of trouble. “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” When a man is first of all brought to Christ he often is so ignorant as to think, “Now my troubles are all over; I have come to Christ and I am saved: from this day forward I shall have nothing to do but to sing the praises of God.” Alas! A conflict remains. We must know of a surety that the battle now begins. How often does it happen that the Lord, in order to educate his child for future trouble, makes the occasion when his justification is most clear to him the season of informing him that he may expect to meet with trouble! I was struck with that fact when I was reading for my own comfort the other night the fifth chapter of Romans; it runs thus — “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” See how softly it flows, a justification sheds the oil of joy upon the believer’s head. But what is the next verse — “and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience,” and so on. Justification ensures tribulation. Oh! Yes, the covenant is yours; you shall possess the goodly land and Lebanon, but, like all the seed of Abraham, you must go down into Egypt and groan,

being burdened. All the saints must smart before they sing; they must carry the cross before they wear the crown. You are a justified man, but you are not freed from trouble. Your sins were laid on Christ, but you still have Christ's cross to carry. The Lord has exempted you from the curse, but he has not exempted you from the chastisement. Learn that you enter on the children's discipline on the very day in which you enter upon their accepted condition.

To close the whole, the Lord gave to Abram *an assurance of ultimate success*. He would bring his seed into the promised land, and the people who had oppressed them he would judge. So let it come as a sweet revelation to every believing man this morning, that at the end he shall triumph, and those evils which now oppress him shall be cast beneath his feet. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We may be slaves in Egypt for awhile, but we shall come up out of it with great abundance of true riches, better than silver or gold. We shall be prospered by our tribulations, and enriched by our trials. Therefore, let us be of good cheer. If sin be pardoned, we may well bear affliction. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now my sins are gone; strike as hard as thou wilt if transgression be covered." These light afflictions which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Let us make it the first point of our care to be justified with Abraham's seed, and then whether we sojourn in Egypt or enjoy the peace of Canaan, it little matters: we are all safe if we are only justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Dear friends, this last word, and I send you home. Have you believed in God? Have you trusted Christ? O that you would do so today! To believe that God speaks truth ought not to be hard; and if we were not very wicked this would never need to be urged upon us, we should do it naturally. To believe that Christ is able to save us seems to me to be easy enough, and it would be if our hearts were not so hard. Believe thy God, man, and think it no little thing to do so. May the Holy Ghost lead thee to a true trust. This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Believe that the Son of God can save, and confide thyself alone in him, and he will save thee. He asks nothing but faith, and even this he gives thee; and if thou hast it, all thy doubts and sins, thy trials and troubles put together, shall not shut thee out of heaven. God



shall fulfill his promise, and surely bring thee in to possess the land which floweth with milk and honey.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON- Genesis 15. and Romans 4.

# CONSECRATION TO GOD — ILLUSTRATED BY ABRAHAM'S CIRCUMCISION

SERMON NO. 845

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 13TH, 1868,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.” — Genesis 17:1-2.*

WE COMMENCED our exposition of the life of Abram with his calling, when he was brought out of Ur of the Chaldees, and separated unto the Lord in Canaan. We then passed on to his justification, when he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness; and now you will bear with us if we continue to the same subject to a further stage, and attempt to describe the fuller development of Abram's vital godliness in the open and clear revelation of his consecration to God. In the chapter before us we see his sanctification unto the Lord, his ordination to service, and purification as a vessel fitted for the Master's use. All the called are justified, and all the justified are by a work of the Holy Ghost sanctified, and made meet to be afterwards glorified with Christ Jesus.

Let me remind you of the order in which these blessings come. If we should speak of sanctification or consecration, it is not as a first thing, but as an elevation to be reached only by preceding stepping-stones. In vain do men pretend to be consecrated to God before they are called of God's Spirit; such have yet to be taught that no strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. They must learn what this meaneth, “Ye must be born again,” for assuredly until men are brought into spiritual life by

effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, all their talk about serving God may be answered in the words of Joshua, “Ye cannot serve the Lord.” I speak of consecration, but it is not as a first thing, nor even as a second thing, for a man must be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, or he will not possess the grace which is the root of all true sanctity; for sanctification grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. Remember holiness is a flower, not a root; it is not sanctification that saves, but salvation that sanctifies. A man is not saved by his holiness, but he becomes holy because he is already saved. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Not then the due order of heavenly benefits, consecration to God follows calling and justification.

Recalling your minds to Abram’s history, let me remind you that thirteen years had elapsed after the time in which God had said that Abram’s faith was counted to him for righteousness, and those thirteen years, so far as we can gather from Scripture, were not at all so full of brave faith and noble deeds as we might have expected them to have been. How sure is that truth that the best of men are but men at the best, for that very man who had accepted God’s promise and had not staggered at it through unbelief, within a few months afterwards, or perhaps a few days, was taken with a fit of unbelief, and at the instigation of his wife, adopted means which were not justifiable, in order that he might obtain the promised heir. He used means which may not be so vicious to him, as they would be in men of modern times, but which were suggested by an unbelieving policy, and were fraught with evil. He takes Hagar to wife. He could not leave it to God to give him the promised seed; he could not leave it with God to fulfill his promise in his own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to accomplish by doubtful methods the end which God himself had promised and undertaken to accomplish.

How shorn of splendor is Abram seen when we read of him, “and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai!” That business of Hagar is to the patriarch’s deep discredit, and reflects no honor at all upon either him or his faith. Look at the consequences of his unbelieving procedure! Misery soon followed. Hagar despises her mistress; Sarai throws all the blame on

her husband; the poor bond-woman is so hardly dealt with that she flees from the household. How much of real cruelty may be meant by the term "dealing hardly," I cannot tell, but one marvels that such a man as Abram allowed one who had been brought into such a relationship with him, to be heedlessly chased from his house while in a condition requiring care and kindness. We admire the truthfulness of the Holy Ghost that he has been pleased to record the faults of the saints without extenuating them. Biographies of good men in Scripture are written with unflinching integrity, their evil recorded as well as their good. These faults are not written that we may say, "Abraham did so-and-so, therefore we may do it." No, brethren, the lives of these good men are warnings to us as well as examples, and we are to judge them as we should judge ourselves, by the laws of right and wrong. Abram did wrong both in taking Hagar to wife and in allowing her to be badly used.

In after years the child of the bond-woman mocked the child of the free-woman, and an expulsion of both mother and child was needful. There was deep sorrow in Abram's heart, a bitterness not to be told. Polygamy, though tolerated under the Old Testament, was never approved; it was only endured because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. In the family relationship there can be opened no more abundant and fruitful source of misery to the sons of men than want of chastity to the marriage-bond made with one wife. Disguise that unchastity by what name you will. All these thirteen years, so far as Scripture informs us, Abram had not a single visit from his God. We do not find any record of his either doing anything memorable or having so much as a single audience with the Most High. Learn from this, that if we once forsake the track of simple faith, once cease to walk according to the purity which faith approves, we strew our path with thorns, cause God to withhold the light of his countenance from us, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

But mark, beloved, the exceeding grace of God. The way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him; and, consequently, we read in our text that at ninety-nine years of age Abram was favored with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the book of Revelation, concerning the church in Laodicea: "Though art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or

hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” — a very solemn declaration; but what follows? “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” which means just this, that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and lukewarmness there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear intercourse. Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity, and he does it by manifesting himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram.

*“Midst darkest shades, if he appear,  
My dawning is begun;  
He is my soul’s bright morning star,  
And he my rising sun.”*

Breathe a prayer, my brethren and sisters. “Lord, reveal thyself to my poor backsliding, languishing spirit. Revive me, O Lord, for one smile from thee can make my wilderness blossom as the rose.”

On the occasion of this gracious manifestation, God was pleased to do for Abram what I think is to us an admirable and instructive illustration of the consecration of our redeemed spirits entirely to his service. I shall, this morning, as God may help me, first lead you to observe the model of the consecrated life; secondly, the nature of the higher life; and, thirdly, its results.

**I.** First, then, let us notice in the words of God to Abram, THE MODEL OF THE SANCTIFIED OR CONSECRATED LIFE.

Here it is: “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” For a man to be thoroughly sanctified to the Master’s service, he must first realize the almightiness and all-sufficiency and glory of God. Brethren, the God whom we serve filleth all things, and hath all power and all riches. If we think little of him we shall render little trust to him, and consequently little obedience, but if we have grand conceptions of the glory of God, we shall learn to confide in him most thoroughly, we shall receive mercies from him most plentifully, and we shall be moved to serve him most consistently. Sin at the bottom of it very frequently has its origin in low thoughts of God. Take Abram’s sin; he could not see how

God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren. Hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One, he would have said, "No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can effect his own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is all-sufficient in himself, and not dependent upon creature strength. I will patiently hope, and quietly wait, to see the fulfillment of the Master's promises." Now, as with Abram, so with you, my brethren and sisters. When a man is in business difficulties, if he believes that God is all-sufficient to carry him through them, he will not practice any of the common tricks of trade, nor degenerate into that shiftiness which is so usual among commercial men. If a man believes, being poor, that God is sufficient portion for him, he will not grow envious of the rich or discontented with his condition. The man who feels that God is an all-sufficient portion for his spirit, will not look for pleasure in the pursuits of vanity; he will not go with the giddy multitude after their vain mirth. "No," saith he, "God hath appeared unto me as God all-sufficient for my comfort and my joy. I am content so long as God is mine. Let others drink of broken cisterns if they will, I dwell by the overflowing fountain, and am perfectly content." O beloved, what glorious names our Lord deservedly wears! Whichever of his names you choose to dwell upon for a moment, what a mine of wealth and meaning it opens up to you! Here is this name, "El Shaddai;" "El," that is, "the strong one," for infinite power dwells in Jehovah. How readily may we who are weak become mighty if we draw upon him! And then, "Shaddai," that is to say, "the unchangeable, the invincible." What a God we have then, who knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning, against whom none can stand! "El," strong; "Shaddai," unchangeable in his strength; always therefore strong in every time of need, ready to defend his people, and able to preserve them from all their foes. Come, Christian, with such a God as this why needest thou abase thyself to win the good word of the wicked man? Why gaddest thou abroad to find earthly pleasures where the roses are always mixed with thorns? Why needest thou to put thy confidence in gold and silver, or in the strength of thy body, or in aught that is beneath the moon? Thou hast El Shaddai to be thine. Thy power to be holy will much depend upon thy grasping with all the intensity of thy faith the cheering fact that this God is thy God for ever and ever, thy daily portion, thine all-sufficient

consolation. Thou dares not, canst not, wilt not, wander into the ways of sin when thou knowest that such a God is thy shepherd and guide.

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words — “walk before me.” This is the style of life which characterises true holiness; it is a walking before God. Ah! Brethren, Abram had walked before Sarai; he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes; he had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar; but now the Lord gently rebukes him with the exhortation, “Walk before me.” It is remarkable that on the former divine visit to the patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord’s-day), the Lord’s message was “Fear not.” He was then, as it were, but a child in spiritual things, and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it. He is now grown into a man, and the exhortation is practical and full of activity — “walk.” The Christian man is to put out and use the strength and grace which he hath received. The pith of the exhortation lies in the last words, “Walk before me,” by which I understand an habitual sense of the presence of God, or doing the right thing and shunning the wrong, out of respect to the will of God; a consideration of God in all actions, public and private. Brethren, I deeply regret when I see Christian men, even in religious societies, in their calculations leaving out the greatest item in the whole calculation — namely, the divine element, the divine power and faithfulness. Of the most of mankind I may say, without being censorious, that if there were no God their course of action would not be different from what it is, for they do not feel themselves either restrained or constrained by any sense of the divine presence. “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” But this is the mark of the truly sanctified man of God, that he lives in every place as standing in the presence chamber of the divine Majesty; he acts as knowing that the eye which never sleeps is always fixed on him. His heart’s desire is that he may never do the wrong thing, because he has respect to worldly greatness, and may never forget the right thing because he is in evil company, but may reckon that God being everywhere, he is always in company where it would be impudent rebellion to sin. The saint feels that he must not, dare not, transgress, because he is before the very face of God. This is the model of the sanctified character, for a man to

realize what the Lord is, and then to act as in the immediate presence of a holy and jealous God.

The next words are, “and be thou perfect.” Brethren, does this mean absolute perfection? I shall not controvert the belief of some, that we may be absolutely perfect on earth. Freely do I admit that the model of sanctification is perfection. It were inconsistent with the character of God for him to give us any other than a perfect command, and a perfect standard. No law but that of absolute perfection could come from a perfect God, and to give us a model that were not absolutely perfect, were to ensure to us superabundant imperfections, and to give us an excuse for them. God sets before his servants no rule of this kind, “Be as good as you can,” but this, “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Hath any man ever attained to it? Truly we have not, but for all that, every Christian man aims at it. I would far rather my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never write equal to it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him, because then he would never make a good writer at all. Our heavenly Father has given us the perfect image of Christ to be our example, his perfect law to be our rule, and it is for us to aim at this perfection in the power of the Holy Spirit, and, like Abram, to fall upon our faces in shame and confusion of face, when we recollect how far we have come short of it. Perfection is what we wish for, pant after, and shall at the last obtain. We do not want to have the law toned down to our weakness. Blessed be God, we delight in the perfection of that law. We say with Paul, “The law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” The will of God is that which we would be conformed unto; and if we who are believers had but one wish, and it could be granted to us at once, it should be this, to make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. However, the word “perfect,” as I have said, bears commonly the meaning of “upright,” or “sincere” — “walk before me, and be thou sincere.” No double dealing must the Christian man have, no playing fast and loose with God or man; no hypocritical professions, or false principles. He must be as transparent as glass; he must be a man in whom there is no guile, a man who has cast aside deceit in every shape, who hates it, and loathes it, and walks before God, who sees all things with absolute sincerity, earnestly desiring in all things, both great and



small, to commend himself to the conscience of others as in the sight of the Most High.

Brethren, here is the model of the consecrated life. Do you not long to attain to it? I am sure every soul that is moved by God's grace will do so. But if your feeling about it is like mine, it will be just that of Abram in the text, "Abram fell on his face before the Lord." For oh, how far short we have come of this! We have not always thought of God as all-sufficient; we have been unbelieving. We have doubted him here, and doubted him there. We have not gone to work in this world as if we believed the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We have not been satisfied to suffer, or to be poor, and we have not been content to do his will without asking questions. We might often have had addressed to us the rebuke, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Is his arm shortened at all? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?" Brethren, we have not always walked before the Lord. If one may speak for the rest, we do not always feel the presence of God as a check to us. There are angry words perhaps at the table; there is wrong-doing in the place of business; there are carelessness, worldliness, pride, and I know not what beside of evil to mar the day's labor; and when we come back at night we have to confess, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, I have forgotten my Shepherd's presence. I have not always spoken and acted as if I felt that thou wast always looking upon me." Thus it has come to pass that we have not been perfect. I feel ready to laugh, not the laugh of Abram, but that of thorough ridicule, when I hear people talk about their being absolutely perfect. They must be of very different flesh and blood from us, or rather they must be great fools, full of conceit, and utterly ignorant of themselves; for if they did but look at a single action, they would find specks in it; and if they examined but one single day, they would perceive something in which they fell short, if there were nothing in which they had transgressed. You see your model, brethren, study it in the life of Christ, and then press forward to it with the zeal of the apostle who said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are

before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

**II.** Secondly, THE NATURE OF THIS CONSECRATION as illustrated in this chapter. On each point briefly.

Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God. Note the third verse: — “Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him.” By looking at Christ Jesus, his image is photographed upon our mind, and we are changed from glory to glory, as by the presence of the Lord. Distance from God’s presence always means sin: holy familiarity with God engenders holiness. The more you think of God, the more you meditate upon his works, the more you praise him, the more you pray to him, the more constantly you talk with him, and he with you, by the Holy Ghost, the more surely are you upon the road to thorough consecration to his cause.

The next point in the nature of this consecration is that it is fostered by enlarged views of the covenant of grace. Read on: “As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.” This is said to help Abram to walk before God and to be perfect; from which we conclude that to grow in sanctification a man should increase in knowledge, and also in the tenacity of the faith which grasps the covenant which God has made with Christ for his people, which is “Ordered in all things and sure.” With your Bibles open, notice attentively that Abram was refreshed as to his own personal interest in the covenant. Note the second personal pronoun, how it is repeated: “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.” Take the sixth verse, “I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee . . . to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” Thus Abram has the covenant brought home to himself; he is made to feel that he has a part and a lot therein. If you are ever to be sanctified unto God’s service, you must get a full assurance of your interest in all the covenant provisions. Doubts are like wild boars of the wood, which tear up the flowers of sanctification in the garden of the heart; but when you have in your soul a God-given assurance of your interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then shall the foxes which

spoil the vines be hunted to death, and your tender grapes shall give a good smell. Cry to God, beloved brethren and sisters, for strong faith to “Read your title clear to mansions in the skies.” Great holiness must spring from great faith. Faith is the root, obedience the branch; and if the root decays the branch cannot flourish. Ask to know that Christ is yours, and that you are his; for here you will find a fountain to water your consecration and make it yield fruit to Christ’s service. Some professors act as if this were not the case. They foment their doubts and fears in order to perfect holiness. I have known Christians, when they are conscious that they have not lived as they ought to live, begin to doubt their interest in Christ, and, as they say, humble themselves in order to reach after fuller sanctification of life. That is to say, they starve themselves in order to grow strong; they throw their gold out of window in order to become rich; they pull up the very foundation-stone of their house to make it stand secure. Beloved believer, sinner as thou art, backslider as thou art, still believe in Jesus, let not a sense of sin weaken thy faith in him. He died for sinners, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Cling to that cross still: the more furious the storm the more need of the life-buoy — never leave it, but make your hold the firmer. Confide alone in the virtue of that precious blood, for thus only will you slay your sins and advance in holiness. If you say within your heart, “Jesus cannot save such a one as I am; if I had marks and evidences of being God’s child, I could then trust in compense of reward; you have cast away your shield, and the darts of the tempter will wound you terribly. Cling to Jesus even when it is a question whether you have a grain of grace in your hearts. Believe that he died for you, not because you are consecrated or sanctified, but died for you as sinners, and saves you as sinners. Never lose your simple trust in the Crucified, for only by the blood of the Lamb can you overcome sin and be made fit for the Lord’s work.

Note, in reading these words, how this covenant is revealed to Abram peculiarly as a work of divine power. Note the run of the passage, “I will make my covenant between me and thee.” “I will make thee fruitful.” “I will establish my covenant.” “I will give unto thee.” “I will be thy God,” and so on. Oh! those glorious “wills” and “shalls.” Brethren, ye cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the divine “will” and “shall.” If my salvation rests upon this poor, puny arm,

upon my resolves, my integrity, and my faithfulness, it is shipwrecked for ever; but if my eternal salvation rests upon the great arm which bears up the universe, if my soul's safety is altogether in that hand that wheels the stars along, then blessed be his name, it is safe and well; and now out of love to such a Savior I will serve him with all my heart. I will spend and be spent for him who has thus graciously undertaken for me. Mark this, brethren, be very clear about it, and ask to have the divine working made apparent to your soul, for that will help you to be consecrated to God.

Further, Abraham had a view of the covenant in its everlastingness. I do not remember that the word "everlasting" had been used before in reference to that covenant, but in this chapter we have it over and over again. "I will establish my covenant for an everlasting covenant." Here is one of those grand truths which many of the babes in grace have not as yet learned, namely, that the blessings of grace are blessings not given to-day to be taken back to-morrow, but eternal blessings. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is not a salvation which will belong to us for a few hours, while we are faithful to it, and will then be taken away, so that we shall be left to perish. God forbid, "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "I am God," saith he, "I change not: therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ, we do not confide in a Savior who might suffer us to be destroyed, but we rest in one who hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Instead of the doctrine of the security of the saints leading to negligence of life, you will find that, on the contrary, where it is thoroughly well received in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, it begets such a holy confidence in God, such a flaming gratitude to him, that it is one of the best incentives to consecration. Treasure up these thoughts, dear brethren, and if you would grow in grace and in conformity to Christ, endeavor to perceive your personal interest in the covenant, the divine power which guarantees its fulfillment, and the everlastingness of its character.

In considering the nature of this consecration, I would observe next, that they who are consecrated to God are regarded as new men. The new manhood is indicated by the change of name — he is called no longer Abram, but Abraham, and his wife is no longer Sarai, but Sarah. Ye,

beloved, are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The root and source of all consecration to God lies in regeneration. We are “born again,” a new and incorruptible seed is placed within us which “liveth and abideth for ever.” The name of Christ is named upon us: we are no longer called sinners and unjust, but we become the children of God by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Note further that the nature of this consecration was set forth to Abraham by the rite of circumcision. It would not be at all fitting or decorous for us to enter into any detail as to that mysterious rite, but it will suffice to say that the rite of circumcision signified the taking away of the filthiness of the flesh. We have the apostle Paul’s own interpretation of circumcision in the verses which we read just now in his epistle to the Colossians.

Circumcision indicated to the seed of Abraham that there was a defilement of the flesh in man which must for ever be taken away, or man would remain impure, and out of covenant with God. Now, beloved, there must be, in order to our sanctification to Christ, a giving up, a painful relinquishing of things as dear to us as right eyes and right hands. There must be a denying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We must mortify our members. There must be self-denial if we are to enter upon the service of God. The Holy Spirit must pass sentence of death and cutting away upon the passions and tendencies of corrupt humanity. Much must perish which nature would cherish, but die it must, because grace abhors it.

Notice, with regard to circumcision, that it was peremptorily ordained that it should be practiced on every male of the race of Abraham, and if it were neglected, death followed. So the giving up of sin, the giving up of the body of the filth of the flesh is necessary to every believer. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Even the babe in Christ is as much to see death written upon the body of the filth of the flesh as a man who, like Abraham, has reached advanced years and come to maturity in spiritual things. There is not distinction here between the one and the other.

“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” and where a supposed grace does not take away from us a love of sin, it is not the grace of God at all, but the presumptuous conceit of our own vain natures.

It is often said that the ordinance of baptism is analagous to the ordinance of circumcision. I will not controvert that point, although the statement

may be questioned. But supposing it to be, let me urge upon every believer here to see to it that in his own soul he realises the spiritual meaning both of circumcision and baptism, and then consider the outward rites; for the thing signified is vastly more important than the sign. Baptism sets forth far more than circumcision. Circumcision is putting away of the filth of the flesh, but baptism is the burial of the flesh altogether. Baptism does not say, "Here is something to be taken away," but everything is dead, and must be buried with Christ in his tomb, and the man must rise anew with Christ. Baptism teaches us that by death we pass into the new life. As Noah's ark, passing through the death of the old world, emerged into a new world, even so, by a like figure, baptism sets forth our salvation by the resurrection of Christ: a baptism of which Peter says, it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." In baptism, the man avows to himself and others that he comes by death into newness of life, according to the words of the Holy Spirit, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The most valuable point is the spiritual meaning, and on that we experience what it is to be dead to the world, to be dead and buried with Christ, and then to be risen with him. Still, brethren, Abraham was not allowed to say, "If I get the spiritual meaning, I can do without the outward rite." He might have objected to that rite on a thousand grounds a great deal more strong than any which the hesitating have urged against baptism, but he first accepted the rite, as well as the thing which it intended, and straightway was circumcised; and so I exhort you, men and brethren, to be obedient to the precept upon baptism, as well as attentive to the truth which it signifies. If you be indeed buried with Christ, and risen with him, despise not the outward and instructive sign by which this is set forth. "Well," saith one, "a difficulty suggests itself as to your views," for an argument is often drawn from this chapter, "that inasmuch as Abraham must circumcise all his seed, we ought to baptise all our children." Now, observe the type and interpret it not according to prejudice, but according to Scripture. In the type the seed of Abraham are circumcised; you draw the inference that all typified by the seed of Abraham ought to be baptised, and I do not cavil at the conclusion; but I ask you, who are the true seed of Abraham? Paul answers in Romans 9:8,

“They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

As many as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham’s seed. Whether eight days old in grace, or more or less, every one of Abraham’s seed has a right to baptism. But I deny that the unregenerate, whether children or adults, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The Lord will, we trust, call many of them by his grace, but as yet they are “heirs of wrath, even as others.” At such time as the Spirit of God shall sow the good seed in their hearts, they are of Abraham’s believing seed, but they are not so while they live in ungodliness and unbelief, or are as yet incapable of faith or repentance. The answering person in type to the seed of Abraham is, by the confession of everybody, the believer; and the believer ought, seeing he is buried with Christ spiritually, to avow that fact, by his public baptism in water, according to the Savior’s own precept and example. “Thus,” said Christ, “it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” as he went down to the river Jordan. At the Jordan was he sprinkled? Why go down to a river to be sprinkled? Why went he down into the water to be sprinkled? “Us.” Did he mean babes? Was he a babe? Was not he, when he said “us,” speaking of the faithful who are in him? “And thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” that is, all his saints. But how does baptism fulfill all righteousness? Typically thus: — It is the picture of the whole work of Christ. There is his immersion in suffering; his death and burial; his coming up out of the water represents his resurrection; his coming up the banks of Jordan represents his ascension. It is a typical representation of how he fulfilled all righteousness, and how the saints fulfilled it in him. But, brethren, I did not intend to go so far into the outward sign, because my soul’s deepest desire is this, that like as Abraham by the outward sign was taught that there was a putting away of the filth of flesh, which must be, or death must follow, so are we taught by baptism that there is an actual death to the world, and a resurrection with Christ, which must be to every believer, however old or however young, or he hath not part or lot in the matter of consecration to God, or, indeed, in salvation itself.

**III.** I have a third head, but my time is gone, and, therefore, just these hints. THE RESULTS OF SUCH A CONSECRATION.

Immediately after God's appearing to Abraham, his consecration was manifest, first, in his prayer for his family. "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Men of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, and feel that you are his, begin now to intercede for all who belong to you. Never be satisfied unless they are saved too; and if you have a son, an Ishmael, concerning whom you have many fears and much anxiety, as you are saved yourself, never cease to groan out that cry, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

The next result of Abraham's consecration was, that he was most hospitable to his fellow men. Look at the next chapter. He sits at the tent door, and three men come to him. The Christian is the best servant of humanity in a spiritual sense. I mean that for his Master's sake he endeavors to do good to the sons of men. He is of all men the first to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, and as much as lieth in him to do good unto all men, especially unto such as be of the household of faith.

The third result was, Abraham entertained the Lord himself, for amongst those three angels who came to his house was the King of kings, the infinite One. Every believer who serves his God doth, as it were, give refreshment to the divine mind. I mean this, God took an infinite delight in the work of his dear Son. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and he takes a delight also in the holiness of all his people. Jesus sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied by the works of the faithful; and you, brethren, as Abraham entertained the Lord, do entertain the Lord Jesus with your patience and your faith, with your love and your zeal, when you are thoroughly consecrated to him.

Once more, Abraham became the great intercessor for others. The next chapter is full of his pleadings for Sodom. He had not been able to plead before, but after circumcision, after consecration, he becomes the King's remembrancer, he is installed into the office of a priest, and he stands there crying, "Wilt thou not save the city? Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" O beloved, if we do but become consecrated to God, thoroughly so, as I have attempted feebly to describe, we shall become mighty with God in our pleadings. I believe one holy man is a greater blessing to a nation than a whole regiment of soldiers. Did not they fear more the prayers of John Knox than the arms of ten thousand men? A man



who lives habitually near to God is like a great cloud for ever dropping with fertilising showers. This is the man who can say, "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof." France had never seen so bloody a revolution had there been men of prayer to preserve her. England, amidst the commotions which make her rock to and fro, is held fast because prayer is put up incessantly by the faithful. The flag of old England is nailed to her mast, not by the hands of her sailors, but by the prayers of the people of God. These, as they intercede day and night, and as they go about their spiritual ministry, these are they for whom God spareth nations, for whom he permitteth the earth still to exist; and when their time is over, and they are taken away, the salt being taken from the earth, then shall the elements dissolve with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up; but not until he hath caught away the saints with Christ into the air shall this world pass away. He will spare it for the righteous' sake. Seek after the highest degree of sanctity, my dear brethren and sisters, seek for it, labor for it; and while you rest in faith alone for justification, be not slack concerning growth in grace, that the highest attainments be your ambition, and God grant them to you, for his Son's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Genesis 17 and Colossians 2:10-15.

# JESUS ONLY

## SERMON NO. 924

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3RD, 1870,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”*  
— *Matthew 17:8.*

THE last words will suffice us for a text, “Jesus only.” When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, “Master, it is good to be here,” as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter, was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting society of “Jesus only.” Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with “Jesus only,” which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious,

and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendor. "Jesus only," is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. "Jesus only," as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body, than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of "Jesus only," we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration; we shall then dwell on what did happen; and then, thirdly, we shall speak on what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day.

**I.** First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things, either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, they might have seen nobody with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses, no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away; like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children

left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! For those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone, and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God, for a while delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses nor Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel and perceives not its reality; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, any thing for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and the spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be revered, all to be respected, but nothing more; there is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century; we have got beyond all that. Ah! Brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other

hand, say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church; we have seen him, though not with eyes; we have heard him, though not with ears; we have grasped him, though not with hands; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succors. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Savior. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes they might have seen Moses only. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for man of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Savior's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose

name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God, cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day; after the clear revelations of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts; yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows — a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not "Jesus only," but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fullness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the Gospel, feel nothing except a

sense of their own sinfulness, and, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfuller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary, where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where “Jesus only” speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see “Jesus only.”

But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, they might have seen Elijah only. Instead of the gentle Savior, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have

remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God's own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, "Command fire from heaven," Elias would have consumed his foes; the Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end; Herod's blood, like Ahab's, would have been licked up by dogs; and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Savior of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to "Jesus only." I am not myself fond of even using the term "preparing for Christ," for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith — a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! How many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longing and go no further. They never get so far as to behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah's challenge, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;"



but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Savior. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you (ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Savior is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. "Jesus only" is the way, the truth, and the life. "Jesus only" is the sinner's Savior. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see "Jesus only."

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another: a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes — they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humble spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiriting? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see "Jesus only," as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star; all those guardians and comforters of the night have disappeared; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the moon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in

Jesus; the law is honored and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in "Jesus only." And why should I wish to retain Elias? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in "Jesus only." It is better to see Moses and Elias in Christ, than to see Moses and Elias with Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie's English Grammar, or a Mavor's Spelling Book, or a Henry's First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath day, because all Sabbath in heaven. Thus, you see, the losing of some things is gain: it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see

Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ himself. Like the traveler ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one born among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mount Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only!"

**II.** Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

"They saw no man, save Jesus only." This was all they wanted to see for their comfort. They were sore afraid: Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word; yet when Jesus said, "Be not afraid," their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, not to prophecy: go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the Savior they wanted. Those three men all needed washing from sin; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah! brethren, all the Savior we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would

bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen “Jesus only,” and if Moses has gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. “Jesus only,” is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a Master. “No man can serve two masters,” and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower’s mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain; in the day of difficulty, enough for their direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield, “One is our Master,” and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as their power for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven: Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. “Jesus only.” Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffer’s fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ

must constrain us, and we shall thus “judge, that if one died for all, then were we all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” In the point of motive, believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished, will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honor him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name. Here is a stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, “Jesus only.” Brethren, it is all the gospel we have to preach — it is all the gospel we want to preach — it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion, even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach today what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the gospel towers above the wrecks of time: to us “Jesus only” remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else.

For “Jesus only” shall be our reward, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant that we may have a fullness of this, and “Jesus only” shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought, than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw “Jesus only,” they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

**III.** I must close, though I fain would linger. Brethren, let us think of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be "Jesus only." I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments right, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only. Other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that any thing which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the religion of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian.

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Savior. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat; it nailed him to the cross; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if

you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." you will best read your interest in Christ, by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it? But I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Savior, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptized; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved. You see it is not by looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fullness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at him! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias

should alarm you, yet “Jesus only” shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, “Jesus only.” May God bless you for the sake of “Jesus only.” Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Matthew 17.



# LIFE IN CHRIST

## SERMON NO. 968

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 1ST, 1871

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Because I live, ye shall live also.” — John 14:19.\**

THIS world saw our Lord Jesus for a very little time, but now it seeth him no more. It only saw him with the outward eye and after a carnal sort, so that when the clouds received him and concealed him from bodily vision, this spiritually blind world lost sight of him altogether. Here and there, however, among the crowds of the sightless there were a few chosen men who had received spiritual sight; Christ had been light to them, he had opened their blind eyes, and they had seen him as the world had not seen him. In a high and full sense they could say, “We have seen the Lord,” for they had in some degree perceived his Godhead, discerned his mission, and learned his spiritual presence of its object, those persons who had seen Jesus spiritually, saw him after he had gone out of the world unto the Father. We who have the same sight still see him. Read carefully the words of the verse before us: “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.” It is a distinguishing mark of a true follower of Jesus that he sees his Lord and Master when he is not to be seen by the bodily eye; he sees him intelligently and spiritually; he knows his Lord, discerns his character, apprehends him by faith, gazes upon him with admiration as our first sight of Christ brought us into spiritual life, for we looked unto him and were saved, so it is by the continuance of this spiritual sight of Christ that our spiritual life is consciously maintained. We lived by looking, we live still by looking. Faith is still the medium by which life comes to us from the life-giving Lord. It is not only upon the first day of the Christian's life that he must needs look to Jesus only, but every day of that life, even until the last, his motto must be, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” The world sees him no more, for it never

saw him aright; but ye have seen him and lived, and now, through continuing still to see him, you remain in life. Let us ever remember the intimate connection between faith and spiritual life. Faith is the life-look. we must never think that we live by works, by feelings, or by ceremonies. "The just shall live by faith." We dare not preach to the ungodly sinner a way of obtaining life by the works of the law, neither dare we hold up to the most advanced believer a way of sustaining life by legal means. We should in such a case expect to hear the apostle's expostulation, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Our glorifying is that our life is not dependent on ourselves, but is safe in our Lord, as saith the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Because he lives, we live, and shall live for ever. God grant that our eye may ever be clear towards Jesus, our life. May we have no confidence but in our Redeemer; may our eyes be fixed upon him, that no other object may in any measure or degree shut out our view of him as our all in all.

The text contains in it very much of weighty truth, far more than we shall be able to bring forth from it this morning. First, we see in it a life; secondly, that life preserved; and thirdly, the reason for the preservation of that life: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

**I.** First, we have LIFE here spoken of.

We must not confound this with existence. It were indeed to reduce a very rich text to a poverty-stricken sentence if we read it, "Because I exist, ye shall exist also." We could not say of such a use of words that the water of ordinary speech was turned to wine, but rather that the wine was turned to water. Before the disciples believed in Jesus they existed, and altogether apart from him as their spiritual life their existence would have been continued; it was something far other and higher than immortal existence which our Lord was here dealing with.

Life, what is it? We know practically, but we cannot tell in words. We know it, however, to be a mystery of different degrees. As all flesh is not the same flesh, so all life is not the same life. There is the life of the vegetable, the cedar of Lebanon, the hyssop on the wall. There is a

considerable advance when we come to animal life — the eagle or the ox. Animal life moves in quite a different world from that in which the plant vegetates — sensation, appetite, instinct, are things to which plants are dead, though they may possess some imitation of them, for one life mimics another. Animal life rises far above the experience and apprehension of the flower of the field. Then there is mental life, which we all of us possess, which introduces us into quite another realm from that which is inhabited by the mere beast. To judge, to foresee, to imagine, to invent, to perform moral acts, are not these new functions which the ox hath not? Now, let it be clear to you, that far above mental life there is another form of life of which the mere carnal man can form no more idea than the plant of the animal, or the animal of the poet. The carnal mind knoweth not spiritual things, because it has no spiritual capacities. As the beast cannot comprehend the pursuits of the philosopher, so the man who is but a natural man cannot comprehend the experience of the spiritually minded. Thus saith the Scripture: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” There is in believers a life which is not to be found in other men — nobler, diviner for education cannot raise the natural man into it, neither can refinement reach it; for at its best, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and to all must the humbling truth be spoken, “Ye must be born again.”

It is to be remarked concerning our life in Christ, that it is the removal of the penalty which fell upon our race for Adam’s sin. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” was the Lord’s threatening to our first parent, who was the representative of the race. He did eat of the fruit, and since God is true, and his word never fails, we may be sure of this, that in that selfsame day Adam died. It is true that he did not cease to exist, but that is quite another thing from dying. The threatening was not that he should ultimately die, but “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;” and it is beyond all doubt that the Lord kept his word to the letter. If the first threatening was not carried out we might take liberty to trifle with all others. Rest assured, then, that the threat was on the spot fulfilled. The spiritual life departed from Adam; he was no longer at one with God, no more able to live and breathe in the same sphere as the Lord.

He fell from his first estate; he had need if he should enter into spiritual life to be born again, even as you and I must be. As he hides himself from his Maker, and utters vain excuses before his God, you see that he is dead to the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins. We also, being heirs of wrath even as others, are through the fall dead, dead in trespasses and sins; and if ever we are to possess spiritual life, it must be said of us, "And you hath he quickened." We must be as "those that are alive from the dead." The world is the valley of dry bones, and grace raises the chosen into newness of life. The fall brought universal death, in the deep spiritual sense of that word, over all mankind; and Jesus delivers us from the consequences of the fall by implanting in us a spiritual life. By no other means can this death be removed: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The work of regeneration, in which the new life is implanted, effectually restores the ruin of the fall, for we are born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." But you remind me that still sin remains in us after we have received the divine life. I know it does, and it is called "the body of this death;" and this it is which rages within, between the power of the death in the first Adam, and the power of the life in the second Adam; but the heavenly life will ultimately overcome the deadly energy of sin. Even to-day our inner life groans after deliverance, but with its groan of "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" it mingles the thankful song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This life is of a purely spiritual kind. We find analogies and resemblances of it in the common mental life, but they are only analogies, the spiritual life is far and high above the carnal life, and altogether out of sight of the fleshly mind. Scarce are there words in which it can be described. To know this life you must have it; it must pulsate within your own bosom, for no explanations of others can tell you what this life is; it is one of the secrets of the Lord. It would not be possible for us with the greatest skill to communicate to a horse any conception of what imagination is; neither could we by the most diligent use of words, communicate to carnal minds what it is to be joined unto the Lord so as to be one spirit. One thing we know of it, namely, that the spiritual life is intimately connected with the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul. When he comes we are “born again from above,” “born of the Spirit.” While he works in us mightily our life is active and powerful if he withdraws his active operations our new life becomes faint and sickly. Christ is our life, but he works in us through his Holy Spirit, who dwelleth in us evermore.

Further, we know that this life very much consists in union with God. “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither again can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Death as to the body consists in the body being separated from the soul; the death of the soul lies mainly in the soul’s being separated from its God. For the soul to be in union with God is the soul’s highest life; in his presence it unfolds itself like an opening flower; away from him it pines, and loses all its beauty and excellence, till it is as a thing destroyed. Let the soul obey God, let it be holy, pure, gracious, then is it happy, an truly living; but a soul saundered from God is a soul blasted, killed, destroyed; it exists in a dreadful death; all its true peace, dignity, and glory, are gone; it is a hideous ruin, the mere corpse of manhood. The new life brings us near to God, makes us think of him, makes us love him, and ultimately makes us like him. My brethren, it is in proportion as you get near to God that you enter into the full enjoyment of life — that life which Jesus Christ gives you, and which Jesus Christ preserves in you. “In his favor is life.” Psalm 30:5. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.” Proverbs 14:27. To turn to God is “repentance unto life.” To forget God is for a man to be “dead whilst he liveth.” To believe the witness of God is to possess the faith which overcometh the world. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

This life within the soul bears fruit on earth in righteousness and true holiness. It blooms with sweetest of flowers of fellowship with God below, and it is made perfect in the presence of God in heaven. The life of glorified spirits above is but the life of justified men here below; it is the same life, only it is delivered from encumbrances, and has come to the

fullness of its strength. The life of heaven is in every believer even now. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus he receives from God that selfsame life which shall look down serenely upon the conflagration of earth, and the passing away of those lower skies. Blessed is that man who hath everlasting life, who is made a partaker of the divine nature, who is born again from above, who is born of God by a seed which remaineth in him, for he is the man upon whom the second death hath no power, who shall enjoy life eternal when the wicked go away into everlasting punishment.

Thus much concerning this life. We have now to ask each of you whether you have received it. Have you been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God? Was there a time with you when you passed from death unto life, or are you abiding in death? Have you the witness in yourself that you have been operated upon by a divinely spiritual power? Is there something in you which was not once there, not a faculty developed by education, but a life implanted by God himself? Do you feel an inward craving unknown to carnal minds, a longing desire which this world could neither excite nor gratify? Is there a strange sighing for a land as yet unseen, of which it is a native, and for which it yearns? Do you walk among the sons of men as a being of another race, not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world? Can you say, with the favored apostle, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Oh! then, thank God for this, and thank God yet more that you have an infallible guarantee for this, and thank God yet more that you have an infallible guarantee that your life shall be continued and perfected, for so saith the text, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

**II.** Our second head treats of LIFE PRESERVED. "Because I live, ye shall live also." There stands the promise, "Ye shall live also. This heavenly life of yours which ye have received shall be preserved to you.

Concerning this sentence, let me draw your attention, first of all, to its fullness: "Ye shall live." I think I see in that much more than lies upon the surface. Whatever is meant by living shall be ours. All the degree of life which is secured in the covenant of grace, believers shall have. Moreover, all your new nature shall live, shall thoroughly live, shall eternally live. By

this word it is secured that the eternal life implanted at regeneration shall never die out. As our Lord said so shall it be. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." We may not view this precious word as referring to all the essential spiritual graces which make up the new man? Not even, in part, shall the new man die. "Ye shall live," applies to all the parts of our new-born nature. If there be any believer here who has not lived to the full extent he might have done, let him lay hold upon this promise; and seeing that it secures the preservation of all his new nature, let him have courage to seek a higher degree of health. "I am come," saith Christ, "that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." There is no reason, Christian, why your love to Jesus should not become flaming, ardent, conquering; for it lives, and ever must live. As to your faith, it also has immortal vitality in it, and even though it be just now weak, and staggering, lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees, for your faith shall not die out. Here in your Lord's promise the abiding nature of the vital faculties of your spirit is guaranteed. There is no stint in the fullness of Christian life. Beneath the skies I would labor to attain it, but herein is my joy, that it shall be most surely mine, for this word is faithful and true. As surely as I have this day eternal life by reason of faith in Christ Jesus, so surely shall I reach its fullness when Christ who is my life shall appear. Even here on earth I have the permit to seek for the fullest development of this life; nay I have a precept in this promise bidding me to seek after it. "Ye shall live," means that the new life shall not be destroyed — no, not as to any of its essentials. All the members of the spiritual man shall be safe; we may say of it as of the Lord himself, "Not a bone of him shall be broken." The shield of Christ's own life covers all the faculties of our spiritual nature. We shall not enter into life halt or maimed; but he will present us faultless before the presence of his glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, much less nay dead limbs or decayed faculties. It is a grand promise, and covers the spiritual nature as with the wings of God, so that we may apply to it the words of David, in the ninety-first Psalm: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence

that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

The text secures that the death-penalty of the law shall never fall upon believers. The quickened man shall never fall back into the old death from which he has escaped; He shall not be numbered with the dead, and condemned either in this life or the next. Never shall the spiritually living become dead again in sin. As Jesus being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him; even so sin shall not have dominion over us again. Once, through the offense of one, death reigned in us; but now having received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus. Romans 5:17.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Romans 5:10.

We are united to Christ this day by bands of spiritual life which neither things present nor things to come can separate. Our union to Jesus is eternal. It may be assailed; but it shall never be destroyed. The old body of this death may for awhile prevail, and like Herod it may seek the young child’s life, but it cannot die. Who shall condemn to death that which is not under the law? Who shall slay that which abides under the shadow of the Almighty? Even as sin reigned unto death, even so must grace reign unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remark carefully the continuance insisted upon in this verse. Continuance is indeed the main element of this promise — “Ye shall live.” It means certainly that during our abode in this body we shall live. We shall not be again reduced to our death-state during our sojourn here. Ten thousand attempts will be made to bring us under dominion to the law of sin and death, but this one word baffles all. Your soul may be so assailed that it shall seem as if you could not keep your hold on Christ, but Christ shall keep his hold on you. The incorruptible seed may be crushed, bruised, buried, but the life within it shall not be extinguished, it shall yet arise. “Ye shall live.” When ye see all around you ten thousand elements of death, think ye believers, how grand is this word, “Ye shall live.” No falling from



grace for you, no being cast out of the covenant, no being driven from the Father's house and left to perish. "Ye shall live."

Nor is this all, for when the natural death comes, which indeed to us is no longer death, our inner life shall suffer no hurt whatsoever; it will not even be suspended for a moment. It is not a thing which can be touched by death. The shafts of the last enemy can have no more effect upon the spiritual, than a javelin upon a cloud. Even in the very crisis, when the soul is separated from the body, no damage shall be done to the spiritual nature. And in the awful future, when the judgment comes, when the thrones are set, and the multitudes are gathered, and to the right the righteous, and to the left the wicked, let what may of terror and of horror come frothy, the begotten of God shall live. Onward through eternity, whatever may be the changes which yet are to be disclosed, nothing shall affect our God-given life. Like the life of God himself — eternal, and ever-blessed, it shall continue. Should all things else be swept away, the righteous must live on; I mean not merely that they shall exist, but they shall live in all the fullness of that far-reaching, much-comprehending word "life." Bearing the nature of God as far as the creature can participate in it, the begotten from the dead shall prove the sureness of the promise, "Ye shall live."

Let me further call to your notice that the fact here stated is univocal, in application to all spiritual life. The promise is, "Ye shall live," that is to say, every child of God shall live. Every one who sees Christ, as the world sees him not, is living and shall live. I can understand such a promise given to eminent saints who live near to God, but my soul would prostrate herself before the throne in reverent loving wonder when she hears this word spoken to the very least and meanest of the saints, "Ye shall live." Thou art not exempted, thou whose faith is but as a smoking flax, thou shalt live. The Lord bestows security upon the least of his people as well as upon the greatest. It is plain that the reason given for the preservation of the new life is as applicable to one saint as another. If it had been said, "Because your faith is strong, ye shall live" then weak faith would have perished; but when it is written, "Because I live," the argument is as powerful in the one case as in the other. Take it home to thyself, my brother, however heavy thy heart, or dim thy bone, Jesus lives, and you shall live.

Remark yet again that this text is exceeding broad. Mark its breadth and see how it meets everything to the contrary, and overturns all the hopes of the adversary. "Ye shall live." Then the inbred corruption which rides within us shall not stifle the new creature. Chained as the spirit seem to be to the loathsome and corrupt body of this death, it shall live in spite of its hideous companionship. Though besetting sins may be as arrows, and fleshly lusts like drawn swords, yet grace shall not be slain. Neither the fever of hasty passion, nor the palsy of timorousness, nor the leprosy of covetousness, nor any other disease of sin, shall so break forth in the old nature as to destroy the new. Nor shall outward circumstances overthrow the inner life. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. If providence should cast you into a godless family, where you dwell as in a sepulcher, and the air you breathe is laden with the miasma of death, yet shall you live. Evil example shall not poison your spirit, you shall drink this deadly thing and it shall not hurt you, you shall be kept from giving way to evil. You shall not be decoyed by fair temptation, you shall not be cowed by fierce persecution: mightier is he that is in you than he which is in the world. Satan will attack you, and his weapons are deadly, but you shall foil him at all points. To you is it given to tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot. If God should allow you for awhile to be sorely tried, as he did his servant Job, and if the devil should have all the world to help him in his attempt to destroy your spiritual life, yet even on the dunghill of poverty, and in the wretchedness of sickness, your spirit shall still maintain its holy life, and you shall prove it so by blessing and magnifying God, notwithstanding all. We little dream what may be reserved for us; we may have to climb steeps of prosperity, slippery and dangerous, but we shall live; we may be called to sink into the dark waters of adversity, all God's waves and billows may go over us, but we shall live. WE may traverse persilent swamps of error, or burning dewerts of unbelief, but the divine life shall live amid the domains of death. Let the future be bright or black, we need not wish to turn the page; that which we prize best, namely, our spiritual life, is hid with Christ in God, beyond the reach of harm, and we shall live. If old age shall be our portion, and our crown shall be delayed till we have fought a long and weary battle, yet nevertheless we

shall live; or if sudden death should cut short the time of our trial here, yet we shall have lived in the fullness of that word.

### **III.** Our third point is, THE REASON FOR THE SECURITY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The reason assigned is this, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ has life essentially as God. Christ, as man, having fulfilled his life-work, having offered full atonement for human sin, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. His life is communicated to us, and becomes the guarantee to us that we shall live also.

Observe, first, that this is the sole reason of the believer's spiritual life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The means by which the soul is pardoned is found in the precious blood of Jesus; the cause of its obtaining spiritual life at first is found in Christ's finished work; and the only reason why the Christian continues still to live after he is quickened, lies in Jesus Christ, who liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore. When I first come to Christ, I know I must find all in him, for I feel I have nothing of my own; but all my life long I am to acknowledge the same absolute dependence; I am still to look for everything to him. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, yet can do nothing." the temptation is after we have looked to Jesus and found life there, to fancy that in future time we are to sustain ourselves in spiritual existence by some means within ourselves, or by supplies extra and apart from Christ. But it must not be so; all for the future as well as all for the past is wrapped up in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Because he died, ye are pardoned; because he lives, ye live; all your life still lies in him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Does not the Christian's life depend upon his prayerfulness? Could he be a Christian if he ceased to pray? We reply, the Christian's spiritual health depends upon his prayerfulness, but that prayerfulness depends on something else. The reason why the hands of the clock move may be found first in a certain wheel which operates upon them, but if you go to the primary cause of all, you reach the main-spring, or the weight, which is the source of all the motion. Many secondary causes tend to sustain spiritual life; but the primary cause, the first and foremost, is because Jesus Christ lives. "All my fresh springs are in thee." While Jesus

lives, he sends the Spirit; the Spirit being sent, we pray; our prayer becomes the evidence of our spiritual life. "But are not good works essential to the maintenance of the spiritual life?" Certainly, if there be no good works, we have no evidence of spiritual life. In its season the tree must bring forth its fruit and its leaves; if there be no outward sign we suspect that there is no motion of the sap within. Still, to the tree the fruit is not the cause of life, but the result of it, and to the life of the Christian, good works bear the same relationship, they are its outgrowth, not its root. If then my spiritual life is low, what am I to look to? I am not to look to my prayers, I am not to find comfort in my works. I may from these discover how declining I am; but if I want my life to be renovated, I must fly to the fountain of my life, even Jesus, for there, and there only, shall I find restoration. Do let us recollect this, that we are not saved because of anything that we are, or anything that we do; and that we do not remain saved because of anything we are or can be. A man is saved because Christ died for him he continues saved because Christ lives for him. The sole reason why the spiritual life abides is because Jesus lives. This is to get upon a rock, above the fogs which cover all things down below. If my life rests on something within me, then to-day I live, and to-morrow I die; but if my spiritual life rests in Christ, then in my darkest frames-ay, and when sin has most raged against my spirit- still I live in the ever-living One, whose life never changes.

Secondly, it is a sufficient cause for my life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." It must be enough to make believers live that Christ lives; for first, Christ's life is a proof that his work has accomplished the absolution of his people from their sins. He would have been in the tomb to this hour had he not made a complete satisfaction for their sins, but his rising again from the dead is the testimony of God that he has accepted the atonement of his dear Son; his resurrection is our full acquittal. Then if the living Christ be our acquittal, how can God condemn us to die for sins which he has by the fact of Christ's resurrection declared to be for ever blotted out? If Jesus lives, how can we die? Shall there be two deaths for one sin, the death of Christ and the death of those for whom he died? God forbid that there should be any such injustice with the Most High. The very fact that Jesus lives, proves that our sin has been atoned for, that we are absolved, and therefore cannot die.

Jesus is the representative of those for whom he is the federal head. Shall the representative live, and yet those represented die? How shall the living represent the dead? But in his life I see my own life, for as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, so is every saint in the loins of Christ, and the life of Christ is representatively the life of all his people.

Moreover, he is the surety for his people, under bonds and pledges to bring his redeemed safely home. His own declaration is, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." Will he break his covenant bonds? Shall his suretyship be cast to the winds? It cannot be. The fact that if any of his people for whom he died, to whom he has given spiritual life, should after all die, Christ would be disappointed of his intent, which supposition involves the grossest blasphemy. What so many shall he have for his reward? The purchase-price shall not be given in vain; a redemption so marvelous as that which he has presented upon the tree, shall never in any degree become a failure. His life, which proves his labor to be over, guarantees to people. Know ye not, my brethren, that if one of those to whom Christ has given spiritual life should after all fall from it and die, it would argue either that he had a want of power to keep them, or a want of will to do so. Shall we conceive him to be devoid of power? Then how he is mighty God? Is he devoid of will to keep his people- is that conceivable? Cast out the traitorous thought! He must be as willing as he is able, and as able as he is willing. While he was in this world, he kept his people; having loved his own, he loved them to the end; he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," he will not suffer one of these little ones to perish.

Recollect, and this perhaps will cheer you most of all, that all who have spiritual life are one with Christ Jesus. Jesus is the head of the mystical body, they are the members. Suppose one of the members of the mystical body of Christ should die, then from that moment, with reverence be it spoken, Christ is not a complete Christ. What were the head without the body? A most ghastly sight. What were the head with only a part of the members? Certainly not perfect. There must be every member present to make a complete body. Therefore we gather that you, brother, though you think yourself the meanest part of the body, are nevertheless, essential to its perfection; and you, sister, though you fancy yourself to be one of the uncomely portions of the body, yet you must be there, or else the body

cannot be perfect, and Christ cannot be a complete Christ. From him, the head, the life streams into all the members and while that head lives as a perfect head of a perfect body, all members must live also. As we have often said, as long as a man's head is above water you cannot drown his limbs; as long as our head is above the reach of spiritual death we also are the same—no weapons can hurt, no poison can destroy, not all hell's fires could burn, nor all earth's floods could drown, the spiritual life within us: it must be safe because it is indissolubly one with Jesus Christ the Lord. What comfort, then, lies in this, the sole but sufficient reason for the eternal maintenance of the new-born life within us, is this, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

And be it remembered, that this reason is an abiding reason — "Because I live, ye shall live also" — a reason which has as much force at one time as another. From causes variable the effects are variable; but remaining causes produce permanent effects. Now Jesus always lives. Yesterday, dear brother you were exalted in fellowship with him, and stood upon the mountain top; then your heart was glad, and your spirit rejoiced, and you could say, "I live in Christ." To-day darkness has intervened, you do not feel the motions of the inner life as you did yesterday, but do not therefore conclude that the life is not there. What is to be your sign; what is to be the rainbow of the covenant to you? Why, that Jesus lives. Do you doubt that he lives? You dare not. You trust him, doubt not then that you live, for your life is as sure as his. Believe also that you shall live, for that also is as sure as the fact that he lives. God gave to Noah, a token that he would not destroy the earth—it was the rainbow: but then the rainbow is not often seen; there are peculiar circumstances before the bow is placed in the cloud. You, brother, you have a token of God's covenant given you in the text which can always be seen, neither sun nor shower are needful to its appearance. The living Christ is the token that you live too. God gave to David the token of the sun and the moon; he said if the ordinances of day and night should be changed, then would he cast off the seed of David. But there are times when neither sun nor moon appear, but your token is plain when these are hidden. Christ at all times lives. When you are lowest, when you cannot pray, when you can hardly groan, when you do not seem to have spiritual life enough even to heave a desire, still if you

cling to Jesus this life is as surely in you as there is life in Christ himself at the right hand of the Father.

And lastly, it is a most instructive cause. It instructs us in many ways: let us hint at three. It instructs us to admire the condescension of Christ. Look at the two pronouns, “ye” and “I”; shall they ever come into contact? yes, here they stand in close connection with each other. “I” — the I AM the Infinite; “ye” the creatures of an hour; yet I, the Infinite, come into union with you, the finite; I the Eternal, take up you the fleeting, and I make you live because I live. What? Is there such a bond between me and Christ? Is there such a link between his life and mine? Blessed be his name! Adored be his infinite condescension!

It demands of us next abundance of gratitude. Apart from Christ we are dead in trespasses and sins; look at the depth of our degradation! But in Christ we live, live with his own life. Look at the height of our exaltation, and let our thankfulness be proportioned to this infinity of mercy. Measure if you can from the lowest hell to the highest heaven, and so great let your thankfulness be to him who has lifted you from death to life.

Let the last lesson be see the all-importance of close communion with Jesus. Union with Christ makes you live; keep up your enjoyment of that union, that you may clearly perceive and enjoy your life. Begin this year with the prayer, “Nearer to thee, my Lord, nearer to thee.” Think much of the spiritual life and less of this poor carnal life, which will be soon be over. Go to the source of life for an increase of spiritual life. Go to Jesus. Think of him more than you have done, pray to him more; use his name more believingly in your supplications. Serve him better, and seek to grow up into his likeness in all things. Make an advance this year. Life is a growing thing. Your life only grows by getting nearer to Christ; therefore, get under the beams of the Sun of the Righteousness. Time brings you nearer to him, you will soon be where he is in heaven; let grace bring you nearer also. You taste more of his love as fresh mercies come, give him more of your love, more of your fellowship. Abide in him, and may his word abide in you henceforth and for ever, and all shall be to his glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Colossians 3.

\* This text has been sent us by a venerable clergyman of the Church of England, who has for many years selected a new year's text for us, and others of his friends. In the calm enjoyment of divine consolations, such as this verse affords, may his last days pass away in tranquility and rejoicing.



# REST, REST

## SERMON NO. 969

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8TH, 1871,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

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

WE have oft repeated those memorable words, and they have brought us much comfort; but it is possible that we may never have looked deeply into them, so as to have seen the fullness of their meaning. The works of man will seldom bear close inspection. You shall take a needle which is highly polished, which appears to be without the slightest inequality upon its surface, and you shall put it under a microscope, and it will look like a rough bar of iron; but you shall select what you will from nature, the bark or the leaf of a tree, or the wing or the foot of an insect, and you shall discover no flaw, magnify it as much as you will, and gaze upon it as long as you please. So take the words of man. The first time you hear them they will strike you; you may hear them again and still admire their sentiment, but you shall soon weary of their repetition, and call them hackneyed and over-estimated. The words of Jesus are not so, they never lose their dew, they never become threadbare. You may ring the changes upon his words, and never exhaust their music: you may consider them by day and by night, but familiarity shall not breed contempt. You shall beat them in the mortar of contemplation, with the pestle of criticism, and their perfume shall but become the more apparent. Dissect, investigate, and weigh the Master's teaching word by word, and each syllable will repay you. When loitering upon the Island of Liddo, off Venice, and listening to the sound of the city's bells, I thought the music charming as it floated across the lagune; but when I returned to the city, and sat down in the center of the music, in the very midst of all the bells, the sweetness

changed to a horrible clash, the charming sounds were transformed into a maddening din; not the slightest melody could I detect in any one bell, while harmony in the whole company of noisemakers was out of the question. Distance had lent enchantment to the sound. The words of poets and eloquent writers may, as a whole, and heard from afar, sound charmingly enough; but how few of them bear a near and minute investigation! Their belfry rings passably, but one would soon weary of each separate bell. It is never so with the divine words of Jesus. You hear them ringing from afar and they are sweetness itself. When as a sinner, you roamed at midnight like a traveler lost on the wilds, how sweetly did they call you home! But now you have reached the house of mercy, you sit and listen to each distinct note of love's perfect peal, and wonderingly feel that even angelic harps cannot excel it.

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

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

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

**1.** Observe the person invited to receive this first rest: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The word "all" first demands attention: "All ye that labor." There was need for the insertion of that wide word. Had not the Savior said a little before, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes?" Some one who had been listening to the Savior, might have said, "The Father, then, has determined

to whom he will reveal the Christ; there is a number chosen, according to the Father's good pleasure, to whom the gospel is revealed; while from another company it is hidden!" The too hasty inference, which it seems natural for man to draw from the doctrine is, "Then there is no invitation for me; there is no hope for me; I need not listen to the gospel's warnings and invitations." So the Savior, as if to answer that discouraging notion, words his invitation thus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Let it not be supposed that election excludes any of you from the invitation of mercy; all of you who labor, are bidden to come. Whatever the great doctrine of predestination may involve, rest assured that it by no means narrows or diminishes the extent of gospel invitations. The good news is to be preached to "every creature" under heaven, and in this particular passage it is addressed to all the laboring and heavy laden.

The description of the person invited is very full. It describes him both actively and passively. "All ye that labor" — there is the activity of men bearing the yoke, and ready to labor after salvation; "heavy laden" — there is the passive form of their religious condition, they sustain a burden, and are pressed down, and sorely wearied by the load they bear. There are to be found many who are actively engaged in seeking salvation; they believe that if they obey the precepts of the law they will be saved, and they are endeavoring to the utmost to do them; they have been told that the performance of certain rites and ceremonies will also save them, they are performing those with great care; the yoke is on their shoulders, and they are laboring diligently. Some are laboring in prayer, some are laboring in sacraments, others in self-denials and mortifications, but as a class they are awakened to feel the need of salvation, and they are intensely laboring to save themselves. It is to these the Savior addresses his loving admonition: in effect he tells them, "This is not the way to rest, your self-imposed labors will end in disappointment; cease your wearisome exertions, and believe in me, for I will at once give you rest — the rest which my labors have earned for believers." Very speedily those who are active in self-righteously working for salvation fall into the passive state, and become burdened; their labor of itself becomes a burden to them. Besides the burden of their self-righteous labor, there comes upon them the awful, tremendous, crushing burden of past sin, and a sense of the wrath of God which is due to that sin. A soul which has to bear the load of its own sin,

and the load of divine wrath, is indeed heavily laden. Atlas with the world upon his back had a light load compared with a sinner upon whom mountains of sin and wrath are piled. Such persons frequently are burdened, in addition, by fears and apprehensions; some of them correct, others of them baseless, but anyhow the burden daily grows. Their active labors do not diminish their passive sufferings. The acute anguish of their souls will often be increased in proportion as their endeavors are increased; and while they hope at first that if they labor industriously they will gradually diminish the mass of their sin, it happens that their labor adds to their weariness beneath its pressure; they feel a weight of disappointment, because their labor has not brought them rest; and a burden of despair, because they fear that deliverance will never come. Now these are the persons whom the Savior calls to himself — those who are actively seeking salvation, those who are passively bearing the weight of sin and of divine wrath.

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

**2.** Notice next, the precept here laid down: “Come.” It is not “Learn,” it is not “Take my yoke” — that is in the next verse, and is intended for the next stage of experience-but in the beginning the word of the Lord is, “Come unto me,” “Come.” A simple word, but very full of meaning. To come is to leave one thing and to advance to another. Come, then, ye laboring and heavy laden, leave your legal labors, leave your self-reliant efforts, leave your sins, leave your presumptions, leave all in which you hitherto have trusted, and come to Jesus, that is, think of, advance towards, rely upon the Savior. Let your contemplations think of him who bore the load of human sin upon the cross of Calvary, where he was made sin for us. Let your minds consider him who from his cross hurled the enormous mass of his people’s transgressions into a bottomless sepulcher,

where it was buried forever. Think of Jesus, the divinely-appointed substitute and sacrifice for guilty man. Then, seeing that he is God's own Son, let faith follow your contemplation; rely upon him, trust in him as having suffered in your stead, look to him for the payment of the debt which is due from you to the wrath of God. This is to come to Jesus. Repentance and faith make up this "Come" — the repentance which leaves that place where you now stand, the faith which comes into reliance upon Jesus.

Observe, that the command to "Come" is put in the present tense, and in the Greek it is intensely present. It might be rendered something like this: "Hither to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" It is a "Come" which means not "Come to-morrow or next year," but "Now, at once." Advance, ye slaves, flee from your task-master now! Weary ones recline on the promise now, and take your rest! Come now! By an act of instantaneous faith which will bring instantaneous peace, come and rely upon Jesus, and he will now give you rest. Rest shall at once follow the exercise of faith. Perform the act of faith now. O may the eternal Spirit lead some laboring heavy laden soul to come to Jesus, and to come at this precise moment!

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

come, without merit come, without preparation come. It is just, come, come now; come as you are, come with your burden, come with your yoke, though the yoke be the yoke of the devil, and the burden be the burden of sin, yet come as you are, and the promise shall be fulfilled to you, "I will give you rest."

**3.** Notice next the promise spoken, "I will give you rest." "I will give." It is a rest that is a gift; not a rest found in our experience by degrees, but given at once. As I shall have to show you, the next verse speaks of the rest that is found, wrought out, and discovered; but this is a rest given. We come to Jesus; we put out the empty hand of faith, and rest is given us at once most freely. We possess it at once, and it is ours forever. It is a present rest, rest now; not rest after death; not rest after a time of probation and growth and advancement; but it is rest given when we come to Jesus, given there and then. And it is perfect rest too; for it is not said, nor is it implied, that the rest is incomplete. We do not read, "I will give you partial rest," but "rest," as much as if there were no other form of it. It is perfect and complete in itself. In the blood and righteousness of Jesus our peace is perfect.

I shall not stay except to ask you now, brethren and sisters, whether you know the meaning of this given rest. Have you come to Jesus and has he given you perfect and present rest? If so, I know your eye will catch joyously those two little words, "And I," and I would bid you lovingly remember the promiser who speaks. Jesus promises and Jesus performs. Did not all your rest, when first your sin was forgiven, come from him? The load was gone, but who took it? The yoke was removed, but who lifted it from off the shoulder? Do you not give to Jesus, this day, the glory of all your rest from the burden of guilt? Do you not praise his name with all your souls? Yes, I know you do. And you know how that rest came to you. It was by his substitution and your faith in that substitution. Your sin was not pardoned by a violation of divine justice; justice was satisfied in Jesus; he gave you rest. The fact that he has made full atonement is the rest of your spirit this morning. I know that deep down in your consciences, the calm which blesses you springs from a belief in your Lord's vicarious sacrifice. He bore the unrest that you might have the rest, and you receive rest this day as a free gift from him. You have done now with servile toils and hopeless burdens, you have entered into rest

through believing; but all the rest and deliverance still comes to you as a gift from his dear hands, who purchased with a price this blessing for your souls. I earnestly wish that many who have never felt that rest, would come and have it; it is all they have to do to obtain it — to come for it; just where they now are, if God enables them to exercise a simple act of faith in Jesus, he will give them rest from all their past sins, from all their efforts to save themselves, a rest which shall be to his glory and to their joy.

## **II.** We must now advance to our second head — REST.

It looks rather strange that after having received rest, the next verse should begin: “Take my yoke upon you.” “Ah! I had been set free from laboring, am I to be a laborer again?” Yes, yes, take my yoke and begin. “And my burden is light.” “Burden? Why, I was heavy laden just now, am I to carry another burden?” Yes. A yoke — actively and a burden — passively, I am to bear both of these. “But I found rest by getting rid of my yoke and my burden!” And you are to find a further rest by wearing a new yoke, and bearing a new burden. Your yoke galled, but Christ’s yoke is easy; your burden was heavy, but Christ’s burden is light. Before we enter into this matter more fully, let us illustrate it. How certain it is that a yoke is essential to produce rest, and without it rest is unknown! Spain found rest by getting rid of that wretched monarch Isabella; an iron yoke was her dominion upon the nation’s neck, crushing every aspiration after progress by an intolerable tyranny. Up rose the nation, shook off its yoke, and threw aside its burden, and it had rest in a certain sense, rest from evil. But Spain has not fully rested yet, and it seems that she will never find permanent rest till she has voluntarily taken up another yoke, and found for herself another burden. In a word, she must have a strong, settled, recognized government, and then only will her distractions cease. This is just a picture of the human soul. It is under the dominion of Satan, it wears his awful yoke, and works for him; it bears his accursed burden, and groans under it; Jesus sets it free — but has it, therefore, a perfect rest? Yes, a rest from, but not a rest in. What is wanted now is a new government; the soul must have a sovereign, a ruling principle, a master-motive; and when Jesus has taken that position, rest is come. This further rest is what is spoken of in the second verse. Let me give you another symbol. A little stream flowed through a manufacturing town; an unhappy

little stream it was, for it was forced to turn huge wheels and heavy machinery, and it wound its miserable way through factories where it was dyed black and blue, until it became a foul and filthy ditch, and loathed itself. It felt the tyranny which polluted its very existence. Now, there came a deliverer who looked upon the streamlet and said, "I will set thee free and give thee rest." So he stopped up the water-course, and said, "abide in thy place, thou shalt no more flow where thou art enslaved and defiled." In a very few days the brooklet found that it had but exchanged one evil for another. Its waters were stagnating, they were gathering into a great pool, and desiring to find a channel. It was in its very nature to flow on, and it foamed and swelled, and pressed against the dam which stayed it. Every hour it grew more inwardly restless, it threatened to break the barrier, and it made all who saw its angry looks tremble for the mischief it would do ere long. It never found rest until it was permitted to pursue an active course along a channel which had been prepared for it among the meadows and the corn fields. Then, when it watered the plains and made glad the villages, it was a happy streamlet, perfectly at rest. So our souls are made for activity, and when we are set free from the activities of our self-righteousness and the slavery of our sin we must do something, and we shall never rest until we find that something to do. Hence in the text you will be pleased to see that there is something said about a yoke, which is the ensign of working, and something about a burden, which is the emblem of enduring. It is in man's mortal nature that he must do or endure, or else his spirit will stagnate and be far from rest.

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



asked or even thought. I have looked at this rest after rest as being a treasure concealed in a precious box. The Lord Jesus gives to his people a priceless casket, called the gift of rest; it is set with brilliants and inlaid with gems, and the substance thereof is of wrought gold; whosoever possesses it feels and knows that his warfare is accomplished and his sin is pardoned. After awhile the happy owner begins to examine his treasure. It is all his own, but he has not yet seen it all, for one day he detects a secret drawer, he touches a hidden spring, and lo! Before him lies a priceless Koh-i-noor surpassing all the rest. It had been given him it is certain, but he had not seen it at first, and therefore he finds it. Jesus Christ gives us in the gift of himself all the rest we can ever enjoy, even heaven's rest lies in him; but after we have received him we have to learn his value, and find out by the teaching of his Spirit the fullness of the rest which he bestows.

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

**2.** Further observe that the rest in this second part of our text is a rest in service. It is coupled with a yoke, for activity — “Take my yoke;” it is connected with a burden, for endurance — “My burden is light.” He who is a Christian will not find rest in being idle. There is no unrest greater than that of the sluggard. If you would rest take Christ's yoke, be actively engaged in his service. As the bullock has the yoke put upon its neck and then begins to draw, so have the yoke of Christ put on your neck and commence to obey him. The rest of heaven is not the rest of sleep; they serve him day and night in his temple. They are always resting, and yet, in another sense, they rest not day nor night. Holy activity in heaven is perfect rest. True rest to the mind of the child of God is rest on the wing, rest in motion, rest in service, not rest with the yoke off, but with the yoke on. We are to enter upon this service voluntarily; we are to take his

yoke upon us voluntarily. You observe, it does not say, "Bear my yoke when it is laid upon you, but take it." Do not need to be told by the minister, "My dear brother, such-and-such a work you are bound to do," but take up the yoke of your own accord. Do not merely submit to be the Lord's servant, but seek his service. Ask, "What can I do?" Be desirous to do it voluntarily, cheerfully, do all that lieth in you for the extension of his kingdom who has given you rest, and you shall find that the rest of your soul shall lie in your doing all you can for Jesus. Every active Christian will tell you he is never happier than when he has much to do; and, on the whole, if he communes with Jesus, never more at rest than when he has least leisure. Look not for your rest in the mere enjoyments and excitements of religion, but find your rest in wearing a yoke which you love, and which, for that reason, is easy to your neck.

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

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

ought to be? Throw them all away; learn of Jesus, and unlearn your own thoughts.

Then, when you are willing to learn, please to note what is to be learned. In order to get perfect rest of mind you have to learn of Jesus not only the doctrines which he teaches, but a great deal more than that. To go to school to be orthodox is a good enough thing, but the orthodoxy which brings rest is an orthodoxy of the spirit. Observe the text, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." What? For I am wise and learned, and can teach you? No; you are to learn from his example to be "meek and lowly in heart," and in learning that you will "find rest unto your souls." To catch the spirit of Jesus is the road to rest. To believe what he teaches me is something, to acknowledge him as my religious leader and as my Lord is much, but to strive to be conformed to his character, not merely in its external developments but in its interior spirit, this is the grammar of rest. Learn to be like the meek and lowly-hearted One, and ye shall find rest. He tells us the two points in which we are to learn of him. First, he is meek, then he says he is lowly in heart. Take the work "meek" first. I think that refers to the yoke-bearing, the active labor. If I actively labor for Christ I can only find rest in the labor by possessing the meek spirit of my Lord; for if I go forth to labor for Christ without a meek spirit, I shall very soon find that there is no rest in it, for the yoke will gall my shoulder.

Somebody will begin objecting that I do not perform my work according to his liking. If I am not meek I shall find my proud spirit rising at once, and shall be for defending myself; I shall be irritated, or I shall be discouraged and inclined to do no more, because I am not appreciated as I should be. A meek spirit is not apt to be angry, and does not soon take offense, therefore if others find fault, the meek spirit goes working on, and is not offended; it will not hear the sharp word, nor reply to the severe criticism. If the meek spirit be grieved by some cutting censure and suffers for a moment, it is always ready to forgive and blot out the past, and go on again. The meek spirit in working only seeks to do good to others; it denies itself; it never expected to be well treated; it did not aim at being honored; it never sought itself, but purposed only to do good to others. The meek spirit bowed its shoulder to the yoke, and expected to have to continue bowing in order to keep the yoke in the right place for labor. It did not look to be exalted by yoke-bearing; it is fully contented if it can

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

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

The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof were offered him, and he repelled the tempter. He was gentle, unobtrusive, self-denying; hence he treated his burden of poverty and shame as a light thing. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." If we once learn Christ's spirit we shall find rest unto our souls.

**4.** But we must pass on to notice, that it is very evident that the rest which we are to find is a rest which grows entirely out of our spirits being conformed to the spirit of Christ. "Learn of me, and ye shall find rest." It is then a spiritual rest altogether independent of circumstances. It is a vain idea of ours, to suppose that if our circumstances were altered we should be more at rest. My brother, if you cannot rest in poverty, neither would you in riches; if you cannot rest in the midst of persecution, neither would you in the midst of honor. It is the spirit within that gives the rest, that rest has little to do with any thing without. Men have sat on thrones and have found them uneasy places, while others on the rack have declared that they were at rest. The spirit is the spring of rest, as for the outward surroundings they are of small account. Let but your mind be like the mind of Christ, and you shall find rest unto your souls: a deep rest, a growing rest, a rest found out more and more, an abiding rest, not only which you have found, but which you shall go on to find. Justification gave you rest from the burden of sin, sanctification will give you rest from molesting cares; and in proportion as it becomes perfect, and you are like your Savior, your rest shall become more like that of heaven. I desire one other thing to be called to your mind before I turn to the practical use of the text, and that is that here, as in the former rest, we are led to adore and admire the blessed person of our Lord. Observe the words, "For I." Oh! it all comes from him still, the second rest as much as the first, the casket and the treasure in the secret drawer. It all hinges there, "For I am." In describing the second rest there is more said concerning him than in the first. In the first part of our text it only says, "I will give you rest;" but in the second part his character is more fully explained — "For I am meek and lowly in heart;" as if to show that as believers grow in grace, and enjoy more rest, they see more of Jesus and know more of him. All they know when sin is pardoned is that he gives it, perhaps they hardly know how; but afterwards when they come to rest in him in sweet fellowship, they

know more of his personal attributes, and their rest for that very reason becomes more deep and perfect.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Matthew 11.



# THE WEDDING GARMENT

## SERMON NO. 976

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1871

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.” — Matthew 22:11-14.*

APPARENTLY the parable of the marriage feast would have been complete without this addition, but there was infinite wisdom in appending this sequel. This is seen practically in the experience of the church of God. Those who are permitted to see large additions to the church will find this parable of the wedding garment to be singularly appropriate and timely. Whenever there is a revival and many are brought to Christ, it seems inevitable that at the same time a proportion of unworthy persons should enter the church. However diligent may be the oversight there will be pretenders creeping in unawares who have no true part or lot in the matter, and hence, when the preacher is most earnest for the ingathering of souls to Christ, he needs to couple therewith a holy jealousy, lest those who come forward to make a profession of faith should be moved by carnal motives, and should not really have given their hearts to God. We must use the net to draw in the many, but all are not good fishes that are taken therein. On the threshing floor of Zion the heap is not all pure wheat, the chaff is mingled with the grain, and therefore the winnowing fan is wanted. God's furnace is in Zion, and there is good need for it, for the gold is yet in the ore and needs to be separated from the dross. Wood, hay, and stubble building is quick work, but it is a waste of effort; we need continually to examine our materials, and see that we use only gold, silver, and precious stones. It is most needful in times of religious excitement, to remind men

that godliness does not consist in profession, but must be proved by inward vitality and outward holiness. Everything will have to be tested by a heart-searching God, and if, when he comes to search us, we are found wanting, we shall be expelled even from the marriage feast itself; for there is a way to hell from the very gates of heaven. In a word, it is well for all to be reminded that the enemies of the great King are not only outside the church, but they are even in it; while a part refuse to come to the wedding of his Son, others press into the banquet and are still his foes. May God grant that this subject may have a heart-searching effect. May it be as the north wind when it blows through the marrow of the bones. May it lead us to desire to be searched and tried of God, whether we are truly in the faith, or are reprobates in his esteem.

The parable may be discoursed upon under five heads. Here is an enemy at the feast; here is the king at the feast; that king becomes the judge at the feast; and hence the enemy becomes the criminal at the feast; and swiftly is removed by the executioner at the feast.

#### **I.** We see in the text AN ENEMY AT THE FEAST.

He came into the banquet when he was bidden, but he came only in appearance, he came not in heart. The banquet was intended for the honor of the son, but this man meant not so; he was willing to eat the good things, but he intended no respect to the prince. He did not, like others, say, "I will not come, for I will not have this man to reign over me"; but he said, "I will come, but it shall be in such a way that the royal purpose shall not be served, but rather hindered. I shall be present as an onlooker, but take no share in the ceremony; I will, on the contrary, show that I have no care for the business in hand, except so far as it serves my turn." The man came in full exercise of self-will and self-love. He resolved to yield no homage, but to assert his independent self-sovereignty. He would show the king even at his table, where his bounties were so largely dispensed, that he was not afraid to affront him. When he came to the door of the feast, he found the guests all putting on the garment suitable for the marriage banquet. As here, in our own country, at a funeral, each mourner is expected to put on the articles of mourning which are provided, so at the wedding feast each person was expected to wear the bridegroom's favors, the garment which, as a badge, marked him as an attendant at the wedding,

and as one who rejoiced in it. While others cheerfully put on this wedding dress the traitor would not; he resolved to defy the rules of the palace, and to insult the king by appearing in his own garments. He scorned to wear the livery of respectful joy, he preferred to make himself conspicuous by his daring insolence. The badge was intended to show that the wearer was a real participator in the joy of the feast, and for that very reason he would not put it on. He did not acknowledge the king nor the prince, nor care one atom about the gladsome event. He had no objection to be there, to eat the dainties, or recline upon the seats, and see the pomp and the show, but he was only in it, and not of it; he was there in body, but not in spirit. Are there not crowds of people whose union to the church is nothing better than an insult to God? Custom sways them, and not sincere faith. They have no regard to the great Head of the church or to the heart-searching God. They treat church membership as a trifle, and have no tenderness of heart touching the matter. They, in effect, say, "The table of the Lord is contemptible." "Spots are they in our feasts, feeding themselves without fear."

Many a time the question has been asked: "What was the wedding garment?" It is a question which need not be curiously pried into. So many answers have been given that I conclude that if our Savior had intended any one specific thing he would have expressed himself more plainly, so that we would have been able, without so much theological disputing, to have understood what he meant. It seems to me that our Lord intended much more than any one thing. The guests were bidden to come to the wedding to show their respect to the king and prince; some would not come at all, and so showed their sedition; this man came, and when he heard the regulation, that a certain garment should be put on, comely in appearance and suitable for the occasion, he determined that he would not wear it. In this act of rebellion, he went as far in opposition as they did who would not come at all, and he went a little further, for in the very presence of the guests and of the king he dared to declare his disloyalty and contempt. Alas, how many are willing enough to receive gospel blessings, but they are still at enmity with God and have no delight in the only Begotten Son. Such will dare to use the forms of godliness, and yet their hearts are full of rebellion against the Lord. The wedding garment represents anything which is indispensable to a Christian, but which the

unrenewed heart is not willing to accept, anything which the Lord ordains to be a necessary attendant of salvation, against which selfishness rebels. Hence it may be said to be Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for alas, many nominal Christians kick against the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of the Savior and set up their own self-righteousness in opposition to it. To be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but having the righteousness which is of God by faith, is a very prominent badge of a real servant of God, and to refuse it is to manifest opposition to the glory of God, and to the name, person, and work of his exalted Son. But we might with equal truth say that the wedding dress is a holy character, the imparted righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in us, and which is equally necessary as a proof of grace. If you question such a statement, I would remind you of the dress which adorns the saints in heaven. What is said of it? "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Their robes therefore were such as once needed washing; and this could not be said in any sense of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; that was always perfect and spotless. It is clear then that the figure is sometimes applied to saints in reference to their personal character. Holiness is always present in those who are loyal guests of the great King, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their nonsubmission to his Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart, they have not on the wedding dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of grace without picking and choosing. It is idle to dispute whether the wedding garment is faith or love, as some have done, for all the graces of the Spirit and blessings of the covenant go together. No one ever had the imputed righteousness of Christ without receiving at the same time a measure of the righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith is not contrary to the production of good works: God forbid. The faith by which we are justified is the faith which produces holiness, and no one is justified by faith which

does not also sanctify him and deliver him from the love of sin. All the essentials of the Christian character may be understood as making up the great wedding garment. In one word, we put on Christ, and he is “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

The wedding garment is simply mentioned here as being a test of loyalty to those who came to the marriage feast, and as a mode by which rebellion was avowed and loyalty made apparent. Here was a man then who came into the gospel feast, and yet refused to comply with the command which related to that feast. He willfully preferred self to God, his heart was full of enmity and pride, he despised the gifts of grace, he scorned the rule of love, he stood a defiant rebel even at the banquet of mercy which his king had spread.

His sin lay, first of all, in coming in there at all without the wedding garment. If he did not mean to be of one heart with his fellow guests and his lord, why did he come? If a man does not intend to yield himself up to God’s will, why does he profess to be of God’s church? If a man is not saved by the righteousness of Christ, why does he profess to be a believer in Christ? If he will not be obedient to Christ’s holy will, why does he pretend to be follower of Christ? It is a grave mistake for any person to imagine that he can be in the church of God to his own advantage unless his heart is renewed, unless he means what he declares, and sincerely loves the rule under which he professes to put himself.

The intruder’s sin was aggravated by the fact that after he had unlawfully come into the feast he still continued there without the wedding robe. He does not appear to have had any compunction, or to have thought of amending his error. Only when the king came in and said, “Take him away,” had the insolent rebel any idea of removing. Had he come in there, as I fear some of you have come into the church, under a mistake, thinking that there was no need of the wedding dress, when he looked around and saw all other persons wearing it, and observed that it was the peculiar mark of a guest, he would have felt uneasy and have gone to those who kept the royal wardrobe to get such a robe for himself; and then his sin in the matter would not have been laid to his charge. But he persisted in remaining where he was, and as he was. O my dear hearers, if you have already perpetrated the sin of union with the visible church of God

without having the prerequisites, without being indeed submissive to God in heart and desirous to honor Christ, I entreat you, seek what is wanted, seek faith in God, seek a new heart, seek holiness of life, seek to become a loyal subject of the King, and be not content until you have these things, for the King will soon come in: he gives you time as yet, may he also give you grace to see to it that, being now where you ought never to have been, you may yet make your position a right one by obtaining that which will justify you in remaining where you are. The guest in his own clothes was a speckled bird amongst that company, it was possible for him even then to have become one of them; but he would not, he continued to defy the King.

This persistence he retained though he probably knew the fate of those who had refused to come. He knew that the king had sent forth his armies and destroyed those wicked men who had molested his messengers, and yet he dared to recline at his ease in the very teeth, and defying the terrible power of the monarch. He made his brow as brass and hardened his heart as adamant, and forced his way into a position where his seditious spirit would be able to display itself conspicuously. He said within his soul, "I care nothing for this marriage. I will make sport of it; I will intrude myself into that feast and show my contempt. I will take the provisions, but the son shall have no honor from me, and the king shall not find me bend my will to his command." Thus he had the audacity to disport himself as a willful rebel at the feast of mercy. Are there any such among you here? The tendency will be for those who are not so to begin to condemn themselves. I know already one who has said, "I am that guest that had not on a wedding garment." She is not that one, for she is not even a member of the church, and therefore it cannot concern her; but many like her write bitter things against themselves. Another will be saying, "I am that one," whereas, if there be one that lives near to God and whose desire is to be like Christ, and to be in all things conformed to the divine will, he is the man. You who are most assuredly right will probably be suspicious that you are not, and you who are insincere and have never submitted yourselves to the will of God will probably say, "What does it matter? I am doing as well as others, I give as much, I attend the means as much, surely there can be no cause for concern in me." God grant that you may feel anxiety and fear before the Lord.

## II. We pass on to the next point — THE KING AT THE FEAST.

“The king came in to see the guests.” What an honor and privilege this was to the poor creatures whom his royal munificence had brought together! Was it not indeed the chief point of the entire festival? One of our greatest joys is to sing —

*The king himself comes near  
And feasts his saints today!*

What would church fellowship be if it had not the fellowship of God with it? To sit with my dear brethren and rejoice in their love is exceedingly delightful; but the best wine is fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The king did not provide the banquet and leave his guests to eat by themselves, but he “came in,” and into every gospel church gathered according to his command the King will come. I am sure the most fervent desire of this church is that the King may personally visit us. We trust he is with us, but we want him yet more fully to reveal himself. Our cry is, “Come, great King, with all thy glorious power, with thy Spirit and with thy glorious Son, and manifest thyself to us as thou dost not unto the world.”

When the king came into the banqueting chamber he saw the guests, and they also saw him. It was a mutual revelation. Ever sweet is this to the saints, that their God looks upon them; his look brings no terror to our minds when we are loyal and loving. “Thou God seest me” is sweet music. We desire to abide for ever beneath the divine inspection, for it is an inspection of unbounded love. He sees our faults, it is to remove them; he notes our imperfections, it is to cleanse them away. Behold me, O great King, and lift up thine eyes upon me, accepting me in the Beloved. What joy it is to us who are saved in Christ Jesus that we also can see him! “Through a glass darkly,” I grant you we behold him, for as yet we are not fit to behold the full splendor of his Godhead! but yet how sweetly doth he reveal himself to our souls and unveil his eternal love. Then it is that the feast is most fully a banquet of wine, when the banner of love waves over us, and the king’s voice fills us with unspeakable delight.

“The king came in to see his guests.” This, I say, was the crowning point of the entire banquet. Observe that he came in after they were in their places. They did not see him before they had entered his halls. When an

inferior entertains a superior he always advances to the door to meet him and waits until he comes. If her Majesty the Queen were entertained by one of her nobles, he would be in waiting, and at the threshold would meet her; but when a superior entertains an inferior the inferior may take his seat at the table, and when all is ready the noble host will come in. It is so in the banquet of mercy. You and I see nothing of God, by way of communion with him, until first we have been brought in by the message of mercy to the marriage-feast of the gospel; for, indeed, until then a sight of God would strike us with terror —

*“Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find;  
The holy, just, and sacred Three  
Are terrors to my mind;  
But when Immanuel’s face appear,  
My hope, my joy, begins;  
His name forbids my slavish fear,  
His grace removes my sins.”*

When I get to the banquet of mercy, then it is that I can dare to look at the King of kings, but not until then. What a joyous sight, a vision of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory as he appears in the gospel, feasting us upon his fatlings. An incarnate God makes God visible to us and makes us happy in the sight. “How canst thou see my face and live?” was the old question, but, behold, it is answered this day. At the marriage union of Christ with his people we see the face of the King in his beauty, and our souls not only live, but we have life more abundantly.

Observe, dear brethren, that the King has special times for this. He is not always in the festal chamber; to our sorrow we sometimes miss the King’s presence at his table. We have the ordinances always, but we do not always enjoy the God of ordinances. The means of grace are abiding, but the grace of the means will come and go according to the sovereign good pleasure of our God. The King has his times of coming in. These are glad times to his people, but they are trying times to the mass of professors. When are these times? So far as unworthy guests are concerned, the times of God’s visitation are those seasons when character is manifested. All times and periods do not reveal character. A lion may lie all day asleep, you may scarce know but what it is tame; but when the night brings the



time for it to go forth to its prey, then it howls, and displays its ferocity. And so an ungodly man may lie down in the church of God with the lambs of the flock, and nothing may lead you to suspect his true character, but when the time comes for him to make profit by sin, or to get pleasure by sin, or to escape from persecution by sin, then you find out what he is. These providences are the King's coming in to scrutinize the guests. Changes in the conditions of the church, changes in the condition of the individual, all sorts of providential events go to make up the great sieve by which the wheat and the chaff are separated.

A great and most solemn coming in of the King to see the guests is, when having looked over the church, unknown to us, he decides that such and such a hypocrite has had space enough for repentance and time enough for mischief, and must now be summoned to the dread tribunal by death. The time when the King comes in to see his guests is not the last judgment, for that is the coming of the Son and not of the Father, and if it were intended in the parable, we would read that the prince came in to see his guests. We are led to view the King himself as continually judging professors and detecting the rebels who place themselves among the saints; by this judgment of God men are taken away from the church in their transgressions, bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. I do not know, my dear brethren, when God may be visiting this church, and taking away the men that are rebels in our midst, but I do know that when professors die it is not certain that all of them sleep in Jesus; but some of them are rooted up, like tares from among the wheat, and are bound up in bundles to burn. The division is going on constantly. The King's presence is known to believers in the joy which they feel, but it is made known to hypocrites by his cutting them off and appointing them their portion in eternal woe.

If, however, there is any one time when we may be quite sure that the King comes in to see the guests, it is after large ingatherings from the world, for notice here, when the servants had gathered in guests in large numbers, it was then that the king came in. Now it will be after the time of revival which we are feeling just now, when I hope a great many will be added to the church, that the Lord will search and sift us. If there has been no visitation of the church before for purposes of love or judgment — for

they go together — we shall be quite sure to have such a visit from the great Lord himself at this time.

### **III.** Solemnly think of THE JUDGE AT THE FEAST.

To all the rest at the festival he was the king, the beloved monarch, the munificent donor of a splendid banquet, and all eyes feasted as they looked at him: it was joy enough to behold the king in his beauty, and to see his Son with all his royal jewels on, attired for the wedding feast; but he was a judge to the hypocritical intruder. The day of comfort to his saints is also the day of vengeance of our God. He who comes to comfort all that mourn comes at the same time to smite the rebellious with a rod of iron.

The judge begins, as you perceive, by seeing, “He saw there a man.” What eyes are those of Omniscience! The parable represents but one such man as present, yet the All-seeing King saw him at once, he fixed his flaming eyes on that one. I suppose it was a greater crowd than this, but the king fixed his eyes on the solitary offender at once. Does the parable speak of only one because we may expect to find only one hypocrite in a church? Alas! there have been many such at the wedding feast, but one only is mentioned to show us that if there were but one, God would find him out; and, being many, the sinners in Zion may be the more sure that they will not escape. It is possible that none of the guests may have noticed the man’s garments; the parable makes no remark upon any expostulations made to him by others; perhaps they were all so taken up with the sight of the king, and so glad to be at the feast themselves, that they had no heart to make remarks upon others. But this is certain, that the king detected at once the absence of what was requisite to the marriage feast. It was not the presence of anything offensive, but the absence of something which was requisite. He did not say to the unworthy guest, “Thou hast rags upon thee,” or “thou art filthy.” or “thou hast an unwashed face”; he enquired solely into the absence of the peculiar badge which denoted a loving guest. God will judge, and does continually judge his church upon this question, the absence of what is absolutely necessary to being a Christian, the absence of honoring the Son, and obeying the Father. O soul, if thou art a professor of religion, and yet dost not love Jesus, and dost not fear the great King of kings, thou lackest the wedding robe, and what dost thou

here? The King will see at once that thou lackest it. Thy morality, thy generosity, thy high sounding prayers, ay, and even thine eloquent discoursings, these cannot conceal from him the fact that thy heart is not with him. The one thing needful is to accept loyally the Lord as King.

The king next began to deal with the rebel. Note how he spoke with him. He took him on his own ground. It was too high a day for the king to use rough speech; the man pretended to be a friend, and he addressed him as such, but though the word I doubt not was uttered softly, it must have stung him if he had any feeling left. Judas exemplified in his own person this character. When he gave the Savior the traitor's kiss, our Lord addressed him as "friend." He pretended to be a friend. A friend, indeed, to insult his king at his own table, and to select for the insult the delicate occasion of the prince's marriage to which he had been hospitably invited! This was infamous! Friend indeed! Where will you find enemies if such shall be called friends? The king put it to him, "How camest thou in hither?" What business hast thou here? What could have induced thee so maliciously to defy me? To smite me in my tenderest point, and mock my guests, and trample on my son? Didst thou intend such daring insolence? "How camest thou in hither? In hither? Was there nowhere else to pour forth thy sedition, no other spot in which to play the traitor? Needest thou come into my palace, and to my table, and before my son on his wedding day to reveal thy enmity? Was there a need to do this?" So may the Lord say to some of us. "Were there no other ways to sin, but that you must profess to be my servant when you were not so? Were there no other bowls that you could drink from, that ye must profane the cups of my table? Was there no other bread that you could put into your wicked mouths but the bread that represents the body of my Son? Had you nowhere else to sin in that you must needs sin in the church? Could you do nothing else to show your spite but that you must make a lying profession of faith in my Son, who bled upon the cross to redeem the sons of men? Could you assail me nowhere else but through the wounds of my only-begotten Son? Could you vex my Spirit by no other means than by pretending to be my friend, and thrusting yourself in hither, while defiantly rejecting that which was necessary to do me honor, and to do my Son honor, at the festival of my grace?" I dare not dwell upon the topic. I give you the text; I pray that your conscience may preach the sermon.

Notice however, one thing, and that is, that the king, when he thus turned a judge, dealt with this man only about himself. "How camest thou in hither?" Did I hear a whisper in some one's mind, "Well, if I am unfit to be a church member, there are a great many others who are in the same condemnation." What is that to you? See to thyself! When the king came in to see the guests he did not say to this man, "How came yonder persons here without the wedding garment?" His dealings were personal with him alone: "How camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" Professor, look to thyself, look to thyself. Let thy charity begin at home. Cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then mayst thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. He fixed on the one man, made him his entire audience, and directed to him the solemn question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Ah, my dear hearers, as the pastor of this church it has been a very great joy to me to see our numbers increased; many have been added to us, and many have gone forth from us to form other churches; my joy has been constant in God concerning this matter. Our beloved brethren associated with me in office have done their best to keep any of you back who have sought membership in whom we could see no fruits corresponding. We have not used our office deceitfully; as in the sight of God we have tried to be neither too severe nor too lax, but for all that I cannot but know that there are some of you who are not Christians though you bear the name. Like those of old, you say you are Jews and are not, but do lie. I am not now speaking of any who have fallen into sin and have suffered our rebuke, or have been separated from us by excommunication and yet remain in the congregation; I mean others of you whose lives are all that could be desired openly, and yet there is a worm at the heart of your profession; you are not vitally godly, you have a name to live, and you keep that name untarnished as yet, but you are dead. Search ye yourselves; do not from this tabernacle descend into hell; let your prayer be, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." I am as concerned about myself as about you, that I should be found "accepted in the Beloved;" lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway! Do let it be a matter of solemn anxiety with each one. If you have never come to Jesus, come now; if you have never sought holiness of life, seek it now. If you have never had the wedding garment, it is yet procurable; go ye to him who freely gives it, the Lord will not refuse you; go to-day and he will accept you.

**IV.** He who was the unworthy guest is now THE CRIMINAL AT THE FEAST. The king has now become a judge to him; the question has been personally put to him, and he is speechless. Why is he silent? Surely it was because he was convicted of open, undeniable disloyalty. No evidence was required; he had come there on set purpose with malice aforethought to display his disloyalty, and had done so in the presence of the King. I do not think he represents at all a person who enters the church through ignorance, with a sincere but ignorant intention, but he portrays one who makes a profession without care to make it true — willfully despising the Lord's commands. He is a man willing to be saved by grace, and professing to be so, but refusing to acknowledge his duty to God and his obligations to the Son. He was speechless; he could not have chosen a worse place, nor a more impertinent method of ventilating his disloyalty than that which he selected; there was nothing he could say in self-defense. At that moment, when the King looked him through and through, he saw the full horror of his position; his loins were loosed, like Belshazzar of old when he saw the handwriting on the wall; he saw now that his time to insult was over, and the day of retribution had come. He was taken in the very fact, and could not escape. He had been guilty of a superfluity of naughtiness, of an unnecessary extravagance of wickedness in coming into the feast to air his pride. He had committed a suicidal intrusion. He might have kept himself away at any rate, and not have thrust himself into the Judge's presence. He saw now that the cause of sedition was hopeless, the King was there and he was in his power and none could rescue him. Why did he not burst into tears? Why did he not confess the wrong? Why did he not say, "My king, I have insulted thee, have pity upon me"? His proud heart would not let him. Sin made him incapable of repentance. There is a verse in one of Hart's hymns which runs thus —

*"Fixed is their everlasting state:  
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."*

That is true enough, but it supposes an impossibility, and I think it would have been far better to have said —

*"Fixed is their everlasting state;  
They can't repent, 'tis now too late."*

Because the sinner goes on to sin he continues still to suffer; he will not turn, he cannot turn. As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, so when sin has reached its height the man cannot bend, or bow, or retrace his steps. Oh, if he could have repented even then! But he could not; and the tears that came after the king had pronounced the sentence were no tears of penitence, but only of despairing pride. He stood speechless. It was not only that he had no excuse, but he would not confess his wrong. Have I anyone here in such a condition of heart, that while he has been sinning by making a false profession, and knows it, yet he sullenly refuses to confess his fault? Yield thee, man! Yield at once. Fall at the King's feet at once. Even if you are not a hypocrite, if you have any suspicion that you are, fall down and say, "My King, make me sincere; I submit myself to thy will, and am ready to put on the wedding badge; if there is any method by which I can honor thy Son, I cavil not at it; let me wear his colors, and be known by all men to be truly a lover of the great Prince."

But now, lastly, while he stood speechless in the king's presence, the king gave place to THE EXECUTIONER, for he uttered these words, "Bind him hand and foot." He was lawless, make him feel the law; he said, "I am free, and I will do as I like," let him never be free again; bind him, pinion him. Executioner, do your duty, prepare him for death. Alas, there are some who are bound and pinioned even before the breath is out of their bodies. In their dying hours false professors have often found that they could not pray, and could not repent; like dying Spira, that arch-hypocrite and apostate, they have been sensible of misery, but not penitent, and no gospel promise has availed to comfort them. Their hearts were seared, they were twice dead before they were dead. Then came the sentence, "Take him away," which is sometimes executed by the church in her excommunications — deceivers are taken away from the gospel feast by just discipline; but which is more fully carried out in the hour of death when the man's hope fails him. Ah, sirs, what will ye do if ye have no true grace in your hearts when you are taken away from the Lord's table, taken away from the baptism in which you gloried, taken away from the doctrines of the gospel which you understood so well by head, but which you did not know in your heart. John Bunyan's description of the man dragged by seven devils, bound with cords, comes up before my mind.

“Bind him hand and foot and take him away.” How thankful I am that the servants who brought them in are not the same who were commanded to take them away. The Douloi brought them in, the diakonoi took them away, the King has a special order of servants for the taking of deceivers away; his angels do that in the hour of death — they execute his vengeance. He gives us ministers a better office, he bids us be his heralds of mercy. Then the judge said, “Cast him,” fling him like a useless, worthless thing. That wretch has dared pollute my marriage feast, cast him away, as men fling weeds over the garden wall or shake off vipers into the fire. There is none in heaven or earth thought more despicable, more fit to be thrown away as rubbish and offal, than a man who had a Christian name, but had not the essentials of the Christian nature. Cast him away. Where? “Into outer darkness” far from the banquet hall where torches flame and lamps are bright; drive him out into the cold, chilly midnight air. He has once seen the light, it will be all the darker now for him when he is driven into the dark. There is no darkness so dark as the darkness of the man who once saw light. Cast him into outer darkness. What will he do there? We are not told what would be done to him, it was not needful; we learn elsewhere as much as could be revealed to us, but we are told what he did, for “there shall be weeping,” not the gush of tears which gives relief but the everlasting dropping of scalding tears which create fresh sorrow and enlarge their own source. The outcast shed no tears of regret, but of sullen disappointment, because he could not after all dishonor the king, and had even served to illustrate the royal justice and power, and so had brought glory to the king whom he hated in soul. Then came the “gnashing of teeth,” caused by wrath and envy because he could do no more mischief. No sorrow is equal to that of a malicious spirit, that having attempted a daring deed of atrocious wickedness, has been defeated and has contributed to the triumph of the good and excellent. The misery of hell is not a misery which God arbitrarily creates, it is the necessary result of sin, it is sin itself come to ripeness. Here you see the picture of the man who was insolent enough to come into the church without being a Christian, and now for ever he gnashes with his teeth against that glorious Majesty of heaven which it will never be in his power to injure, but which it will always be in his heart to hate; and this will be his hell — that he hates God, this his darkness — that he cannot see beauty in God, and this the outerness of the darkness — that he cannot enter into God’s will.

“Depart ye cursed,” is only love repelling that which is not lovely, it is only justice giving to man what his fallen nature craved after. “Get away from me, ye did not honor me; when ye did come to me it was with your lips only. Go where your hearts were; depart from me, you cursed.” Oh, may God grant that not one here may come under the lash of this terrible parable, but may we be found of the Lord in peace in the day of his appearing. You see, then, how the Lord sifts us. First we are sifted by the preaching of the gospel, and many will not come — there is one heap of chaff: next, by the judgment of God in his church, and others are found wanting — there is another heap of chaff. Ah, when this is done, and the two great sieves are used, shall we be found among the wheat?

Do you say, “the sermon has nothing to do with me, I never made a profession, I shall go home easy enough.” Come hither friend, I must not let you go. There is a vagabond brought before the magistrate accused of theft, he says he is perfectly innocent, but he is convicted and has to suffer for it; after him comes a bragging fellow, who says, “I do not make any profession of being honest, I rob anybody I can, and I mean to do so, I do not pretend to keep the law.” Why, methinks the magistrate would say, “I condemned the one who did at least pretend to something decent, but to you I give double punishment, you are evidently incorrigible, and your case needs no consideration.” You who do not say you are Christians, who confess you are not, you avow yourselves the enemies of Christ; get no comfort therefore out of this parable I pray you, but yield yourselves to the Savior, and believe in him, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Epistle of Jude.

The attention of all our friends is earnestly directed to the SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES AT THE TABERNACLE. In order that London friends may unite with us we publish the meetings week by week, and at the same time our country friends can join with us in spirit: —

**Lord’s-day, February 26th.** — Sermon to the Sabbath School and young people generally. By C.H.S., at 3 p.m.

**Monday, February 27th.** — Prayer-meeting for females only, at six. Young people’s prayer-meeting at the same time. At seven, Elders and



Deacons will deliver addresses to the unconverted at the usual prayer-meeting.

**Tuesday, February 28th.** — Great meeting of butcher's men, invited by Mr. Henry Varley. Addresses in the Tabernacle at 7. (Tickets.) C.H.S. to preside.

**Wednesday, March 1st.** — Prayer-meetings at the houses of our friends, according to the list, which will be issued. May the prayers of all the households be heard in heaven.

**Thursday, March 2nd.** — Mothers' prayer-meeting at six. Meeting for persons under concern of soul at half-past eight, after the lecture. Fathers' prayer-meeting at 8:30.

**Friday, March 3rd.** — Meeting of our young friends above fifteen, and yet unsaved. Tea at six. (Tickets to be had of the Elders.)