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SAD FASTS CHANGED TO GLAD FEASTS

SERMON NO. 2248

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

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

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

sent them a message of hope. That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, he sends them words of judgment; but when they turn from their wickedness, and are renewed by his grace in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings; for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

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

Notice, next, in the tenth verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God’s people is *consideration for others*: “Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor.” How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of love, who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her even relief from her hunger? God’s children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing. Those who take delight in oppressing the poor, and who make their gain thereby, will be themselves pinched in eternal poverty; they are little likely to enter the golden gates of paradise. There is

many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty; and when he gets to heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into glory to sit side by side with him? I trow not.

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

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

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

First, *jealousy is a tunnel into communing love*. God represents himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about his people; because he loved them so much, he was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in his own city, even in his own temple, and God was angry with them, and would not dwell with them; but when they repented, and

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

Next, *desolation is turned into population*. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. "I scattered them with a whirlwind," saith the Lord, "among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Zion sat like a widow, nobody came up to her solemn feasts; but God returned to her and he says, in the fourth verse,

"There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

So that when God comes to bless his people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody. When churches and congregations sin, God often minishes them, and brings them low; but when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there again, and there are new-born believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of his people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests, that crowd the heart and life. Old experiences revive, and new life and joy are born, where God comes near to us in grace and power. What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows: *scattering is turned into gathering*. God goes on to say that, as he scattered his people, so he will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already

said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day; but when we turn to him, his word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," and may it be to us according to his word!

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

Farther on in the chapter we are told of another change: *ill-will is turned into good-will*. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the tenth verse. But when God's grace came, and changed their character, then one city went to another, and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also;" and they went up to the house of the Lord together. Oh, where the grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out, and they say, "Come, old friend, let us end all this; give me your hand, and let by-gones be by-gones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which else would have had dominion. May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance, and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist, be put away!

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

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

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

Now we come to this fact, which always accompanies God’s presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts, when the character of the men who observed them had changed, and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces, occasions of self-glorification, and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness, and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in his good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a believer in Christ, and is renewed, this principle operates; many a fast is turned into a feast, and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness.

When the communion-table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of *the death of our Lord*, what might have been the memory

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

*“‘It is finished;’ shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Savior die,
Or proclaim his victory?”*

But it justly answers —

*“Lamb of God! Thy death hath given
Pardon peace, and hope of heaven:
‘It is finish’d;’ let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”*

As the Lord's Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. *The*

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

*“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”*

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

gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them.
Happy Sabbath! We hail thy coming with delight, and sing —

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

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

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

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

*“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from his love can sever.”*

But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election, and to make it sure; to know that the Father loved us as he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that he loves us with such a love that can never end, and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the Desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers. It was the hold these truths of grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain, and often illiterate men, preach the gospel. They preached a gospel that had something in it; and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them.

There is much that goes for gospel now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it. But when your soul is heavy, and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read *Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty* through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the sovereignty of God, and the way of his grace, whereby he saveth the unworthy, and getteth unto himself glory by his faithfulness to his promises, what had been a fast becomes to the child of God a feast of fat things, and royal cheer of a godly sort.

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

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

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

Once more: the solemn truth of *the coming of the Lord* is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, "Surely, I come quickly," would be better translated, "Surely, I am coming quickly." He is on the road, and will certainly appear, to the joy of his people, and for the emancipation of the world. There are certain writers who say they know when he is coming; do not you be plagued with them; they know no more about it than you do. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect; before this "diet of worship" shall break up, he may be here. On the other hand, he may not come for a thousand years, or twice ten thousand years. The times and the seasons are with him, and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread his coming, for he will come to destroy them that obey not the gospel. "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." That day will be terror, and not light to you. When he cometh, he shall judge the earth in righteousness, and woe unto his adversaries; for "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers." You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is *dies irae*, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe. But if you become a believer, and by grace are transformed, as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you. Then you will look out for his appearing as the day of your hope, and will gladly say, "Ay, let him come! Come Lord, nor let thy chariots wait! Come, Lord! Thy church entreats thee to tarry no longer! Come, thou absent love, thou dear unknown, thou fairest of ten thousand! Come to thy church, and make her glad!" To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast; it is a blessed feast. Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices, and sing —

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

Last of all, to come still more closely home, *the approach of death* is to most men a dreadful fast. Not the Mohammadan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room to-morrow and were compelled to stay there all day, and to think of death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You *will* die, however, perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed, when they will wipe the death-sweat from your brow, when they will bow over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the six thousand persons here to-night, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year’s Day. Usually this is some one who does not see even another Sabbath-day. Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Lord’s-day.

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

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

“Well, I shall soon be home,” says one old saint; and she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays, and of her going away from

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Zechariah 7. and 8.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 181, 30.

EVEN NOW

SERMON NO. 2249

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
MARCH 27TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8TH, 1891.

“Even now.” — John 11:22

I HOPE that there are a great many persons here who are interested in the souls of those around them. We shall certainly never exercise faith concerning those for whose salvation we have no care. I trust, also, that we are diligent in looking after individuals, especially those who are amongst our own family and friends. This is what Martha did; her whole care was for her brother. It is often easier to have faith that Christ can save sinners in general, than to believe that he can come into our own home, and save some particular member of our household. But, oh, the joy when this comes to pass; when we are able to kneel beside some of our loved ones, and rejoice with them in being made alive by the power of the Holy Ghost! We cannot expect to have this privilege, however, unless like Martha we send our prayers to Jesus, and go to meet him, and tell him of our need. In the presence of Christ it seems very natural to trust him even at the worst extremity. It is when we are at our wits' end that he delights to help us. When our hopes seem to be buried, then it is that God can give a resurrection. When our Isaac is on the altar, then the heavens are opened, and the voice of the Eternal is heard. Art thou giving way to despair concerning thy dear friend? Art thou beginning to doubt thy Savior, and to complain of his delay? Be sure that Jesus will come at the right time, though he must be the judge of which is the best time for him to appear.

Martha had a fine faith. If we all had such an honest belief in Christ as she had, many a man, who now lies dead in his sins, would, ere long, hear that voice which would call him forth from his tomb, and restore him unto his

friends. Martha's faith had to do with a dreadful case. Her brother was dead, and had been buried, but her faith still lived; and in spite of all things which went against her, she believed in Christ, and looked to him for help in her extremity. Her faith went to the very edge of the gulf, and she said, "But I know, that *even now*, whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee.

Still, Martha had not so much faith as she thought she had. But a few hours after she had confessed her confidence in the power of the Lord Jesus, or perhaps it was only a few minutes, she stood at the grave of her brother, and evidently doubted the wisdom of him she professed to trust. She objected to the stone being removed; and, strong in the admitted facts of the case, she urged her reason and said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Well, but, Martha, you said, not very long ago, "I know that even now Christ can interpose." Yes, she said it, and she believed it in the way in which most of us believe; but when her faith was sharply tried by a matter of fact, she did not appear to have had all the faith she professed. I suspect this also is true of most of us. We often fancy our confidence in Christ is much stronger than it really is. I think I have told you of my old friend, Will Richardson, who said, when he was seventy-five years of age, that it was a very curious thing, that all the winter through, he had thought he should like to be a-harvesting, or out in the hay-field, because he felt so strong. He imagined that he could so as much as any of the youngsters. "But," he said, "do you know, Mr. Spurgeon, when the summer comes, I do not get through the haymaking; and when the autumn comes, I find I have not sufficient strength for reaping?" So it often is in spiritual things. When we are not called upon to bear the trouble, we feel wonderfully strong; but when the trial comes, very much of our boasted faith is gone in smoke. Take heed that ye examine well your faith; let it be true and real, for you will need it all.

However, Christ did not take Martha at her worst, but at her best. When our Lord says, "According to your faith be it unto you," he does not mean "According to your faith in its ebb," but "According to your faith in its flood." He reads the thermometer at its at its highest point, not at its lowest; not even taking the "mean temperature" of our trust. He gives us credit for our quickest pace; not counting our slowest, nor seeking to discover our average speed in this matter of faith. Christ did for Martha all

she could have asked or believed; her brother did rise again, and he was restored to her, and to his friends. In thy case, too, O thou trembling, timorous believer, the Lord Jesus will take thee at thy best, and he will do for thee great things, seeing that thou desirest to believe greatly, and that thy prayer is, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

The point upon which Martha chiefly rested, when she expressed her faith, was the power of Christ in intercession with his Father. "I know," said she, "that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Since the omnipotence of God could be claimed, she felt no anxiety as to the greatness of the request. "Whatsoever" was asked could easily be gained, if it was only asked by him who never was denied. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Can you believe, even now, that whatever he shall ask of God, God will give it him, and give it you for his dear Son's sake? What an anchorage is the intercession of Christ! "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Here is a grand pillar to rest the weight of our souls upon: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Surely, we may have great faith in him who never wearies, and who never fails; who lives, indeed, for no other purpose than to plead for those who trust in his dying love, and in his living power. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Fall back upon the intercessory power of Christ in every time of need, and you will find comfort that will never fail you.

It is a grand thing to have faith for the present, not bemoaning the past, nor dreaming of some future faith which we hope may yet be ours. The present hour is the only time we really possess. The past is gone beyond recall. If it has been filled with faith in God, we can no more live on that faith now than we can live to-day on this bread we ate last week. If, on the contrary, the past has been marred by our unbelief, that is no reason why this moment should not witness a grand triumph of trust in the faithful Savior. Let us not excuse our present lack of faith by the thought of some future blessing. No confidence which we may learn to put in Christ, in the days to come, can atone for our present unbelief. If we ever mean to trust

him, why should we not do so now, since he is as worthy of our belief now as he will ever be, and since what we miss now we miss beyond recall.

*“The present, the present, is all thou hast
For thy sure possessing,
Like the patriarch’s angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing.”*

In this verse, “I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee,” I want to fix your attention only on the two words, “Even now.” We have just sung —

*“Pass me not, O tender Savior,
Let me love and cling to thee;
I am longing for thy favor;
When thou comest, call for me:
Even me.”*

Our hymn was “Even me.” The sermon is to be “Even now.” If you have been singing “Even me,” and so applying the truth to your own case, say also, with an energy of heart that will take no denial, “Even now,” and listen with earnest expectation to that gospel which is always in the present tense: “While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.” Remember, too, that this is not only the preacher’s word, for the Holy Ghost saith, “To-day”; “Even now.”

I shall use these words, first, in reference *to those who are concerned about the souls of others*, as Martha was about her dead brother. Believe that Christ can save even now. Then I shall speak *to you who are somewhat concerned about your own souls*. You believe, perhaps, that Christ can save. I want you to be persuaded that he can save you even now; that is to say, at this exact hour and minute, going by the clock, while you hear these words, even now, Christ can forgive; even now, Christ can save; even now, Christ can bless.

First, CAN WE BELIEVE THIS WITH REFERENCE TO OTHERS? If you are in the same position as Martha, I can bring out several points of likeness which should encourage you to persevere. You, mother, have prayer for your boy; you, father, have pleaded for your girl; you, dear wife, have

been much in prayer for your husband; you beloved teacher, have frequently brought your class before God; and yet there is a bad case pressing upon your mind, and your heart is heavy about some dear one, whose condition seems hopeless. I want you to believe that now, even now, Christ can grant your prayer, and save that soul; that now, even now, he can give you such a blessing that the past delay shall be more than recompensed to you.

There is one, for instance, in whom we are deeply interested, and we can say that *the case has cost great sorrow*. So Martha could have said of Lazarus. "Blessed master", she might have said, "my brother took the fever" — (for I should think it was a fever that he had) — "and I watched him; I brought cold water from the well, and I laved his burning brow; I was by his bedside all night. I never took off my clothes. Nobody knows how my heart was wrung with anguish as I saw the hot beaded drops upon his brow, and tried to moisten his parched tongue and lips. I sorrowed as though I was about to die myself; but in spite of all that, I believe even now that thou canst help me; even now." Alas! There are many griefs in the world like this. A mother says, "Nobody knows what I have suffered through that son of mine. I shall die of a broken heart because of his conduct." "No one can tell," says the father, "what grief that daughter of mine has caused me. I have sometimes wished that she had never been born." There have been many, many such stories told into my ear, in which a beloved one has been the cause of anguish and agony untold to gracious, loving hearts. To those so sorely troubled I now speak. Can you believe that *even now* the living Intercessor is "mighty to save"? It may be that you are at this moment trembling on the verge of the blessing you so long have sought. God give you faith to grasp it "even now"!

With other persons we are met with a fresh difficulty. *The case has already disappointed us*. That is how some of you have found it, is it not? "Yes," you say, "I have prayed long for a dear friend, and I believed, some time ago, that my prayer was heard, and that there was a change for the better; indeed, there was an apparent change; but it came to nothing." You are just like Martha. She kept saying to herself, "Christ will come. Brother is very ill, but Jesus will come before he dies; I know he will. It cannot be that he will stay away much longer; and when he comes, Lazarus will soon

be well.” Day after day, Mary and she sent their messenger to look toward the Jordan, to see if Jesus was not coming. But he did not come. It must have been a terrible disappointment to both these sisters; enough to stagger the strongest faith that had ever had in the sympathy of Christ. But Martha got the better of it, and she said, “Even now, though disappointed so bitterly, I believe that thou canst so whatsoever thou wilt.” Learn from Martha, my discouraged brother. You thought that your friend was converted, but he wanted to go back again; you thought that there was a real work of grace upon his heart, but it turned out to be a mere disappointment, and disappeared, like the mist of the sun. But can you not believe over the head of your disappointment, and say, “I believe even now, even now”? Blessed shall your faith be, if it gets so far.

Perhaps further difficulties have met us. We have attempted to help someone, and *the case has proved our helplessness*. “Ah, yes,” says one, “that exactly describes me. I never felt so helpless in my life. I have done all that I can do, and it amounts to nothing. I have been careful in my example. I have been prayerful in my words. I have been very patient and longsuffering. I have tried to induce my beloved one to go and listen to the gospel here and there. I have put holy books in his way, and all the while, I have seized opportunities to plead with him, often with tears in my eyes, and I can do nothing! I am dead beat.” Yes, that is just where Martha got to; she had done everything and nothing seemed to be of the least use. None of the medicines she applied seemed to soothe the sufferer. She had gone down to the village, perhaps to the home of Simon the leper, who was a friend of hers, and he possibly advise some new remedies; but nothing seemed to make the least difference. Her brother grew worse and worse, until she saw that, though she had nursed him back to health the last time he had been ill, she was now utterly powerless. Then he died. Yet, even though things had gone as far as that, she had faith in Christ. In like manner, your case is beyond your skill; but you cannot believe that, even now, the end of nature will be the beginning of grace; can you not even now feel that you shall find that word true, “He shall not fail”? Christ never did fail yet, and he never will. When all the doctors give a patient up, the Great Physician can step in and heal. Can you believe concerning your friend “even now”?

But perhaps you are in a worse plight still. *The case has been given up.* I think I hear one kind, gracious soul, whose hope has been crushed, say, “Well, sir, that is just what we have come to about my boy. We held a little family meeting, and said we must get him to go away to Australia, if we can. If he will only go to America, or somewhere abroad, it will be a relief to have him out of our sight. He keeps coming home intoxicated, and gets brought before the magistrates. He is a disgrace to us. He is a shame to the name he bears. We have given him up.” Martha had come to this. She had given her brother up, and had actually buried him; yet she believed in the power of Christ. Ah, there are many people that are buried alive! I do not know that such a thing ever happens in the cemetery; but I know it happens in our streets and homes. Many are buried morally, and given up by us before God gives them up. And, somehow, it is often the given-up people that God delights to bless. Can you believe that even now, *even now*, prayer can be heard, that even now the Holy Ghost can change the nature, and that even now Christ can save the soul? Believest thou this? I shall rejoice if thou canst, and thou too shalt rejoice ere long.

But there is still a lower depth. Here is one who is much concerned about an individual, and *the case is loathsome.* “Though we loved him once,” he says, “his character has now become such that it is pestilential to the family. He leads others astray. We cannot think of what he has done without the very memory of his life spreading a taint over our conscience, and over our mind.” There are persons alive in the world, who are just masses of living putridity. There may be such here. I should be glad if a word I said could reach them. It is a shocking thing that there are men and women, made in the image of God, with talents and ability, with capacity and conscience, who, nevertheless, seem to live for nothing else but to indulge their licentious passions, and to lead others into vices which else they had never known. There must come an awful day of reckoning to such when the Christ of God shall sit upon the throne, and shall weigh before all men the secret doings of libertines, of debauched men, and depraved women. If any of you have such a one related to you, can you believe that even now Christ can raise that one? Yours is just the same sort of case as Martha had. She could have said, “Brother is buried; worse than that, he stinketh.” She did not like to say that of dear Lazarus, her own brother, but she could not help saying it. And there are some men of

whom we are compelled to say, no matter how much our love seeks to shield them, that their character stinks. But can you still believe that, even now, there is hope that God can intervene, and that grace can save? Why, my dear friend, you and I know that it is so! I do believe it; we must all believe it. If it comes to a case very near and dear to you, and you begin to be a little bit staggered, recollect what you used to be yourselves — not openly so depraved, perhaps, but inwardly, quite the same, and take hope for these foul men and women from the remembrance of what you were: “and such were some of you; but ye are washed.” When John Newton used to preach at St. Mary Woolnoth, he always believed in the possibility of the salvation of the worst of his hearers; for he had been himself one of the vilest of the vile. When he was very old, and they said, “Dear Mr. Newton, you are too old to preach; you had better not go into the pulpit now,” he said, “What! Shall the old African blasphemer, who has been saved by grace, leave off preaching the gospel while there is a breath in his body? Never.” I think while there is breath in the body of some of us, we must go on telling the gospel; for, if it saved us, it can save the worst of sinners. We are bound to believe that even now Christ can save even the most horrible and the most vile.

***“His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.”***

Perhaps there is even a more desperate difficulty still with reference to someone whom we would fain see living for God. *The case is beyond our reach.* “Yes,” that brother quickly answers, “now you have come to my trouble. I do not even know where my boy is; he ran away, and we have not heard from him for years. How can I help him?” Why, believe that “even now” Christ can speak to him, and save him! He can send his grace where we can send our love. The great difficulty which lies like a stone at the door of the sepulcher will not prevent him speaking the life-giving word. He has all forces at his command, and when he says the word, the stone shall be rolled away, and the son, that is lost shall be found; the dead shall be made alive again. Though you cannot reach your son, or your daughter, Christ can meet with them. “the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither does his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Though your prodigal boy or your wandering girl be at the end of the earth, Christ

can reach them, and save them. "Have faith in God." "Even now" Christ can aid you.

*"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done.'"*

I know there are some Christian people who have drifted into the terribly wicked state of giving up their relatives as hopeless. There was a brother here, who is now in heaven, a good, earnest Christian man, whose son had treated him very shockingly indeed, and the father, justly indignant, felt it right to give his son up. He had often tried to help him, but the young man was so scandalous a scapegrace that I did not wonder that the old man turned him away. But one night, as I was preaching here, I spoke in something like the same way in which I have spoken now; and the next morning the old man's arm was about his child's neck. He could not help himself; he felt he must go and find his son out, and seek again to reclaim him. It seemed to have been the appointed time for that boy's salvation, for it pleased God that within a few months that son died, and he passed away with a good hope, through grace, that he had been brought to his Savior's feet by his father's love. If any of you have a very bad son, go after him, seeking, until by the grace of God, you shall find him. And you that have grown hopeless about your relatives, you must try not to give them up. If other people cast them off, you must not, for they are allied to you by the ties of blood. Seek them out. You are the best person in the world to seek them, and the most likely to find them, if you can believe that even now, when the worst has come to the worst, "even now," almighty grace can step in, and save the lost soul.

Oh, that some here may have faith to claim at this moment the salvation of their friends! May desire be wrought into expectancy, and hope become certainty! Like Jacob at Jabbok, my we lay hold of God, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." To such faith the Lord will give a quick response. He that will not be denied shall not be denied. My friend, Hudson Taylor, who has done such a wonderful work for China, is an instance of this. Brought up in a godly home, he, as a young man, tried to imitate the lives of his parents, and failing in his own strength to make himself better, he swung to the other extreme, and began to entertain

skeptical notions. One day, when his mother was from home, a great yearning after her boy possessed her, and she went up to her room to plead with God that “even now” he would save him. If I remember aright, she said that she would not leave the room until she had the assurance that her boy would be brought to Christ. At length her faith triumphed, and she rose quite certain that all was well, and that “even now” her son was saved. What was he doing at that time? Having half an hour to spare, he wandered into his father’s library, and aimlessly took down one book after another to find some short and interesting passage to divert his mind. He could not find what he wanted in any of the books, so, seeing a narrative tract, he took it up with the intention of reading the story, and putting it down where the sermon part of it began. As he read, he came to the words “the finished work of Christ”, and almost at the very moment in which his mother, who was miles away, claimed his soul of God, light came into his heart. He saw that it was by the finished work of Christ that he was to be saved; and kneeling in his father’s library, he sought and found the life of God. Some days afterwards, when his mother returned, he said to her, “I have some news to tell you.” “Oh, I know what it is!” she answered, smiling, “You have given yourself to God.” “Who told you?” he asked in astonishment. “God told me,” she said, and together they praised him, who, at the same moment, gave faith to the mother, and the life to the son, and who has since made him such a blessing to the world. It was the mother’s faith, claiming the blessing “even now”, that did it. I tell you this remarkable incident that many others may be stirred up to the same immediate and importunate desire for the salvation of their children and relatives. There are some things we must always pray for with submission as to whether it is the will of God to bestow them upon us: but for the salvation of men and women we may ask without fear. God delights to save and to bless; and when the faith is given to us to expect an immediate answer to such a prayer, thrice happy we are. Seek such faith even now, I beseech you, “even now.”

But, in the second place, I want to speak very earnestly to any here who are concerned about their own souls. Jesus came to save you “even now.” CAN WE BELIEVE THIS FOR OURSELVES? Can you expect the Lord, even while you hear these words, to speak to you the word of power, and bring you forth from your sleep of sin?

For some of you, *the time is late, very late; yet it is not too late*. You are getting into years, my friend. I want you to believe that even now Christ can save you. I often notice the number of old people who come to the Tabernacle. I am glad to see the aged saints; but amongst so many elderly people, no doubt, there are some unsaved sinners, whose grey hairs are not a crown of glory, but a fool's cap. But, however old you are, though you are sixty, seventy, eighty or even ninety years of age, yet "even now" Christ can give you life. Blessed be God for that! But it is not altogether the years that trouble you; it is you sins. As I have already said, if you have gone to the very extremity of sin, you may believe that, after all those years of wandering, the arms of free grace are still open to receive you "even now." There is an old proverb, "It is never too late to mend." It is ever too late for us to mend ourselves, but it is never too late for Christ to mend us. Christ can make us new, and it is never too late for him to do it. If you come to him, and trust him, he will receive you "even now."

By the longsuffering of God, *there is a time left to you*, in which you may turn to him. What a thousand mercies it is that "even now" is a time of mercy to you: it might have been the moment of you everlasting doom! You have been in accidents; you have been within an inch of the grave many times; you have been ill, seriously ill; you have been well-nigh given up for dead; and here you are yet alive, but still an enemy to God! Plucked by his hand from the fire and flood, and, mayhap, from battle; delivered from fever and cholera, and still ungrateful, still rebelling, still spending the life that grace has lent you in resisting the love of God! Long years ago you should have believed in Christ, but the text is "even now." Do not begin to say, "I believe that God could have saved me years ago;" there is no faith in that. Do not meet my earnest plea, by saying, "I believe that God can save me under such-and-such conditions." Believe that he can save you now, up in the top gallery there, just as you are. You came in here careless and thoughtless; yet, even now, he can save you. Away yonder, quite a man of the world, free and easy, destitute of all religious inclinations though you may be, he can save you even now. O God, strike many a man down, as thou did Saul of Tarsus, and change their hearts by thine own supreme love, as thou canst do it, even now, on the very spot where they sit or stand.

But though God waits to be gracious to you, though you have yet time to repent, remember, *it is but a time, therefore seize it*. Your opportunity will not last for ever. I believe that even now God can save; but if you reject Christ, there will come a time when salvation will be impossible. On earth, as long as a man desires to be saved, he may be saved: while there is life there is hope. I believe that, if a man's breath were going from his body, if he could then look to Christ, he would live. But —

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

Do not venture on that last leap without Christ; but even now, ere the clock strikes another time, fly to Jesus. Trust him “even now.”

It is a time of hope. Even now, there is still every opportunity and every preparation for the sinner's salvation. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Shall I give you some reasons for believing that “even now” is a time of hope? There are many good arguments which may be brought forward, in order to banish the thought of despair.

First, *the gospel is still preached.* The old-fashioned gospel is not dead yet. There are a great many who would like to muzzle the mouths of God's ministers; but they never will. The old gospel will live when they are dead; and, because it is still preached to you, you may believe and live. What is the old gospel? It is that, seeing you are helpless to save yourself, or bring yourself back to God, Christ came to restore you; that he took those sins of yours, which were enough to sink you to hell, and bore them on the cross, that he might bring you to heaven. If you will but trust him, even now, he will deliver you from the curse of the law; for it is written, “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” If you will trust him, even now, he will give you a life of blessedness, which will never end; for again it is written, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Because that gospel is preached, there is hope for you. When there is no hope, there will be no presentation of the gospel. God must, by an edict, suspend the preaching of the gospel ere he can suspend the fulfillment of the gospel promise to every soul that believeth. Since there is a gospel, take it; take it now, even now. God help you to do so!

In the second place, I know there is hope now, “even now”; for *the Christ still lives*. He rose from the dead, no more to die, and he is as strong as ever. “I am he that liveth and was dead.” He saith, “an behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen.” These words were spoken to the Apostle John, and when he saw him, he said that “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;” but when the spouse saw him, she said, “His locks are busy, and black as a raven.” Yet both saw truly. John’s vision of the white hair was to show that Christ is the ancient of days; but the view of the spouse was to show his everlasting youth, his unceasing strength and power to save. If there is any difference in him, Christ is to-day more mighty to save than he was when Martha saw him. He had not then completed the work of salvation, but he has perfectly accomplished it now; and therefore there is hope for everyone who trusts in him. My Lord has gone up yonder where a prayer will find him, with the keys of death and hell jingling at his girdle, and with the omnipotence of God in his right hand. If you believe on him, by his “eternal power and Godhead” he will save you, and save you even now, on the spot, before you leave this house.

Moreover, I know that this is a time of hope, in the next place, because *the precious blood still has power*. All salvation is through the blood of the Lamb. Still —

***“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;”***

and still, “even now,” —

***“Sinners, plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

The endless efficacy of the atoning sacrifice is the reason why you may come and believe in Jesus, “even now.” If that blood had diminished in its force, I should not dare to speak as I do; but I can, “even now,” say with confidence, —

***“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”***

How many have already entered into glory by the blood of the Lamb! When a man comes to die, nothing else will do for him but this: our own works are a poor staff for us when we pass through the river. All those who are now in the land of light have but one confidence, and but one song: they stand upon the merit of Jesus Christ, and they praise the Lamb who was slain, by whose blood they have been cleansed and sanctified. There is no other way of salvation but that. “Even now: that blood has virtue to take away your sin. Christ is a sufficient Savior, because his death has unexhausted power. Believe that he can save you “even now.”

Again, I would remind you that “even now” is a time of hope to you because *the Spirit still can renew*. He is yet at work, regenerating and sanctifying. He came down at Pentecost to dwell with his people, and has never gone back again. He is still in the church. Sometimes we feel his mighty power more than at other times, but he is always at work. Oh, you that do not know anything about the power of the Holy Ghost, let me tell you that this is the most wonderful phenomenon that can ever be observed! Those of us, who have seen and known his mighty energy, can bear testimony to it. In my retirement, at Menton, during the last few weeks, if you had seen me, you would have found me sitting every morning, at half-past nine o’clock, at my little table, with my Bible, just reading a chapter, and offering prayer, my family prayer with the little group of forty to fifty friends, who gathered for that morning act of worship. There they met, and the Spirit of God was manifestly moving among them, converting, cheering, comforting. It was because of no effort of mine; it was simply the Word, attended by the Spirit of God, binding us together, and binding us all to Christ. And here, in this house, for seven-and-thirty years, have I in all simply preached this old-fashioned gospel. I have just kept to that one theme; content to know nothing else amongst men; and where are they that preached new gospels? They have been like the mist upon the mountain’s brow. They came, and they have gone. And so it will always be with those who preach anything but the Word of God; for nothing will abide but the mount itself, the everlasting truth of the gospel to which the Holy Ghost bears witness. That same Holy Ghost is able to give you a new heart “even now”, to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus at this moment. Believest thou this?

Once more. I know that “even now” Christ can save you, and I pray you to believe it, for *the Father is still waiting to receive returning prodigals*. Still, as of old, the door is open, and the best robe hangs in the hall, ready to be put upon the shoulders of the son who comes back from the far country, even though he returns reeking with the odor of the swine-trough. How longingly the Father looks along the road, to see whether at length some of you are turning homeward! Ah! did you but know the joy that awaits those who come, and the feast which would load the welcoming table, you would “even now” say, “I will arise and go to my Father.” You should have returned long ago; but blessed be his love, which “even now” waits to clasp you to his heart!

Last of all, *faith is but the work of a moment*. Believe and live. Thou hast nothing to do; thou needest no preparations: come as thou art, without a single plea, but that he bids thee to come. Come now, “even now.” If Christ were far away, the time that is left to some of you might be too short to reach him; if there were many things which first of all you had to do, your life might close before they were half done; if faith had to grow strong before it received salvation, you might be in the place of eternal despair before your faith had time to be more than a mere mustard seed. But Christ is not far away; he is in our midst, he is by your side. You have nothing to do before you trust him, he has done it all; and, however weak your faith, if it but comes in contact with Christ, it will convey you to instant blessing. “Even now” you may be saved for ever; for —

*“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at one he receives,
Redemption in full, through his blood.”*

Surely all these are sufficient reasons why “even now” is a time of hope to you; may it also be a time of blessing! It shall be so if thou wilt but at this instant cast thyself on Christ. He says to thee that, if thou wilt but believe, thou shalt see the glory of God. Martha saw that glory. Thou shalt see it too if thou hast like precious faith.

I long that God would give me some souls to-night, on this first occasion when I have met an evening congregation since my return from the sunny South. I desire earnestly that he would set the bells of heaven ringing because sinners have returned, and heirs of glory have been born into the

family of grace. I stirred you up to pray this morning. Pray mightily that this word to-night, simple but pointed, may be blessed to many.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — John 11.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 95 (Part II.), 607, 612.

WORDS TO REST ON

SERMON NO. 2250

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 3RD, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, On Thursday Evening, September 18th, 1890—*“And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.” — 2 Chronicles 32:8.*

It is very beautiful reading the story of Hezekiah, to see how the people always went with him. God had prepared the nation for a change, and when the hour came the man came with it. Under his father Ahaz, the people had been idolaters, and had forsaken God; but, when Hezekiah became king, he had a zeal for the worship of Jehovah, and on the very threshold of his reign, he began what proved to be a glorious reformation in the land. He seems to have been a man who was attractive to the people, and they took up his line of things at once with enthusiasm. Whether he proposed to break down the idols, to cleanse the temple, or to bring tithes into the house of God, they made no objection; but, on the contrary, they followed his word with much vigor and earnestness. It is a grand thing when God sends a man who can guide others aright; especially when, in times of apostasy and spiritual declension, a leader is given who becomes a guide back to the old paths. We should feel exceedingly grateful whenever, in any place, God raises up a judge to deliver Israel, and when the people serve God all the days of that judge.

When our text comes in, the people of Judah were in great straits. The Assyrians, who were both cruel and barbarous in their treatment of others, had invaded the land, and had captured all the country, with the exception of Jerusalem. The city of the Great King was yet untrampled by the armies of the alien; but it looked as if it could not hold out very long, and Hezekiah encouraged his men of war by exciting their faith in their God. “Be strong and courageous,” he said to them; “be not afraid or dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him.” With a ring of triumph in his tone, he told them that with Sennacherib was only

an army of flesh; and though it was a powerful one, yet with them was the omnipotence of God, and therefore there was more with them than with the Assyrians. The past glory of his reign, and the evident depth of his own faith, added weight to his words, and the people believed his testimony. In such a time of great difficulty, when people are apt to mutiny, to find fault with their leaders, and to break up into cliques and parties, they still held to their king, and comforted themselves with the assurance he had given them of help in God. They were not distressed because of invasion, nor did they despair of their cause. They were, of course, conscious of their great danger; but they had found peace, even in their extremity, by quoting to themselves, and to one another, the emboldened language of their king. "The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah."

It is not always a good thing to rest upon man's words. It may often be a very evil thing; and because some error has been introduced by "such a dear, good man", it has had the deadlier hold upon masses of men. There have been thousands who have found their way to hell resting upon the words of some priest or pretended teacher who taught other than the truth. An yet, with this grain of caution, we cannot but commend these people, who, when they had a God-sent leader, had both the common-sense and the uncommon confidence to banish their fears at his bidding, seeing that his trust was in the name of the Lord. The people were not perfect, nor was their king; but we commend them, in that they did wisely when they "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah."

Our first consideration shall be, **THE KIND OF MAN WHOSE WORDS ARE LIKELY TO BE RESTED ON.** There are some in whose words you never have much confidence, because they are flippant in their utterance. They do not appear to be sincere, and those who hear them, make nothing of what they say, for they are evidently making nothing of it themselves. You cannot rest in the words of a man who contradicts himself, nor rely much upon one who is of one opinion to-day, who will be of another opinion to-morrow, and who before the third day is over, will be seized with some new notion. There are men whom we all know in whose word nobody is tempted to put any kind of trust whatever. But, thanks be to God, there are in the Christian church still some in whose words men do

trust, men who are as transparent as the clearest crystal, and as reliable as the best steel. These are the kind of men I want to describe; and this man who won the confidence of the people of Jerusalem shall serve us as a type thereof, and enable us to discover the kind of man whose words are likely to be rested on.

To begin with, he must be *a great man*. So it was in the case of “Hezekiah king of Judah.” If the people cannot trust their king in matters of war, in whom can they trust? But if they see him to be a good sovereign, walking in the fear of God, and doing his utmost for them, how shall they do otherwise than trust their king? Yet in this matter we must take care, for they who trust in the great may find themselves greatly deceived. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” That man is not truly great who leads us away from the greatest of all, even the Lord who ruleth over all. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” There is a kind of greatness that is only a cover for littleness. Sometimes a great title has great selfishness, even great sensuality, lying just underneath it. But Hezekiah was not a little great man; he was truly a king. He was born a monarch; a kingly man. He was a man of royal mind and noble deed; hence the people did not ill, when, having respect to his greatness, they “rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah.”

Moreover, the man who will be trusted will be found to be *a good man*. If he be not really so, he will, at least, be thought to be so. Men will put great trust in the words of one whose life agrees with his teaching. If they can detect something inconsistent in his character, the man’s power is ended; but if a man is evidently carried away with the one idea of being and doing good, and consumed with the purpose of glorifying God, then his utterances have power. I know a man who is not an orator; he speaks but very plainly; and yet, if I had my choice I would sooner hear him than almost any man I ever heard, because, when he speaks, I remember the wondrous life of faith in God, which accompanies his words. I will not say who he is, but almost everybody will guess. It is not what he says, but the man who says it, that makes the impression. It is the life behind the words, the holy confidence in God every day exhibited, the calm restful walk with God which everybody can see in his very face, which, to a

thoughtful man, makes his feeblest accent more powerful than the most furious declamation of a mere rhetorician. As Dr. Bonar says, —

*“Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth wouldst teach.
Thy soul must overflow, if thou
Another’s soul wouldst reach:
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech.”*

The man in whose words we are likely to find rest must be a good man. Hezekiah, from all we read of him, was evidently such a man. When greatness and goodness are blended, as in his case, there is sure to be a wide influence exerted. When there is eminence of ability as well as eminence of character found in a man, it often follows that what is described in this verse is true, the people rest themselves upon his words, even as they did upon Hezekiah’s.

Again, a man whose words are to be rested upon, must be *a courageous man*. Hezekiah had this qualification. He had waited upon God in prayer, and knew God would deliver him, so that bidden farewell to fear; he was calm, and therefore bold. When he spoke to the captains of the soldiers, there was no trepidation in his voice or in his manner. He spoke like one who was —

*“Calm ‘amid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory*

Courage in one man breeds courage in another, and once coward has the contagion of cowardice about him; many will turn tail when one runs. But, if a man stands like a rock, unmoved, he will soon have a body of others behind him who will have borrowed courage from his example. Paul in the storm is an example of this. I suppose he has a little insignificant-looking Jew, yet when the sailors and the soldiers were alarmed at the tempest, he calmly and quietly told them not to be afraid, and they borrowed courage from his faith. He told them that no harm would come to them; that though the ship would be lost, their lives have been given to him in answer to his prayer; and since they had fasted long, he bade them to eat, and they did eat. All his orders were carried out as fully as if he had been the centurion in command of the soldiers, or the captain in charge of the ship. Because he was bold he made them brave; he commanded them, because he

could command himself. Oh, my brothers and sisters, may you have the courage of your convictions! May you be brave enough to do right, and to speak right, and to stand up for the gospel, whoever rails at it! If you do, you have only to bide your time; and you will be master over meaner men who cannot be trusted. He that will but “hold the fort” when others are giving up their castles, shall by-and-by, God helping him, behold a race of valiant men, who, like himself, shall believe in their Master’s coming, and will not quit the field until he appears. God grant to many here to be bold in the way of holiness, in their own circle, in their own families! They must be assured that there will be found some who will rest upon their words, because they see their courage.

Further, a man who is to have his words much rested in, must also be *a hearty man*; indeed, he must be an enthusiast. Of such a spirit was Hezekiah, for we read in the last verse of the previous chapter, “and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart.” This is the kind of man whom people will follow. Let them but see that the whole of the man leads them, and not only a bit of him, and they will quickly learn to rely on his word. Put all your heart into what you do, or else put none of it. There are some people who seem as if they have no heart, or at least their heart is only a kind of valve for the expulsion of blood, and not over vigorous in that direction, I fear. Any other kind of heart you cannot discover. Nobody will follow mere head. There must be a heart displayed by the man who would have a hearty following. If you want to lead others aright, lead them by showing that you yourself love the way. Be intense; be emphatic; throw your whole being into it. Be hearty when you are working, when you are praying, when you are singing. In all that you do for God, and for your fellow-Christians, let your heart be manifest; and then it is highly probable that it may happen to you, as it did to Hezekiah, that many will rest upon your words.

Let me add, that he who could help others must be *a man who has respect for God’s Word*. We may safely rest ourselves upon a man’s words when, like Hezekiah, his words are full of God, and when, evidently, he has nothing to say but what God has first said to him. Such a man becomes the medium by which God speaks to your soul. “With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.” Even

had this been spoken by another, it was a divine truth, and any man might have rested upon it. If any of us must needs be very original, if we must think out our own theology, and go on speculating from day to day, our people will be very foolish if they ever rest themselves upon our fickle, vapid words. But if the minister of Christ is as God's mouth, if he be dependent upon the Spirit of God for teaching; then God will speak through him, and the people will hear. If his one aim be, not to be original, but to repeat God's thought as far as he knows them, and to speak the truth revealed as far as he can get a grip of it, such a man will often come to know that the people are resting themselves upon his words; for his words will be not so much his, but God's words through him. May our prayer then be —

*“Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of thy tone;
As thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children, lost and lone.”*

Here a word of caution is necessary. Since men are permitted to say words upon which other people rest, let us be careful how we speak. There may be some here, who have attained, by years of holy living and deep experience, to a position of great influence- — one of you in a Bible-class, another in a village station, several of you, perhaps, in your pulpits. Brothers and sisters, what a very responsible position we occupy when young people and others are resting upon your words! I will not say whether they are altogether right or wrong in doing so; but I know this is their habit; therefore, what manner of people ought we to be, how choicely we should use language, how determines we ought to be to let all our teachings be Scriptural, and not to mingle the precious with the vile; remembering the promise, “If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.”! Do not let us even sportively say what may injure others. I have known children take in earnest what others have said in jest. It were often better that some things were not said even in sport; for such flippant utterances have either misled the children, or they have injured the influence of those who have uttered them when they have spoken another time. Since it so happens that many of those around us are of feeble mind, and need a strong mind to guide them, let those who lead be doubly careful of their conversation and conduct. Since those who know their own weakness lean perhaps too much upon their teachers, let their

teachers cry to God that they may be helped to teach nothing but what is right. May you and I never lead another even one inch astray! May none of us ever be in communion with that which is not true! May we stand right out from all connection with that which we feel to be contrary to the mind of God! Let us try to live in such a way that, if another were to take us for an example, he might copy us through and through and do himself no harm. I set before you a very high standard, and one which no man will reach except under divine instruction; but since the necessary teaching is freely given to all who seek it, I would urge you to be quick scholars in the school of grace. I fear very few of us have ever reached this excellent standard, but that is no reason why we should not study our lesson with redoubled energy. Remember that Hezekiah must speak aright when the people of Jerusalem rest themselves upon his words. O Hezekiah, be not silent when thou oughtest to speak; speak not when thou oughtest to be silent; and never speak except when the Lord shall open thy lips, that thy mouth may show forth his praise! Since thou hast this responsibility that the people rest upon thy words, be sure to give them words solid enough, and reliable enough to rest upon. As thou hast “wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord”, speak also true and right and good words to the people: and then it shall be well both with them and with thee.

In the second place, let us turn the other way, and look at THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO REST ON SUCH A MAN’S WORDS. I am not going to praise all these people, nor am I going to blame them. I wish to use discrimination, and judge each case upon its merits. Sometimes it is the best possible thing for a man to rest himself on the words of another; but often such a course is a very foolish one.

Children do so with their parents, and if they have gracious and godly parents. They do well to rest themselves on their father’s or on their mother’s word. When I was a boy, I never doubted what my father believed. And when I was under the influence of my grandfather who taught the Word of God, I was such a little simpleton, that I never set up my judgment against his. I find that very small boys are not now so foolish; I wish they were wise enough to be as foolish as I was! When I grew up, I never suspected a doctrine because my father believed it. No, my leaning went the other way; and if my godly father found peace and

comfort in a word, I thought that what was good for him was good for his son. I was foolish enough to lean upon the words of my elders in this way, and somehow, though others often think that such a course is folly, I am glad that it was so. I thank God, too, that my sons were as foolish as their father; and that what their father believed had an attraction for them. I hope that they judged for themselves, as I also tried to do, when I came to riper years; but, at the first, it was the words of my parents that led me to Christ. What I knew of the elements of the gospel I received largely, without a question, from them, and I do not think it was an ill bequest. Now, dear parents, mind that your children are able to believe in you. I like children to have fathers and mothers whom they can trust. A young friend has written me a letter, asking me to preach a sermon on, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger." Well, will you kindly consider that I have preached it? I fear I could not make a long sermon of it; but it is necessary to tell some of you parents that I suspect you are not quite so considerate as you ought to be. I do not know the man for whom the word is intended, but I wish he would take the sermon as if I had preached it to him. Now, fathers and mothers, your children do rest themselves upon your words, if you are fathers and mothers worth having. Be careful, then, of what you say. I like that boy who said, "I know that it is true, for mother said it. Whatever mother says is true, and it is true if it is not true, of mother said it." It is a blessed thing when boys and girls can feel such confidence in their parents that they are sure that their word is beyond all question. It is so much easier for them to have faith in God in the days to come, if first they have been able to have faith in their father and mother. Faith of any kind is so tender a plant, that it should be carefully nourished wherever it is found; and as children often, and rightly too, rest themselves upon the words of their parents, it behoves the parents to give them words whereon they may rest safely.

Illiterate people, who cannot read, belong to another class, who must needs rest themselves upon the words of others. They are but grown-up children, if they are persons of no education, though I am glad to think the number of those who cannot even read their Bible for themselves is constantly decreasing. Still, there are many persons who are so taken up with daily toil that they have no opportunity of searching for themselves. Although God has given many of them gracious judgments, so that they

seem to know truth from error by a kind of inward instinct, yet, for the most part, much of the teaching that they receive must come to them as the utterance of some man in whose life they believe, and whom they believe to be under a divine influence which makes him speak continually with an endeavor for their good. Whether this is right or not, it is so; and every man who is placed in a position where many such hang upon his words, must therefore learn to speak only as God speaks to him, lest he himself should sin, and lest the hundreds who accept what he says as being true, would also be led astray.

This is also the case with regard to *unconverted persons who have no spiritual discernment*, and who can have none, in their first hearing of the gospel. Very largely, men believe in Christ not only through the Scriptures, but through the testimony of those who already know the Lord. This was implied by our Savior's words, in that wondrous intercession with his Father. Christ said concerning his disciples, "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It is part of the economy of grace that the testimony of the saints shall be used of the Spirit to lead people to Christ. We bear witness to forgiveness which we have received; we bear witness to a change of heart which we have experienced; we bear witness to the power of prayer; and like the men of Sychar, the people who hear us, first believe our word, and that leads them to Christ. After they have met with him, they may say, with much truth, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." Still, it will always be true that, at the beginning, it was because of our saying that they believed. It is a large part of our ministry to bear witness to the truth recorded in the Book of God; and oftentimes the witness himself is believed, and then what he says is believed because of the faith the hearer has in him. Although some are unworthy of such credence, yet so it does happen. Christian men, you are like the Bibles of the people. They do not read the Book, but they read you; and if they see Christ in you truly represented, they will, perchance. Come to the knowledge of him. But, if you caricature him, dreadful evil will come of it. I beseech you, be very careful. If the preacher, when he is addressing a mass of people who never read the Word of God, contorts and distorts the truth, what wonder is it if the people miss the salvation of

Christ altogether, seeing that they rest upon his word? If he only gives half of the truth, or only one side of it; if he paints one doctrine out of proportion to another; if he misses the love and tenderness of Christ; and even if he omits the justice and stern truthfulness of God, he may so misrepresent God and Christ, and so misinterpret the whole system of grace to the people, that when they rest upon his words they will be resting upon a broken reed, and fall to their eternal destruction.

Persons who naturally run in a groove form another class who rest upon the words of men. There are some people of considerable capacity who, nevertheless, partly from a want of elasticity of mind, and partly from excess of common-sense, are very apt to keep to beaten tracks. They are not altogether to be censured, for some of them are the salt of the earth; but they are a trifle monotonous in their method of life. Still, with some this is very natural. They are like the tramcars that only get off line by accident. Well, I think that, if I were a tramcar, I should like to run on the trams after I got used to it. If they lead in the right direction, we might do much worse than travel by tram. There are, however, a number of people who always will live like that. Having attended at such a place of worship, and having been brought up in the midst of a certain set of godly people, they scarcely deviate one jot from the teaching that they have received. Almost by necessity of their nature they rest on what they hear.

There is another class more I should like to mention, not because I am fond of them, but for the opposite reason; I mean *those who profess always to do their own thinking*, who will not have any creed, and who say that they will not follow anybody. If you will trace them home, they are, in nine cases out of ten, the veriest slaves that ever lived. They are the bond-servants of some heretic or other, who has put it into their heads that, in following him, they become free men. Why, there are thousands of people that laugh at us for believing in the old doctrine of the fall of man, who, nevertheless, rest themselves implicitly upon the words of some infidel philosopher, or else they follow some favorite heretic in broadcloth upon whom they rest their confidence through thick and thin. They speak much of their deep thought, but they never think; they make up for want of brains by talking the jargon supposed to be spoken by highly intellectual people, though, in most cases, it requires a very vivid imagination to make the supposition. These, who thus take for granted the heterodox words of

their favorite leaders, though they do not acknowledge them, incur great guilt, and their leaders are doing grievous mischief in uttering the words upon which their followers stay themselves.

Before I leave this point, I would urge you earnestly to be careful both as to the man you hear, and the words of his on which you rest. I beseech any of you who are attendants here, who are resting yourselves upon my words, to cease that habit. If I tell you anything that is not consistent with God's Word, away with my word, and away with me, too. If you hear from em anything which Christ would not have taught, I shall grieve to the last degree if you believe it. But if you fling it away, and ascribe it to the infirmity and fallibility of the preacher, it will be better for you. Or if there are some of you here who are resting yourselves upon any other man's words, I exhort you to know thoroughly the man and his communications, and do not, even when you know him, take his words without an appeal "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Bring all men's words to the test of God's words "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God." Blindly follow no man. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you" from this blessed Book, "let them be accursed." When a man has a message from God, listen to him earnestly, with an open mind ready to be taught; but never think of making him the master of your spirit. "The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king;" and they did well in doing so; for he was a man worthy of their trust. But had he been under another kind of king, or a man of a different character and temperament, they might have ruined themselves by relying upon the words which he spoke to them. Again, therefore, I utter the caution, be careful both as to the man you hear, and the words of his on which your rest.

And now I close with my third head, by asking you to consider **THE KIND OF WORDS THAT YOU MAY REST ON**. We come to speak now, not of the kind of men who speak restful words, nor of the kind of men who find rest in such words when they are spoken; but of the kind of words in which you and I may rest.

You may safely rest in *words which urge you to faith in God*. Are you exhorted to-night to lay your burden of sin down at Jesus' feet? Obey such a word as that without questioning. You may well rest on words which bid you to believe in Christ, and you may, without fear, believe in him who has all grace and wisdom and power to save and to bless you. Through the hearing of such words, may you soon be able to say —

***“I rest my soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine;
His right hand me embraces,
I on his breast recline.
I love the name of Jesus,
Immanuel, Christ, the Lord;
Like fragrance on the breezes,
His name abroad is poured.”***

Are you, who are believers, encouraged to roll your care on your great Father, according to that word, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”? You will do no wrong in obeying to the full every admonition to believe your God, and to believe his Christ. If our preaching tends to create faith, and foster it, it goes the right way; but, whatever clever things may be said, if the tendency is to undermine faith, and if the words you hear increase that tendency, they are mischievous, eternally mischievous, to the souls of men.

You may always rest, in the next place, on *words which are the words of God himself*. If God has said it, it is sure. If those men could rest themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king, how is it that some of you, who are God's people, cannot rest yourselves upon the words of God our King? You believe his promises, you say, but still you are very restless. You have some of that terrible fever of unbelief on you. Beloved, try to practice the art of resting yourself upon the Word of God. God has promised me such and such a thing. I believe it, therefore I have got it. “No,” you say, “the word is not fulfilled yet.” Ah, but I have got it notwithstanding! If a friend gives me a cheque for five pounds, though I have never seen his money, I have the five pounds. I do not want to see his money, for I have his five-pound cheque in my pocket; I have his guarantee for the amount; and though I have not received the coin, I believe that I have the five pounds, and so I have. And if thou believest that thou hast the blessing for which thou hast asked, go thy way, and rejoice that

thou hast it, for it is thine in the promise, and God's promise is as valuable as God's fulfillment. Rest yourselves, then beloved, in the words of God. Are you afraid of being too peaceful? Are you afraid of being too happy? Are you afraid of living too blessed a life? Are any of you afraid of having too much heaven here below? Well, do not give way to such idle fears. The more thou can rest, the more will God be pleased with thee. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people:" saith your God; "speak ye comfortably to comfortably to Jerusalem;" and if he bids us comfort you, you may be sure that he wants you to be comforted. Be comforted, therefore. Rest yourselves in his word. I have had to praise with 'bated breath those who rested on Hezekiah's word; I have thrown in little bits of necessary caution and interjection of doubt; but, if you desire to rest on God's Word, I need not caution you against trusting the Lord too much. Though you believe God up to the hilt, though you believe God desperately, though you believe God to the utmost, though you believe him infinitely, he will never fail you. Your confidence in him can never exceed that which he deserves. He will warrant it all. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;" and again it is written, "Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." You can never be wrong in resting upon the words of God himself. Even in your greatest weakness you may look to him, and say —

*"I am trusting thee for power,
Thine can never fail,
Words which thou thyself shalt give me
Must prevail."*

You may always believe, also, *in words which are sealed by the Lord Jesus*. If the mark of his blood is upon any word, thou needest never doubt it. If he has died, how canst thou perish? If he has bidden thee come, how can he cast thee out? If thou dost rest upon his finished work, how canst thou be condemned? Believe, I pray thee, and rest thee on the blood-sprinkled words of this wondrous Book.

*"The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep the sky;
The blood-sealed friendship changes not,
Thy cross is ever nigh."*

*“I change; he changes not,
The Christ can never die;
His word, not mine, the resting-place,
His truth, not mine, the tie.”*

Believe also, most firmly, and rest yourself most fully on *words which have been blessed to other men*. If other have been saved by a word, that word will suit thee. If God’s promise proved true to my father, it will be true to me. There is no private interpretation of God’s “great and precious promises.” They are not hedged about with a ring-fence. They are as much mine as they were Abraham’s or Jacob’s — as much mine as they were Peter’s or Paul’s; and I will have them, too, by faith, and have what those promises include. Beloved, rest yourselves upon the words of God, upon which others have rested, and you shall find them to be as true in your experiences as in the experience of those who have gone before.

Last of all, you may surely rest upon *words which breathe a sense of rest into the soul*. I love all the words of God; but there are some that have an aroma of rest around them. Were you ever in such trouble that, when you read the chapter beginning with those sweet words, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me,” you read it in vain? I think I never did. With the tears in my heart as well as in my eyes, I have read that blessed verse, again and again, and I have been comforted. That eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a wonderful light when you are in the dark; when I read those glorious doctrines, I find golden stepping stones through the Slough of Despond. And, as for the Psalms, why the man who wrote most of them seemed to be “not one, but all mankind’s epitome.” He has lived out all our lives, yours, and mine, and millions besides; his psalms breathe peace around us; and, as we accept the truths they reveal, we are enabled to rest upon them.

To all of us the time will come when we shall want rest. Dear young people, however long you may live, unless the Lord descend from heaven in glory, the time will come when you will die. You will want a pillow then; and, oh, may it be said of all of us then, “The people rested themselves upon the words of Jesus”! These promises are the best pillows for dying heads. There is no one who will suit you now, and suit you then. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Go, brother, anywhere on earth, and even up to heaven with that in thy hand: “I will

never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Or will this other word suit you better, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”? But I need not go on giving these words to you; you know them well. If you are not familiar with them, I should advise you to get a little book called *Clarke’s Precious Promises*, where you will find them all arranged. General Gordon, who was killed at Khartoum, used to carry a copy in his pocket wherever he went, and he and many others have found it to be a great help to them. Get hold of the promises of God, and when you feel downcast, when the wind is in the east, when the liver does not work, or when you have a real heart-ache, when the dear child is dead, when the beloved wife is sick, or when there is trouble in the house from any cause, then get you the words of the Lord; and may it always be said of you: “The people rested themselves on the words of King Jesus, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords”!

Oh, that the Holy Spirit might lead some poor soul to rest on these precious words of God even now for the first time; and unto the Lord shall be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — 2 Chronicles 32.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 23 (Vers. II.), 759, 614.

OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

SERMON NO. 2251

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 10TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 3RD, 1890

“We can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” — Hebrews 5:2

THE high priest looked Godward, and therefore he had need to be holy; for he had to deal with things pertaining to God. But at the same time he looked manward; it was for men that he was ordained, that, through him, they might deal with God; and therefore he had need to be tender. It was necessary that he should be one who could have sympathy with men; else, even if he could succeed Godward, he would fail to be a link between God and man, from want of tenderness and sympathy with those whom he sought to bring nigh to Jehovah.

Hence, the high priest was taken from among men that he might be their fellow, and have a fellow-feeling with them. No angel entered into the holy place; no angel wore the white garments; no angel put on the ephod and the breastplate with the precious stones. It was a man ordained of God, who for his brothers pleaded in the presence of the Shekinah. Many of us, I trust, have a desire within our hearts to come to God; but we need a High Priest. Inasmuch as it is his right, he counts it not robbery to be equal with God; but he communes with the Father as one that was by him, as one brought up with him, who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. But we ought also to be very grateful that we can come into touch with our High Priest on his human side, and rejoice that he is truly man. For thus saith the Lord, “I have laid help upon One that is mighty: I have exalted One chosen out of the people;” he is anointed, it is true, with the

oil of gladness above his fellows, but still he and they are one, “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Those who came to the high priest of old, were not often of the rough sort. Those who wished to have fellowship with God through the high priest in the tabernacle, or in the temple, were generally the timid ones of the people. Remember how she who came when Eli was high priest was “a woman of sorrowful spirit”; and the high priest had to deal with many such. The sons and daughters of affliction were those who mostly sought the divine oracle, and desired to have communion with God; hence the high priest needed not only to be a man, but a man of tender and gentle spirit. It was necessary that he should be one with whom those with broken hearts, and those who were groaning under a sense of sin, would like to speak. They would dread an austere man, and would, probably, in many cases, have kept away from him altogether. Now, the mercy for us is, that our great High Priest is willing to receive the sinful and the suffering, the tried and the tempted; he delights in those that are as bruised reeds and smoking flax; for thus he is able to display the sacred qualifications. He “can have compassion.” It is his nature to sympathize with the aching heart; but he cannot be compassionate to those who have no suffering, and no need. The heart of compassion seeks misery, looks for sorrow, and is drawn towards despondency; for there it can exercise its gracious mission to the full.

Often, when we are trying to do good to others, we get more good ourselves. When I was here one day this week, seeing friends who came to join the church there came among the rest a very diffident tender-hearted woman, who said many sweet things to me about her Lord, though she did not think that they were any good, I know. She was afraid that I should not have patience with her and her poor talk; but she said one thing which I specially remember: “I have to-day put four things together, from which I had derived a great deal of comfort,” she told me. “And what are they, my sister?” I asked. “Well,” she said, “they are those four classes — ‘the unthankful and the evil, the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,’ Jesus ‘is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil’, and he ‘can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,’ and I think that I can get in through those four descriptions. Though I am great sinner, I believe that he will be kind to me, and have compassion upon me.” I stored that up; for I thought that one of these days I might want it

myself; I tell it to you, for if you do not want it now, you may need it one of these days; you may yet have to think that you have been unthankful and evil, ignorant and out of the way, and it will give you comfort to remember that our Lord Jesus is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and that he “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”

On this latter subject, I would speak at this time, wishing to comfort some who are of a sorrowful spirit, and others who may yet have need of such consolation as this topic gives.

Notice in our text, first, *the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned*, namely, “the ignorant and them that are out of the way”; secondly, *the sort of High Priest with whom sinners have to deal* — One “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way”; and thirdly, *the sort of infirmities in men that may be sanctified to great uses*. “For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity,” is said of an earthly high priest; this it was that made him fit to be a high priest; and there are certain infirmities that we might almost glory in, for they enable us to be like priests unto God, and make us helpful to his sorrowing and suffering children.

First, then, let us carefully observe THE SORT OF SINNERS FOR WHOM OUR HIGH PRIEST IS CONCERNED. While it is true that he is willing to receive all sorts of sinners, there are many who never come to him, nor submit to his authority. With those who proudly and rashly stand before God on their own merit, he has nothing to do; but with others of a different character he is greatly concerned.

The people who claim Christ’s aim are generally *those who have a very low opinion of themselves*. Out of all the tribes of Israel, those that came to the high priest, to ask him to present their sacrifice to God for them, and to speak a word from God to them, were God-fearing people. No doubt hypocrites, occasionally, did come, and some of a proud spirit who trusted in their own offerings; but I should think that, all the year round, the high priest saw some of the humblest and best people in all Israel. Men and women, in sore trouble, would come to him; and these chastened spirits would be choice spirits. Men and women who were conscious of sin, and longing for pardon, would come to the high priest; men and

women who had not sinned after the similitude of a public transgression, who nevertheless felt evil darkening their conscience within, would draw near to him; men and women who had lost the light of God's countenance, and who came longing to have it back again, because they could not live without it, would approach the courts of God's house. All these would be welcome visitors at the high priest's door, and would receive his sympathy and compassion. Such are the people whom Christ our great High Priest now delights to bless. The proud and self-satisfied cannot know his love; but the poor and distressed may ever find in him comfort and joy, because of his nature, and by means of his intercession.

As with the high priest of Israel in the olden time, amongst those who come to our High Priest, *are many whose fear and distress arise from ignorance*. Oh, dear friends, if all the ignorant were to come, we should all come; for we are all ignorant; but there are some who fancy that it is otherwise with them. They imagine they know all things, and, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. They know not their need of the great High Priest. Their folly is proved by their light esteem of him. But among those who come to our great High Priest in heaven, there are none but those who are ignorant.

In the first place, there is *a universal ignorance*. Notwithstanding all that great men may say about what they evolve from their own consciousness, I think that the only thing that a man can evolve from his own consciousness is folly and sin; for there is nothing else there. If he goes on evolving, he will evolve greater folly and greater sin, that is all. But when the Lord deals with men, he makes them feel that they know very little. What do we know of sin? The larger proportion of our sins are probably unknown to us. We do them, and scarcely observe that we have committed them. And who knows the evil that lies in any one sin? We is he that can weigh his iniquities in scales, or his errors in balances? Upon that one dread subject of sin, we are all life babes; we have not begun to learn more than the alphabet of that awful knowledge. Sinful we are, but it is part of the effect of sin that we do not know the extent of our sinfulness, and we should not know it at all, if it were not for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Again, what do we know of ourselves? Does any man truly know himself? "The proper study of mankind is man," says Pope. I am not sure of that;

but I am certain that the proper study of mankind is Christ; for in him we not only can learn about man, but much more besides. But how little we know of ourselves, of our natural weakness, of our evil tendencies, of our proneness in this direction, or in that!

What do we know of God the unsearchable? Is he past finding out? Who can sufficiently tell of his nature, or of his wondrous attributes? Who can speak adequately of his greatness, or of his glory? Who can number up his years, or declare the whole of his lovingkindness? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" On this great subject as well as on the other topics I have mentioned, there is a universal ignorance. As compared with the light of God, we are in the dim twilight. He that seeth best only seeth men as trees walking.

But, in addition to the ignorance that is universal, there is also a *comparative ignorance* on the part of some; and because of this, the compassion of Christ flows forth to them. Those who are ignorant in this way, are the kind of sinners whom he has come to help as a High Priest. He puts them in a class by themselves.

There are, first, the recent converts — young people whose years are few, and who probably think that they know more than they do; but who, if they are wise, will recognize that, even by reason of the fewness of their years, their senses have not been fully exercised to discern between good and evil. You must not ask them questions about the deep things of God. They have to be satisfied with those blessed parts of Scripture where a lamb may wade; they must not meddle with those parts where leviathan has to swim. Many truths are either above them or below them, much experience is too deep for them. In the presence of many of God's ways, they are compelled to say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The Lord Jesus Christ can take little boys and girls to his bosom; and he does so, while they are as yet ignorant of many things. He loves them; he teaches them; he has compassion on them; and he says of them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God." Christ receives them in spite of their lack of knowledge, and therefore we must treat such very tenderly. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones;" for our great High

Priest has compassion upon their ignorance, and he instructs them. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," when they trust in him who sympathizes with them, and who cares for them.

Others there are who are ignorant because of their little opportunity of getting instruction. Are there not many who are so placed that they have little chance of ever learning to read? We are thankful that there will be few left of that sort by-and-by. But there are others who, if they could read, have scarcely sufficient time allowed them to read their Bibles, and who, when they have read them, are very like the Ethiopian eunuch, in that they do not comprehend what they have read. If the question were addressed to them, "Understandst thou what thou redest?" they could truly say, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" There are many, all over our land, who are situated in places where they cannot often hear the gospel, and when they do hear it, it is so mixed up and confused, that it is small wonder they cannot make head or tail of it. Constantly do we meet with persons of that kind, whose ignorance is excusable; for they have had no teaching. They have not had opportunities of reading and searching, as most of us have had; upon these our great High Priest has compassion, and often with their slight knowledge they show more of the fruits of the Spirit than some of us produce even with our more abundant light.

Further than that, there are many that are of a very feeble mind. You can only with difficulty get a thought into their brain, and if you try to get another idea on the top of it, the second one seems to knock the first one out. They never learn much, and they are so constructed that they never will. In our pilgrim band we have a number who are like Mr. Feeblemind; we may try all that we can with him, but we shall never make a hero of him. Others are like Mr. Ready-to-halt, with his crutches; he did dance once, you will remember, when Giant Despair's head was cut off; but still he had to go on his crutches even then, and he never gave them up till he crossed the river; then he left them to anybody who wanted such things, and, I fear me, there are many who want them to-day. We have those in our company who never will be able to give a systematic statement of the doctrines of grace, though they are full of grace. They could never explain how they were saved; but they *are* saved. I daresay the snail could never explain how he got into the ark, but he did get in; and these feeble ones are

in Christ, though they cannot fully explain how they came to that blessed position. Some of these good people are not very apt to receive knowledge: they are not “learnable”, if I may coin a word to express my meaning. We cannot make them learn. They are willing to be taught, they are teachable; but they are not “learnable.” Ah, well, our blessed High Priest can have compassion on the ignorant, and the feeble-minded!

Beside the universal ignorance of which we have spoken, and this comparative ignorance, there is a *sinful ignorance*. We have some who are ignorant, and no excuse is to be made for them; their ignorance is to be condemned; and if these words reach any who are thus guilty, I would beseech them to pray God to pardon their guilt, and cease to sin in this way any longer. I mean those who are ignorant for want of attention. They are so full of business, and have such a great many other things to think of, that they do not value the means of grace. They say that they cannot attend, but we know that where there is a will there is a way. Perhaps they go once on a Sunday and never more all the week. Now, if I had to eat one meal a week, and only one, I should want it to be a very good one; but I think that I should hardly be in a good condition for the next one the week following. It is a grand thing to get a little bit by the way, by coming on a Thursday night, or a morsel or two on a Monday, at the prayer-meeting. This stays the heart, and keeps the soul in good order.

Some will never be much above the ignorant, because they have not the ambition to learn. They do not set themselves to study the things of God. They do not sufficiently prize the revelation of God. I pray that they may be stirred up to do so. Though they have been guilty of neglectfulness and forgetfulness, they are not to be deprived of the sweetness of this text. Our Lord can have compassion on the ignorant, and on such as are out of the way. Here stands the great company to which his compassion goes out, and its name is written, “*The ignorant*.” I think that we had better all get into this class; indeed, I am sure that we had better join it, and thus obtain our Lord’s compassion. I have seen, at a railway-station, gentlemen with first-class tickets walking up and down the platform unable to find a first-class carriage, and if the train was going on they have jumped in the third-class, so as to get to the journey’s end. If there is a man here who does not think that he ought to be put down quite among the ignorant, jump in, brother, because you will get to your journey’s end in this

compartment, and there is no carriage, just now, for any wise person. There is nothing provided in the train that starts from this text, except that which is provided for the ignorant. The Lord hath us personally to rejoice that he can have compassion on the ignorant.

Now comes another description of the sort of sinners for whom our High Priest is concerned. There are *many whose fears arise from being out of the way*. The Lord “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” I remember that, when I felt myself to be a very great sinner, and verily thought I was more of a inner than anybody else, these words were very, very much blessed to me. I read them, “and on them that are out of the way”; and I knew that I was an out-of-the-way sinner. I was then, and I am afraid that I am now, somewhat like a lot out of the catalogue, an odd person who must go by himself. Very well; our High Priest can have compassion on those that are odd, on those that are out-of-the-way, on those who do not seem to be in the common run of people, and do not go with the multitude, but who must be dealt with individually, and by themselves. He can have compassion upon such.

But let us look at the more exact meaning of the text.

To be out of the way is, in the case of all men, *their natural state*. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” That is where we are all by nature, and our own way is out of *the way*. Therefore, Christ can have compassion upon all of us who come to him; for he has learnt to deal with those who are out of the way, and such, literally, are we all.

In addition to that, men have gone out of the way by *their own personal folly*. We had enough original sin; but we have added to that another kind of originality in evil.

*“Like sheep we went astray,
And broke the fold of God
Each wandering in a different way;
But all the downward road.”*

But there are some who wander most foolishly. You wonder why they sin in the particular way that they do. There seems to be no reason for it, no motive for it, no special temptation in that direction, and yet, they will do

it. They wander out of the way by themselves. Have you done so, dear friend? The Lord can have compassion on those that are out of the way.

Some are out of the way because of *their seduction from the way by others*. False teachers have taught them, and they have taken up with the error brought before them by a stronger mind than their own. In some cases persons of evil life have had a fascination over them. It is wonderful how, in the cases of young men and young women, they frequently seem to be not themselves, but the evil embodiment of another. They are ruled and governed by the will of somebody else, and not by their own. Thus they are led out of the way. They are like sheep that “have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.” Ah, poor friend, it is ill that you should have been the victim of another’s temptation! Do not blame your tempter; blame yourself; but, at the same time, remember that Christ has compassion upon those who have been led out of the way. As by the will of another you were beguiled from the true path, so by the love of Another shall you be won back again, even as it has been with many of us.

Many are out of the way because of *their backsliding after grace has come to them*. Our text comprehends backsliders who were once in the way. To such we may say, “Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?” Something has been an occasion of stumbling to such; and now, though sitting in the house of God, they know they are not what they once were, nor what they ought now to be, nor what they must be, nor what I hope they will be, even before I shall finish my discourse. “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Why will ye wander from the only source of good? “Take with you words and turn to the Lord.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: 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 Lord calls you in infinite tenderness; for he can have compassion upon backsliders, and stop them from becoming apostates, bringing them back unto himself, according to his divine purpose.

Others are out of the way because of *their consciousness of special sin*. Is there here anyone conscious of some great sin in years gone by? Is there a crimson spot upon your hand, which you have tried to wash out, but cannot; some act of your life which you would fain undo, and remove?

There it is, still there, always there. Does it fret you by night, and weary you by day, to think of the gross iniquity of yours? Ah, it has put you out of the way! Perhaps you did not grasp all the consequences of what you were doing when you did it. Be comforted by this gracious text. Hear your High Priest pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He pleads your ignorance. You "did it ignorantly in unbelief"; and while this does not excuse you, it puts you into the list of those who are both ignorant and out of the way. Come to this compassionate High Priest, and trust your case in his dear hands; they were pieced because of your sin. Trust your iniquity with him; his heart was opened and set abroad because of your transgression. Come, trust in him. He died because of your sin. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Thus I have very feebly set forth the sort of sinners for whom Christ is High Priest; those who are ignorant, and those who are out of the way. This message is for almost everybody here, except my friend over there who knows everything, and never did anything wrong. He does not want any Christ, and I will not bother him with one. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," saith the Lord Jesus; and he further adds this word, which shuts out you who never did any harm, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." To be so very learned, and so very good in your own estimation is no recommendation to Christ, but the reverse. He comes to men who need compassion, and those he teaches to profit, and leads in the way everlasting.

Having seen the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned, let us in the second place, look at **THE SORT OF HIGH PRIEST WITH WHOM SINNERS HAVE TO DEAL.**

Now, if I go back to the high priest under the law, the type would be a fine fatherly man, whose very face invited confidence. I should think that all the people were glad when the high priest was very tender and compassionate. Possibly that had occasionally a high priest who was very high and very mighty; one who was very glad when the day's service was over. If sinners wanted to see him, he was not visible; and when he did talk to them, he was not very gentle. Sometimes he may have said to them, "Now you are stupid, you talk nonsense;" and when any of them were

very sad, he said, "You ought to know better than to indulge this foolish nervousness of yours." I think that they were not sorry when that high priest was taken from them. But the pattern high priest was a fatherly-looking man, with love in his eyes, a smile on his face, one who had often sorrowed himself, one to whom all the people could go naturally. There are such men still alive. They are like a harbor for ships. Sometime sit brings a very heavy burden upon them, but they are happy men to have such a burden to carry. I think that some of those high priests must have seen a great deal of sin, and a great deal of mercy and divine love. When the poor people went up to the temple, one would say, "I must go in and see the high priest. I have such a burden and he will be able to help me." Another would say, "No, I shall not go in; I do not need to take up his time myself. Did not you hear him speak? What, what he said was just the very thing that I wanted. God gave him the very word that my distress required, and so I can go in peace." But here and there one would say, "Ah! I must tell him. It does me good to unburden my heart." Now that is the kind of high priest that we should all have wished for had we been living in those days; but our Lord Jesus is something incomparably better than that.

He is One who can bear with ignorance, forgetfulness, and provocation. How do I know it? Because he bore so wonderfully with the ignorance of people when he was here. It was with a very tender accent that he said to one of his disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip?" He had told them many, many times the same thing over again, and yet he was not above repeating it, he had such compassion on them. Sometimes, he could not say what he would have liked to say, and yet he bore with the poor men who did not know the burden he had on his heart: he only said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And when, after he had taught them, they still forgot, he did not chide them. I never find that he turned one of them away because of their stupidity; he did not even cast off Thomas for his unbelief. He let them still linger about his person, despite their false notions and their forgetfulness. They must often have grieved him through their ignorance, and through getting out of the way, especially when they got into the way of each desiring to be the greatest. But notwithstanding all, our Lord was never like Moses. Of him it is written that the people of

Israel “provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.”; but never an impatient word came from those lips into which grace was so abundantly poured. There was never such a meek, and gentle, and quiet spirit as our divine Lord and Master possessed. I need not dwell on that, for you all know what compassion he had upon the ignorant sons of men.

Again, he is One who can feel for grief, because he has felt the same. When I have explained compassion as implying meekness of disposition, I have not given you the full meaning of the expression. Not only has our Lord compassion on the ignorant by being gentle towards them, but he sympathizes with them by having a fellow-feeling with them. They got out of the way, and into the thorns; they wandered, and fell into a maze; they were lost in the dark mountains, but he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “In all their afflictions he was afflicted.” Because of that fellow-feeling he is always very tender and pitiful; and if he finds any of his children sorrowing, he has abundant compassion upon them.

Moreover, *He is One who lays himself out tenderly to help such as come to him.* He did so when he was here in body, and he is the same now; all his life was given in tenderness. You never find Christ throwing bread and meat to the hungry crowd as we throw bones to the dogs. He has made them sit down on the green grass, and then he blessed the food, and gave it to his disciples, and they distributed it in a quiet, orderly way. And the Lord Jesus Christ has a very loving way now of helping his people. So tenderly does he do it, that the doing of it is almost as great a wonder as the thing that is done. He abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, and we may each one say, “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” Oh, he is a wonderful Savior! There is none like him for sympathizing with us, and dealing tenderly with us.

Another thing I have to say of him that never can be said of anybody else is, that *he is One who never repelled a single person.* Not even the most ignorant, the most out of the way, was ever turned back from him. It was always true: “This man receiveth sinners.” And for ever this word is settled in heaven, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

I have not time to go into this matter fully, but all who have read the life of Christ know what a gentle and tender High Priest he was towards men.

*“Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well he remembers Calvary
Nor let his saints forget.”*

His heart is on earth, though he has ascended into the heavens. If anyone here groans after him, he will hear that groan; and if the wish does not come to a vocal sound at all, but if your heart only aches after him, he will feel that ache of your heart, and know what it means; and if you do not know how to pray, the very desire to pray he will interpret. He can have compassion on the ignorant. And if you do not know what you want, but only know that it is something that you must have or die, he will give it to you; for he will interpret your wordless desires, and what you cannot read yourself, he will read for you. But, oh, you must have him; you must have him, you cannot get to God without him! I pray that you will feel such confidence in his tenderness that you may come and take him as your own High Priest; if you do, he will be yours at the moment of acceptance. He will never refuse the seeker. He will not hide himself from his own flesh. He will never be distant and strange to any penitent sinner. If thou desirest him, it is because he desirest thee; and if thou hast a spark of wish for him, he has a furnace of desire for thee. Come, and welcome. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. God bless these words! I pray that he may do so, to very many.

Now, I want to speak to those of you who are the people of God. I can imagine that some of you here are troubled, perhaps ill, and that you cannot get on as you would like in the world. You seem compassed with infirmities. I want to remind you that there may be a blessing even in your weakness; and that this may be the more clearly seen we will look, in the third place, at the SORT OF INFIRMITY WHICH MAY BE SANCTIFIED AND MADE USEFUL.

The high priest of old was compassed with infirmities, and this was part of his qualification. “Yes,” says one, “but he was compassed with sinful infirmities; but our Lord Jesus had no sin.” That is quite true, but please remember that this does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Anything that is sinful hardens; and inasmuch as he was without sin, he was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear upon a man. He was all the more tender when compassed with infirmities, because

sin was excluded from the list. We will not, then, reckon sin in any form as an infirmity likely to be turned to a great use, even though the grace of God abounds over the sin; but, beloved friends, let me try and speak to some of you who wish to do good, and set forth some of the things which were sore to bear at the times, and yet have been rich in blessing since.

First think of *our struggles in finding mercy*. Years ago you had a hard time of it when you were seeking the Savior. I had, and I have always been very glad of it ever since. It was a long while before I could perceive the eternal light, and cast myself on Christ. I thank God that it was so because I have had to deal with hundreds — I might say thousands — in a similar case; and if I had found Christ, as many dear friends do, very readily and very easily, I could not have guided them; but now I can sit down by the side of them and say, “What! Have you got into the dark? I have been in the dark, too. You are down in the lowest dungeon, are you? Well, I was in the lowest dungeon of all. I can show you the way to where the jug of water stands, and the bit of brown bread. I know the way, for I have been there.” If you have not had a certain experience, you cannot so well help others who have; but if you were compassed with infirmity in your first coming to Christ, you may use that in helping others to come to him.

Again, *our grievous temptations* may be infirmities which shall be largely used in our service. “What a blessing it would be to live without temptations!” says one. I do not believe it would be a blessing at all. I think that, being without temptation is more of a temptation than having a temptation. There is no devil that is equal to no devil, for when there seems to be none, we get so very quiet and so very easy, and think that everything is going on well, when it is not. Be glad if you have been tempted. Remember that temptation is one of the best books in the minister’s library. To be tried, to be afflicted, to be downcast, to be tested — all this helps you to deal with others. You cannot be unto others a helper unless you have been compassed with infirmities. Therefore accept the temptations which trouble you so much, as a part of your salvation to make you useful to others.

Our sickness may turn out to be in the same category. Of course we would like to be always well. I think that health is the greatest blessing that God ever sends us, except sickness, which is far better. I would give

anything to be perfectly healthy; but if I had to go over my time again, I could not get on without those sick beds and those bitter pains, and those weary, sleepless nights. Oh, the blessedness that comes to us through smarting, if we are ministers and helpers of others, and teachers of the people! I do not say that too much of it is to be despised, but the Lord knows how much is too much, and he will never afflict us beyond that which he will enable us to bear. But just a touch of sickness now and then may help you mightily. I have heard some brethren preach the gospel, but it had been as hard as a Brazil nut; little children could never get at the kernel. These brethren had never had any trouble or affliction; and if you have never had any, you may try to be very tender, but it will be like an elephant picking up a pin; you may try to be patient and sympathetic, but you will not be able to manage it. Glory in your infirmities, then, and in your sicknesses, for they shall be made useful in you for the comfort of God's sick people.

Our trials, too, may thus be sanctified. He that has had no troubles, and no trials, what mistakes he makes! He is like the French lady in the time of famine, who said that she had no patience with the poor people starving because of the price of bread. You can always buy a penny bun for a penny, she said; and therefore she thought there need not be any poverty at all. She was one of the rich ones of the earth. I do not suppose that she had ever had a penny bun in her life, or a penny either. Ah, dear friends! You must, if you are ready to help others, be yourself compassed with infirmity.

Our depressions may also tend to our fruitfulness. A heart bowed down with despair is a dreadful thing. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" But if you have never had such an experience, my dear brother, you will not be worth a pin as a preacher. You cannot help others who are depressed unless you have been down in the depths yourself. You cannot lift others out of despondency and depression, unless you yourself have sometimes need to be lifted out of such experiences. You must be compassed with this infirmity, too, at times, in order to have compassion on those in a similar case.

Herein I think that every one of us should try to make use of all his weaknesses. *Our whole nature as feeble men* may be turned to the noblest

use if it calls forth our compassion towards others. Thanks God that you are not a man of iron. We has the Iron Duke once, who did famous things, but in a different fight from ours. An iron preacher would need to have iron hearers; and then, I am afraid, that there would come a crash before long. No, no; we must have our weaknesses and infirmity consecrated to God, and laid at his feet. Let us go, in all our weakness and infirmity, and try to help others who are as ignorant and as out of the way as we once were; and, God blessing us, when we are weak, we shall be strong. When we are less than nothing, the all-sufficiency of God will be all the more manifested. Here I must stop, for our time has gone. May the Lord bless the word, both to the sinner and to the saint, for his name's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Hebrews 4:15, 16; 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 326, 367, 376.

THE UNKNOWN GIVER AND THE MISUSED GIFTS

SERMON NO. 2252

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 17TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
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“For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I will return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and flax.” — Hosea 2:8, 9.

IN reading any of the records concerning the people of Israel and the people of Judah, one stands amazed at two things, and scarcely knows which to wonder at most. The first thing which causes astonishment is the great sin of the people; and the next thing, which is even more marvelous, is the great patience of God. I scarcely know which of the two things causes me greater surprise, that men should be so guilty, or that God should be so gracious. On every page of Israel's history, the kindness and forbearance of Jehovah are manifested towards the people whom he had betrothed unto himself. Even in the midst of their backsliding and idolatry, he did not forget the covenant which he had made with their fathers. Yet, in spite of all this goodness, the people sinned times without number, and grieved his Spirit again and again; instead of being led to repentance, they sinned yet more and more. Their iniquity, and the forbearance of God, stand like two mountain summits of the history of the chosen yet wayward people.

Let us just transfer these thoughts to ourselves, and see if we can, with any justice, cast a stone at the people who, in spite of such love, went so far astray. Alas, we are condemned by the comparison! We are nothing better than they were. Our case is, perhaps, fuller of contradictions and

inconsistencies, if that is possible. Is it not wonderful, first of all, that we should have been so guilty, that we should have persevered in sin so many years, that even after we have known God we should have been so unfaithful to him, so unfaithful to our own convictions, and to our own conscience? Is it not this awful fact amazing? But that God should love us still, that he should follow us with warning and invitation, that his Holy Spirit should strive with us, and continue to strive until he wins the day, and that despite our shortcomings and our transgressions, he should have remained faithful to us, even to this very hour, is more amazing still. O my soul, sink low in deep humiliation because of thy sinfulness! But, rise higher and yet higher in adoration of the unutterable love, the boundless mercy of God to thee in spite of thine iniquity. Beloved brethren, if it were possible for us to only know adequately these two things, man's sin and God's love, we should have learned more than the greatest scientists of this world ever knew, and we should have attained to more true wisdom than all earth's philosophers ever possessed. There be some that, in their search for knowledge, have almost seemed to walk the heavens in order to tread the stars, and to dive into the depths to arrange the rocks and all their ancient life; but there are two things that none of the wise amongst men have ever been able to compass — two things which unaided reason has ever failed to grasp, and ever will — sin and love; sin for its thunder, and love for its music: sin for its hell and love for its heaven. But we, who have been taught by the grace of God, do know something of sin: may we know increasingly what an evil it is! I trust we also know something of divine love; may we be filled with it, even to overflowing!

But, coming now close to our text, I am going to make four observances upon it.

The first will be one that seems self-evident, yet is often forgotten, namely, that *God is the Giver of every good gift*. "I gave her corn, and wine and oil." In the second place, I will dwell upon the sad fact that *many seem not to know this*. "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil." My third observation will be, that *this ignorance leads to perversion of God's gifts*: the gifts of God were profaned by being "prepared for Baal." In the last place, the solemn truth will demand our attention, that *this ill use of God's gifts causes God to withdraw them*. "Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and

my wine in the season thereof, and I will recover my wool and my flax.” We lose what we are determined to put to improper use. So, you see that my discourse promises to be a very practical one.

The first thought in the text which claims our attention will be, THAT GOD IS THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD GIFT. “I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” Whether we know it, or not, it is true that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Do not, then, exult over thy brother if thou art more richly endowed with God’s gifts than he is: “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” All things that we possess have been bestowed upon us; for it is as certain that we brought nothing into the world, and that we shall take nothing out of the world. We receive everything from the great Distributor, who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Though used with reference to a higher gift than any of those mentioned in the text, the words of John the Baptist are true concerning all God’s gifts, “a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”

But someone may say, “Corn and wine are here mentioned first of all; surely these are *the fruit of tillage*. Men sow, and reap. Men plant, and gather grapes. How, then, can these things be the gift of God?” Why, the moment we think seriously of this matter, we perceive that no husbandman can command a harvest! No vine-dresser can be sure of fruit, unless he that rules the heavens, and sendeth the dews, the rains, the snow, and the frosts, shall take care both of the budding vine and of the ripening clusters. All that springs from the earth comes by a miracle of God’s benevolence. If God withheld his hand, you might plough your land, but you would wait in vain for the harvest; and unfruitful season would not return to you even so much as the seed which you had sown. When famines come upon the nations, because of blighted harvests, then men ought to understand that the corn, and the wine, and the oil are God’s gifts; but, alas, many are very slow to learn even that elementary lesson!

Perhaps others say, “Our share of these things comes to us as *the earnings of labor*. Of course, in some form or other that must be true. Ever since man fell, that word of God to Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou

eat bread," has been the rule of life for his sons. If men do not till the soil, but dwell in cities, they must still work; but in less pleasant ways than the farmer knows. They may have to toil in murky workshops, where they would be glad to catch a breath of fresh breezes that come over the fields. I know we get our bread by our work; but then, who finds us work? Who gives us strength to do it? Let God but withdraw from us his gracious power, and our hands would hang feebly at our side. You know how true this is. When you have been laid aside upon the bed of sickness, then have you understood that, unless God gave health, the breadwinner could not go forth to his service, and there would be nothing on the table for the wife and children. It is God that gives us our bread, however hard we work in order to earn it. Still have we need to present the petition that our Lord taught his disciples, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Besides this, the text also mentions *the gain of commerce*. "I multiplied her silver and her gold." Here, also, God's hand is plainly seen. I admit, of course, that men gain their silver and their gold by trading; but will the ship come home again in safety unless God watches over it? Will the men that go into the bowels of the earth, to dig for minerals, come up alive unless still the providence of God preserves them? Is not the benediction of heaven needed in every enterprise to which men can put their hand? "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." The success of business is based upon a thousand conditions, and surrounded by many risks, as every merchant knows. How easily God can lay his finger upon my human scheme, and bring to nought all our plans! They used to call those who engaged in commerce "merchant venturers", and they were rightly named. There is many a "peradventure" about business-life in these days of cruel competition, even in our home-trade; and it is even more at a venture that a man goes to a far-off land for a gain. God must give him success, if he is to get it. In our bills of lading we even now insert a clause, by which the shipowner disclaims responsibility in certain contingencies, amongst which is mentions "the act of God"; and when men dispatch a vessel, they often pray, and they always ought to pray, "God speed this ship," for God-speed is needed if it is to reach its destination safely.

But some come in by their own corn, and their own wine, and their silver, and their gold, by *the legacies of their friends*. In such a case, you may

easily trace the gifts of God. If you parents have left you sufficient for your maintenance, who gave you those parents? Who placed them in a position to be so generous to you? Who arranged the place and manner of your birth but the great Lord of providence? If you are living in specially favorable circumstances, and are able to obtain food, and the other necessaries of life, with a good share of its luxuries, which others can only gain by long labor, if at all, ascribe to it, I beseech you, to the bountiful providence of the Most High. If you do not give all the glory to the Giver of these gifts, surely you are forgetting your God.

And yet, perhaps, another says, "I have not labored with my hands, but I am a man of resources. What I possess is *the result of thought*. I have carefully elaborated an invention, and in a few months I have been able to get for myself what others cannot get with a whole life of toil. Surely I may trace my prosperity to my capacious mind." And if you do so, you will be very foolish, unless you also adore the God who gave you your mind. By whose power is it that you have had the wit to gain wealth so speedily? I beseech you be humble in the presence of God, or you may in a few days lose your reason, for it has often happened that men who have had more wit than others have been among the first to lose it. "Great wit to madness is allied." In many a case it has proved to be so. Remember Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, builder of cities, inventor of great things, and yet "he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws," because he was proud, and exalted himself against God, neither gave glory for his greatness to the Most High.

We therefore settle it in our hearts as true, once for all, that God is the Giver of the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and the silver, and the gold, and whatever temporal blessings we enjoy. If honestly gained, we trace them to his hand; and we would thank him now and always for every good gift that we have received from him.

I need not make a list of spiritual blessings, nor need I remind you that they all come from God. You know how dependent you are upon him for them. By nature you are dead. What spiritual life can you get for yourselves without God? Can the dead make themselves to live? When you have been made alive, you are pardoned; can you pardon yourselves?

Whence can forgiveness come but from God? You have more than pardon if you are a child of God, you are possessed of righteousness; how shall you ever have it but as God arrays you in the righteousness of Christ? Joy and peace are our portion, but both come by believing; they are the gift of God. Holiness, too, and everything else that prepares us for heaven, and helps us to reach that blessed place, is the gift of God freely bestowed upon unworthy men. We were unworthy when he began to bless us, and we are unworthy still; yet the hand that at first bestowed the gift upon us, continues to enrich us every day in all bountifulness. Shall we not praise him, lifting high our grateful song?

*“Come thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.”*

We will not withhold our thanks for such abounding goodness.

*“Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let that grace, now, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to thee.”
So much for the first point.*

Now, secondly, and we come closer to our text, MANY SEEM NOT TO KNOW THIS. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” She did not know, and in this lack of knowledge she stands not alone. There are great numbers in the world who do not know this elementary truth, that all good gifts, of any kind whatsoever, come from the hand of God. Why is this?

With some it arises from *natural ignorance*. Myriads of men know not God as yet; and they are to be pitied, if they have not even heard of him. I fear that in London there are many who have never received even the plainest instruction with regard to God and his Christ. It ought not to be so, seeing that so many in earlier years have passed through our Sunday-schools into which a child may go and come out again, and know but little that will abide with him. It is a pity that this should be the case; but facts go to show that I state no more than the plain truth. There are many whom we may meet in the street who could give us no intelligent account of what they owe to God. They scarcely know who he is. They use his name as a part of their profanity, and that is all. Brethren, I charge you, by

the living God, that as far as your ability goes, you do not suffer a single person in London to be ignorant of God, and what men owe to him. With all your might, instruct those with whom you come in contact concerning the great Creator, Preserver, and Judge of men, and show them how all our blessings are to be traced to his generous hand. Thus shall be laid a foundation whereon may rest a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are, however, many more who, from *thoughtless ignorance*, do not know that God gave them their providential mercies. Oh, what a thing it is that the bulk of the people by whom we are surrounded should have a thought for everybody but God! Some persons are strictly honest to their fellow-men, but they never think that they owe God anything. Everybody is treated fitly by them except their Creator. They will be ungrateful to nobody except their very best Friend; and all for want of thought. Is it not ten thousand pities that so many miss heaven from heedlessness, and that so many go down to hell for want of thinking how they may escape from it? “The wicked shall be turned into hell,” says the Psalmist, “and all the nations that forget God.” What did these do who thus perish? Did they blaspheme? No; they only forgot God. Did they oppose his purposes? No, it is not said so; but they *forgot* God. That is all. He that forgets his king becomes a traitor. The soldier that forgets his captain becomes a deserter. The child that forgets his mother, becomes a prodigal. But the man that forgets his God is the worst of all; his sheer thoughtlessness leads him to the abyss of woe.

Some lose sight of God because of their wrong thoughts. They look upon everything that happens as luck. “I was a lucky fellow,” says one. “Wonderfully fortunate I have always been,” says another; “I have always had good luck.” So God is pushed from his throne, and men pay their tribute to an imaginary something, which is really nothing, but which they call “luck.” If luck has actually done anything for you, then by all means worship luck, and pay homage to it; but it is not so. Luck, fortune, and chance are the devil’s trinity. If things have gone well with you, it has been so because it has pleased the Most High to favor you. I pray that you may not be unmindful of the heavenly blessing, but thank your God, and bless his name.

“Well,” says one, “I do not attribute my success to luck. I say I owe it to myself.” So you turn from your God, and worship yourself, do you? The Egyptians have been counted the most degraded people of this world in their worship. They worshipped onions, till Juvenal says, “O blessed people, who grow their gods in their own back gardens!” But I do not think they were quite so degraded as the man that worships himself. If I could bring my soul to worship an onion, I could never degrade myself low enough to worship myself. A man who makes himself his own god is mad. When you begin to adore yourself as a self-made man, you have surely come to the very abyss of absurdity and idolatry. “Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” Let us not then be guilty of the folly of forgetting him to whom we owe our all. “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Still, alas, it is true that some, through their thoughtlessness or their corrupt thought about God, know not that he gave them their corn and wine and oil.

There are others who forget God from *assumed ignorance*; they know better, but they profess that they are too intelligent to believe in God. Do you often hear the proud boastings of such men? Oh! It is folly of the most profound kind for any man to think he is too intelligent, or too clever, to believe in God, or to trace anything to him. “These things happen according to the laws of nature,” they say. “The arrangements of nature are fixed and invariable.” Thus “nature” becomes nothing more than a false god, which they worship. They have elevated a certain something which they call “nature” into the place of God, and they suppose that God is somehow tied by his own laws, and can never do any other than that which he has been accustomed to do; by such reasoning natural law is lifted up, and made higher than the omnipotent God himself. Go you that worship nature, and worship her if you will. I have not generally found much worship in it. I had a neighbor, who said to me, “I do not go and shut myself up in the stifling atmosphere on a Sunday; I stop at home, and worship the god of nature.” I said to him, “he is made of wood, is he not?” “What do you mean?” he said in some surprise. “I think,” I answered, “that I have heard you at worship, and you seem to me to adore your god by knocking him down.” “Ah!” said he; “have you heard me playing skittles on Sunday?” “Yes,” I said; “you are a pretty fellow to tell me that

you stop at home, and worship the god of nature. Your worship is all a lie." When you hear men talk about this god of nature, it often means that they only want an opportunity of having more drink, or of amusing themselves, or of otherwise wasting the hours of God's holy day. As for us, I trust that we shall not assume an ignorance which is not ours. We know that God gave us all we have, and unto him shall be the praise.

A great many have no real lack of knowledge at all, if you search their minds. Theirs is a *practical ignorance*. They know not that God gave them these things, in the sense that they do not confess that it is so. They never speak about him as the one who provideth for all their needs; they never praise him for his bounty. They may, perhaps, jerk out a "Thank God," just as a matter of common speech; but there is no thankfulness in their heart. Practically, they live from year to year as if there were no God, and spend their time and their substance as if they were under no obligation whatever to the great Lord of providence. Practically it may be said of them, "They know not that I gave them their corn and their wine and their oil."

A lower depth is reached by those who do not recognize God because of their *wilful ignorance*; who, because of their deeds of darkness, hate the light, and refuse to acknowledge the gifts of God. Our Father in heaven "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." But the unjust do not receive the refreshing showers as from his hand, nor do those who are evil acknowledge that it is God's sun that shines upon their head. They hate God, and are wilfully ignorant, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

Now, it does seem to be a very grievous thing that men should be indebted to God for everything, and should never praise him; that they should every morning be awakened by the light that he gives, and every evening be helped to sleep by the shades of darkness with which he mercifully closes the day, and curtains the night; and yet that they should never adore his name. Am I not speaking to some here who, through a tolerably long life, have never thought of their God, or whose thoughts concerning him have been but fitful and feeble? I would like to hold you to your seat for a

moment, my friend, while I ask you whether you do not feel ashamed that you have never considered the claims of the Most High, or have never thought that he could have any claims, but supposed that you had just to live to think of yourself and your friends, and perhaps of your fellow-men, but never of your God? His goodness has been practically denied by you. You have lived as if there were no God, or as if he were too far off to operate upon your life. You live as if you had received ought to have secured for him your service. Yet what have you done? Does a man keep a cow without expecting its milk? Would he keep a horse without putting it to work? Would he own a dog if it did not fawn upon him, and come at his call? Yet God has kept you all these years, and he has had nothing from you but sheer forgetfulness, or, possibly, something worse than that. What do you say to this? I press the matter upon you, and ask you carefully to review it before your own conscience, and before the Lord, to whom you must one day give account. Seeing that you have received so much from him, you should, at the very least, acknowledge that he is the Giver of all your good things. May God the Holy Spirit make you confess that you have not dealt well with your God, and strive with you until, by his almighty grace, you shall be constrained to change your evil course, and acknowledge the goodness and mercy you have received from him throughout your whole life!

In the third place, when men thus fail to recognize and acknowledge God's goodness, THIS IGNORANCE OFTEN LEADS TO THE PERVERSION OF GOD'S GIFTS. See how God puts it with reference to the people of Israel, "I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." What a depth of infamy it would be to receive the bounty of one king, and to pay homage therewith before the throne of his rival! This is what Israel did, and alas! Too many imitate them to-day. The people burned incense to the false god of the heathen on every hill. "She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord." This was a great iniquity. The very gold which God gave them they fashioned into ornaments for their idol, and poured out the wine that came as a gift from heaven, as an offering at Baal's shrine. There was a certain Indian potentate, who deposed his father from the throne, and then desired that father to send him his jewels, that he might wear them at his own coronation. These people desired God's gifts, in order that they might

present them to Baal; and, alas! In this impiety they have many followers. How many there are who are using against God all that he has given them! They have prepared it for Baal.

We do this whenever the gifts of God are used *to augment pride*. This is a temptation that besets all. We have all a tendency to swell and grow great simply because God has given us more than other people; whereas that but makes us the greater debtors. I have heard that, in the days of imprisonment for debt, there were people in prison who used to be quite proud because they owed ten thousand pounds, and who looked down with scorn upon a poor fellow who had come in there only owing a hundred pounds, or perhaps, only a five-pound note. The more they were in debt, the more they thought of themselves. Now, is not that the case with every proud man? Because you have greater ability, or greater wealth, than another, you owe so much the more to God; and yet you are foolish enough to make that, which ought to be a reason for being humble, a reason for being proud. God surely feels that his gifts are being misused when we handle them so as to make ourselves haughty and important. In doing this we forget him who gave us all, even as Hosea in another place saith concerning the people, “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten me.”

Moreover, the gifts of God are perverted when we use them *to justify sin*, setting our necks stiffly in the way of evil, because, though we have wandered from God, the corn and the oil are still continued to us. “There are my rewards that my lovers have given me,” said this nation that went after Baal; therefore she thought that her worship of Baal was worthy to be continued. How horrible a thing it is for a man to boast in his sin, because God does not swiftly follow it with judgment, and to continue therein because God does not at once withdraw his common mercies! Those whose hearts are set in them to do evil, because the sentence against the evil work is not executed speedily, shall have sore distress in the day when, at last, the righteous God arises to judgment.

Again, God’s gifts are ill-used when because of the very abundance of them, we begin *to excuse excesses*. the drunkard and the glutton pervert what was meant to be a good gift into an occasion of sin and riot. God

gives us all good things richly to enjoy; but when, instead of enjoying them, men abuse them, and ruin themselves, body and soul, by missing the gifts of heaven, it would be small cause for wonder if God was roused to remove the gifts put to such base use. And since so many of those around us do abuse God's gifts in this manner, it behooves us, who desire to glorify God, to use all things with great temperance, and wholly to abstain from some thing, lest we should cause our brother to stumble.

Equally bad is it when a man uses the gifts of God's providence so as to *foster selfishness*. His silver and gold are multiplied; he hoards it up and makes a god of it. The poor are at his gate. There let them keep; why should he trouble about them? The church of God needs his aid. Let it need it. It shall have nothing from him. "Soul," says such a man, "thou must lay up much goods for many years." And, when he has effected his purpose, then he talks to his own soul again, poor creature that it is, and says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." He has made a god of his goods, and thus he has perverted God's gifts, and used them to God's dishonor. He has given them to Baal.

It grieves one's heart to see gifts of God used to *oppose God*. What would you have thought of David, when Jonathan gave him his sword and bow, if he had not taken the sword, and cut off Jonathan's head, or if he had fitted an arrow to the string, and shot Jonathan to the heart? It would have been ingratitude. But men fight against God with God's own gifts. A woman endowed with beauty, the rare gift of God, uses it to ensnare others to sin. God gives us garments, and there are some who use their very garments for nothing else but pride, and who go through the world with no motive but display. A man has a musical voice given to him, but he sings what God cannot be pleased to hear, and what no man or woman ought to listen to. Another has great intellect, and he gives himself up to pulling the Bible to pieces, and, as far as he can, to destroy much good. Another has a voice that is clear and loud, and skill in using it, and you hear him stand up and lead others to war against their Maker, and to sin with a high hand against the King of heaven. Oh, the pity is that there should be so much of good in the world, all heaped up to rot — that so many gifts of God should be used by men against him! When those in high authority oppress the righteous, they use their authority against God; and when men in high

standing are seen at police courts advocating that which is injurious to morals, they not only degrade themselves, but they make us think that the “nobility” with which they are said to be endowed must be a myth. God keep us all, dear friends, from ever using the gifts of our Maker against our Maker; and we are certainly acting against him when we go contrary to anything that is honest, lovely, and of good repute; and when, in any way, we sanction that which will do our fellow-creatures wrong, and will be injurious to the interests of true righteousness, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

My text is sadly true with reference to many; “She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” They prepared for God’s enemies what God himself had given to them, and what he meant to be used only for his own glory.

And now my fourth observation is this: THIS PERVERSION OFTEN MOVES GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS MISUSED GIFTS. “Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax.”

God has given to many of you a great many mercies. Remember that, if you become proud of them, if because you have become fat, like Jeshurun, you begin to kick, he can take his gifts away. If you forsake God, who made you, and lightly esteem the Rock of your salvation, he will forsake you, and withdraw his bounty.

He can withdraw his gifts *easily*. “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” You have seen the crows on the ploughed field, have you not? There they are, blackening the ground. But clap you hands, and they are gone. So have we often seen it with a man’s wealth. There has been a little change in the money market, some little turn in commerce, and all his money has taken to itself wings, and flown away. Is it health and strength that you have, or great wit? Ah, sir, a puff of wind may take away life; a little gas may be fatal to health! We know not what dependent creatures we are. God can easily take away the blessings which he gives, therefore let us remember him in the use of them. “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”

Moreover, God can take away his gifts *unexpectedly*. In the text, he says, “I will take away my corn in the time thereof,” that is, in harvest, “and my wine in the season thereof,” that is, just at the time of vintage. When it seems as if the harvest and vintage were secure, God would send a sudden blight upon both, and they would perish. God can take things away when they almost touch the tips of our fingers, and he can easily deprive us of misused blessings at the very moment when we think we are most sure of them. “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip;” and there is many an occasion of final disappointment when we think we have succeeded. We are only secure as we trust in the Giver of all good.

God can take away these things *rightfully*. What would you do yourself if you had one whom you fed who was always kidding against you? Would you feed a dog that was always barking at you, and trying to fly at you, and do you mischief? Is it not right that God should take away providential benefits from men when they misuse them, and pervert them to his dishonor? It is of his grace that these things are ours at all; he has but to withdraw that grace, and to deal with us as we deserve, and lo! We are impoverished at once.

If God does take these things away, I would pray that he may take them from you *mercifully*. I was riding one day with a young gentleman, who was leading a very reckless life indeed, but whose father was a very gracious man. I found that the son had taken to horse-racing, and I said, “That is right; go on as fast as you can. Till you have lost every penny you have, you will scarcely be willing to turn to God. Young fellows like you do not often come home, except round by the swine-trough. When you get down to that, then, I trust, you will cry to God for mercy, and say, ‘I will arise, and go to my father.’” He was very astonished at my advice; but I think it was the right thing to say under the circumstances.

How often have I seen something of this sort take place! The Lord has taken away from a man wealth, or he has taken away health, or else the man has fallen into dishonor; the Lord takes away the corn in the time thereof, and the wine in the season thereof, and then it happens, as we have it in the verse before the text, the afflicted one says, “I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now.” So long as you come to Christ, I do not mind if you come round by

“Weeping-Cross.” Even if you come with a broken leg, with the loss of an eye, or with consumption making a prey of you, it will be well; if only your souls be saved, and you come home to your great Father, we will be glad. But why do you want to be whipped to Christ? Why not come willingly? Why do you need to have these truths burnt into you as with a hot iron? Why not learn them easily. “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Be not hard-mouthed with God, for he will master you, if he once take you by the hand. If he means to bless you, he will conquer you, though he may have to use rough measures with you. By-and-by, when he has broken you in, he will deal with you in all the infinite tenderness of his compassion; and you will acknowledge that even his roughness was all the result of his love to you.

Now, I close by saying that the Lord may take these things away from us *justly*. He sometimes withdraws his bounty without intending mercy. The sufferings of guilty men here are like the first days of a horrible tempest that will continue for ever and ever. If they will not turn to him when he calls in mercy, but continue to reject his love, then will he begin to speak in thunder, and the first storm of his righteous wrath shall only be the beginning of an endless hurricane.

*“Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there.”*

I have tried to speak very earnestly; but if I have failed to speak as tenderly as I would, may the great Master forgive! Oh, that you would acknowledge your indebtedness to God! Oh, that you would cast away your idols! “As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.”

God grant that you may be led by the blessed Spirit to yield yourself to him who has given you so much cause to trust him, and to his name shall be eternal honor! Amen, and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Hosea 2

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 709, 524, 596.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF FAITH

SERMON NO. 2253

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 24TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30TH, 1890.

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”
— *Matthew 15. 28.*

I have frequently spoken to you concerning the faith of this Canaanitish woman, of the way in which Christ tried it, and of the manner in which, at length, he honored it, and granted all that the suppliant sought. The story is so full of meaning, that one might turn it this way, and that way, and the other way, and always see jewels in it. But I am not going to use it with only one aim, namely, to encourage those who have faith enough to seek Jesus, but have not yet, to their joy and peace, been quite able to find him.

This woman had come to her last word. I do not see what more she could have said. When Christ had likened her to a dog, she had consented to it, and said, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” She had come to her last word, and now Christ gives her his best word. It is his way, sometimes, to make us wait till we are completely exhausted, and can say and do no more; then he comes in with the fullness of his divine power, and gives to us what we have importunately sought at his hands. Our extremity is his opportunity.

The first remark which I shall make, and enlarge upon, is that FAITH ALONE CAN KEEP A SOUL SEEKING AFTER CHRIST UNDER DISCOURAGEMENT. Other causes may send us a certain distance along the road, but only faith will bring us to the goal of assured rest.

That which made this woman seek the Savior was, first of all, parental love. She loved her daughter. She longed to have the devil cast out of her,

that her daughter might not be so grievously vexed. That started her going, and carried her some way towards the blessing; but she would have stopped short of the boon she desired if she had relied upon natural love alone.

Her earnestness also to a large extent urged her forward. When she desired healing for her daughter, she meant what she said. When she cried, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" it was with a shrill and piteous voice. She could not bear to be refused. Nobody ever came to Christ who pleaded more from the heart than did this poor Canaanite. She was not an idle repeater of forms of prayer. Her prayer leaped, red-hot, from her soul — "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" But her earnestness alone would not have upheld her under the ordeal through which she was called to pass. It would have given way if she had not had the believing conviction that Christ could heal her daughter, and that he would do so.

Her humility also helped her greatly. Had she been a proud woman, she would have stood upon her dignity when she was called a dog; but humility came to her help, and she did not resent even the harsh word the Lord used, but still pleaded for her poor child. Now, parental love and earnestness and humility are good things, but they are not enough to enable a soul to cling to Christ, and never let him go. Something more is needed.

This Canaanite woman was a very sensible woman, wise and prudent. She knew how to turn the hard words of Christ into arguments in her own favor. She would not be put back. If he had not answered her, she would have pleaded with him again. When he did answer her, and say that it was not meet to give the children's bread to dogs, she found even in that dry bone some little marrow on which to feed her heart. But wise as she was, and prudent as she was, she would not have held out to the end, and obtained the blessing she desired for her daughter, if it had not been for her faith.

We may be quite sure that the one thing specially noteworthy in this woman's case was her faith, first, because *we have Christ's word for it*. He said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" He did not say, "Great is thy love to thy child;" nor, "Great is thy earnestness;" nor, "Great is thy

importunity;” but he put his finger on the power that had urged her forward, and he said, “O woman, great is thy faith!” And not in this case alone did Christ trace the blessing to faith, but in nearly every instance where a suppliant obtained favor from him, faith was the medium of securing the mercy. Faith is mightier than all other available forces.

Besides this, *we know that faith supports the other graces*. If other graces can help a soul to plead with Christ, they all owe their power to faith. If it had not been for the faith which she had to support it, parental love would not have helped this woman much. If it had not been for faith, she would not have been earnest and importunate. Faith hangs on to Christ in the dark, it holds to a silent Christ, it holds to a refusing Christ, it holds to a rebuking Christ, and it will not let him go. Faith is the great holdfast that hooks a soul on to the Savior.

Faith is thus powerful because of its effects. *Faith enlightens, enlivens and strengthens*. It is written of some of old that “They looked unto him, and were lightened.” Faith shed a light upon many things, and lets us see that even if Christ has a frown on his face, he has love in his heart. Faith looks right into the heart of Christ, and helps us to perceive that he cannot mean anything but mercy to a seeking soul. Faith also enlivens, and when the heart begins to faint, faith brings its smelling bottle, and revives it. David said, “I had fainted, unless I had believed.” Believing is the cure for fainting, and you must do one of two things, either believe or faint. Faith is thus a great help to one who is seeking Christ, because it both enlightens and enlivens the soul. Faith also strengthens. It makes the lame take the prey. Beloved, it is because faith thus enlightens and enlivens and strengthens, that it is the grace most useful to a soul that is seeking to lay hold upon Christ, and yet cannot get a comfortable look at his blessed face.

Moreover, *faith lays hold on Christ*. It is like the Greek Antisthenes, who went to a philosopher to learn; but he was a dull scholar, and the philosopher bade him go away. The next time the class met, Antisthenes returned, and the philosopher thereupon sent for a man with a club to drive the stupid scholar away; but he was overcome by his scholar; for Antisthenes said, “There is no club that was ever made that is heavy enough to drive me away from you. Here I mean to stay, and learn

whatever you can teach me.” Oh, may we have a faith like that, a faith that will say to Christ, “I will not go away from thee. I can but perish if I stay with thee, and if I go from thee, I must perish; therefore I will abide with thee evermore, and learn all thou wilt teach me”! Faith is like the Greek in the days of Xerxes, who seized the boat with his right hand. When they chopped off the right hand, he seized it with the left hand; when they cut off the left hand, he laid hold of the boat with his teeth, and did not let go until they severed his head from his body. Soul, if thou canst lay hold of Christ with thy right hand, or with thy left hand, it will be well with thee. Cling to Christ, and say to him with that holy boldness that is the result of faith, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Faith, then, holds on to Christ.

Further, I would say that *faith does this best without help*. How often we try to assist faith! We want faith to have some works, some prayers, something or other of our own to help it. It is as if somebody were to try and help me to walk by giving me a big chair to carry. I should not walk so well with the burden, as without it. Have you ever heard this parable concerning faith? She had to cross a stream, and the current was strong, and there came one to her who said, ““ faith, I will help thee! Come with me up the river till we can find a place where we can ford it.” Faith said, “No; I was bidden to cross the river here.” So another came, and said, “I will build a bridge for you, that you may go over the river with ease;” and he laid hold of a few stones, but not much ever came of it. Yet another said, “I will go and find a boat.” But there were no boats about; therefore they asked faith to wait till they build a boat for her. What did she do? She took off her vestments, and plunged into the water. “Thanks God,” said she, “I can swim;” and so she swam across, and reached the other side without boat, without bridge, and without ford. That is what I should like to see every sinner here do — begin to swim. Do not wait for help. Cast yourself into the stream of everlasting love. Believe in Christ Jesus, and have no more confidence in the flesh, with its bridges and boats. Commit thyself to the stream of eternal grace, and swim across. Faith can enable you to do it. Nothing else can. Take that lesson home to yourselves, you who are seeking to Savior at this time.

The only thing that will help you to follow after Christ till you find him, is faith. All your groaning will not help you. All your doubting and your

trembling will be of no avail; your feeling that you are too vile to be saved, and that faith would be presumption in such a sinner as you are, will not aid you. But believe that Christ can save you, and trust to his power and love, and he will save you. Come to him as the woman of Canaan came, with her importunate cry, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David," and he will have mercy on you even as he had upon her. Believe, believe, believe! Thou wilt never come into light by doubting and fearing. The way to liberty lies through this one door of faith. Therefore believe and live.

Thus much upon our first remark, that faith alone can keep a soul seeking after Christ under discouragement.

Secondly, FAITH IS EXCEEDINGLY DELIGHTFUL TO CHRIST. What he said to this woman began with an exclamation, as if he were struck with something in her that delighted him. He said, "O woman, great is thy faith!" Notice that he spoke of her faith, and of that alone. He knew about her love; he knew about her earnestness; he knew about her humility; but he said nothing at all about them; his one word of commendation was for her faith. "O woman, great is thy faith!" That is what my Lord is looking for now. He comes round and looks at you, who are sitting in these pews, to see whether you have faith in him. There are several thoughts suggested by this, that should encourage you who are seeking Christ.

He can spy out the beginnings of faith. "If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed," he will see it, and he will accept it. If thou hast only now begun to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to trust him, though thy faith be feeble as a babe that cannot stand, but can only cling to its mother's breast, Jesus will see the beginnings of it. He is the "Author" as well as "the Finisher of our faith." Be thou comforted, then, concerning that tiny trust thou hast in him.

Still, *he is greatly pleased when he sees great faith.* When a great sinner says, "I believe that he is a Savior great enough to save me;" it brings joy to the heart of Christ. When an old sinner says, "I believe that his precious blood can take away the sin of seventy or eighty years;" the Lord's heart is gladdened. Christ loves a great faith. He deserves great faith, and when he gets it, he is highly pleased. "O woman," said he, "great is thy faith!"

He is so delighted with faith, that *he passes by other things for it*. If that woman's ears had been hung with rings, and her neck had been decked with pearls, and her hands had been covered with diamonds, he would not have cared about her ornaments and her beauty. He sees something that he prizes more than any of these things; therefore he says to her, "O woman, great is thy faith!" He is charmed with that choice decoration of her heart. By that treasure "The king is held in his galleries." Christ may say of faith, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes." When we can but look straight to Christ, and trust in him, he is charmed and carried away by our faith.

Why does Christ think so much of faith?

One reason is, because *faith glorifies him*. He thinks much of it, because it thinks so much of him. Faith believes him, faith trusts him, faith lives upon him. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand" and the "altogether lovely" to faith. Therefore, because faith highly esteems Christ, Christ highly esteems faith.

Next, he loves faith because it is *God's appointed way* in which we are to receive blessing. God might have appointed ordinances as the vehicle of grace; but, instead thereof, he has made faith to be the medium of salvation. If thou believest, thou shalt be saved. He that be faith lays hold on Christ, has laid hold on eternal life. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To the awakened sinner our word is still, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Since God has put faith into so eminent a place, our Lord Jesus Christ loves to see it; he takes delight in that which pleases his Father.

Another reason why he loves it is, because *faith is the signal which permits the train of mercy to come to us*. Whenever unbelief holds up its arms, the train of almighty grace stands still. Of a certain place it is said, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Their doubt blocked the way. But when faith lowers the signal, the great Driver of heaven's express says, "That road is clear," and he delights to see it, and drives right ahead. Oh, if thou canst but let that signal go down, showing that the line is clear of all obstructions, Christ will surely come to thee! He is glad to come wherever he can bring a blessing, and he rejoices when faith reveals to him a clear road.

Besides, *faith has open arms for embracing Christ*. When he comes to our door, and finds it locked, he stands there till his bitter lament is “my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” But when he comes and the door is open, the poor sinner is so taken up with his beauty that he never thinks of shutting him out. “Oh,” says the seeking soul, “if the Lord would but come in!” And as surely as Christ finds thus door open, he comes in, and dwells there; and makes that heart and that house happy with his divine presence. Christ loves faith because faith gives him a hearty welcome; faith receives him; faith embraces him.

Oh, I would to God you would think of this and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus! May you see that nothing delights Christ like a sinner believing in him, that nothing gives him more joy than to have a saint resting completely upon him without doubt or fear!

Thus have we considered two points; first, that the only way to keep a soul seeking Christ under discouragement is by faith; and, secondly, that nothing pleases Christ like believing on his name.

The third point is that **FAITH WILL, BEFORE LONG, GET A KIND ANSWER FROM THE LORD JESUS**. This poor woman at the first, received no reply to her petition, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!” Then, when Christ did speak to her, he gave her what seemed to be a rough answer. But, after a while, these notes of heavenly music sounded in her ear, “O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt!”

Now, someone here probably says, “I have been praying ever so long, and I have received no cheering reply.” Well, if thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt have a good reply before long. If thou canst but hold on to Christ, determined to plead with him till he answers thee, he will answer thee kindly ere long. But keep on believing that he can and will give thee what thou needest, and thou shalt not be disappointed. “Oh,” says one, “you do not know who I am! I am an outcast.” So was the woman. She was a Canaanitish woman, yet she obtained a blessing from Christ; and thou shalt get one, too, if thou dost follow her in her faith. “Oh, but I do not think that I am fit!” Did Christ ever say to you that you were a dog? He did as good as tell this woman that; yet she held on to him by faith, and prevailed. “Oh, but I have prayed in vain for such a long time! So did she. She prayed, and for a while, she received no answer. “Oh, but I feel worse

after I have prayed!" So did she; for instead of getting a comfortable answer, she heard Christ say, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." You cannot be in a worse plight than she was. "But the devil troubles me," you add. The devil also troubled her. She pleaded about her daughter, who was possessed with a devil; and she kept on pleading and believing. She meant to have Christ. I exhort you to come to the same holy determination. Oh, that Almighty grace might help you so to do; for in so doing you will surely get an answer of peace! You will get a comfortable answer before very long, probably much earlier than you have reckoned upon.

Remember that *Christ delays in order to increase your faith*. Your faith will grow by exercise: therefore he tests it that you may use it, and that thus it may become stronger.

Christ delays in order to increase the blessing itself. While we wait, the blessing becomes bigger, and our hands become stronger to hold it when it does come. You may be sure that our blessed Lord will give you a comfortable answer; for you do not know that he has been sustaining you while you have been pleading, and as yet have received no answer? Did you ever notice, when Joseph's brethren went down into Egypt, that he made himself strange to them, and spoke to them roughly, and put them in prison? But in spite of that, there was one thing he did: when they went back to Jacob, he filled their sacks for them. He would not smile upon them, but he would not starve them; and at last, it is said, "Joseph could not refrain himself," and he "made himself known unto his brethren. He was obliged to show his love at last; but even before he did that, he always filled their sacks for them. Christ will deal with you in like manner; while you are waiting, he will not let you die. Oh, in what wonderful ways did the Lord support me when, through weary years, I was seeking his face! I could not say that I had any comfort that I dared to call my own, and yet there flowed into my soul, somehow, a secret power that enabled me still to hope, and still to hold on; for that I now desire to bless his name, and I tell it for the encouragement of any who may be in soul-trouble as I was. Keep on seeking his grace, dear friend. Believe still; for he must give you a comfortable answer one of these days.

Consider well that *it is contrary to his nature to refuse to bless*. He is brimful of love; and if he does put a sinner back for a while, it is only because it is right and kind and wise to do so. But his heart yearns over every seeking sinner. He wants you more than you want him. He longs after you. He desires to bless you. He must do so; it is his nature to do so.

He must give you a comfortable reply before long, again, *for it is contrary to his glory to refuse*. If he allowed a seeking sinner to die, where would his troubles be? Has he not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? Our friend, Dr. Barnardo, announces that in his refuges no homeless boy will ever be rejected: that no destitute child shall ever be turned away. Suppose somebody could prove — which, of course they cannot do — that scores of destitute children were turned away, all confidence in him would be destroyed. And if it could be proved that Christ ever cast out a single soul that came to him, it would take away his honor and glory. We could never believe him any more. Perish the thought of such a thing!

It is contrary to his word to refuse any seeker, and Christ will keep his word. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If Christ will not give you rest when you come to him, what is his promise worth? My friend, Dr. Pierson, sent me, the other day, an imitation of an American banknote, which they call a "greenback" over there, and on one side of it were these words, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." A splendid note that! It had our friends name on the back, "Arthur T. Pierson"; and he said to me, when he sent it, "If the Lord does not pay you, I will, for I have endorsed the note." I shall never have to look my brother Pierson up, and tell him that the note he endorsed is of no value. There it stands, and stands forever/ God will keep his word. I know it; and I want you poor sinners to know it too. He cannot run back from his own promise. His word is his bond. To every honest man it is so; but to the thrice-holy God his oath and his promise bind him eternally.

Let me add that, if Christ does not give a comfortable answer to you who believingly seek him, *it is contrary to his custom*. Here are many of us who have known our Lord now for forty years, and we can say that his custom is to hear our prayers, and according to our faith, so is it unto us. Come

along, thou blackest sinner out of hell! Come, and wash in the fountain filled with blood, and thou shalt be cleansed, as surely as ever Christ died! Come along, thou lowest, meanest, most self-aborred, most self-condemned of humankind! Come thou, and look to him, and trust in him; and if thou dost not find peace at once, yet be sure that thou shalt have it before long. "The morning cometh." It is not for long that Christ's mercy can be restrained. He must break forth, like Joseph, weeping over his brethren. He must manifest himself to you in love, and tenderness, and kindness. I will be bound for him any day that it shall be so.

Lastly, we come to a very glorious thought. FAITH GETTING CHRIST'S WORD HATH ALL THINGS. Listen to the text again: "Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto you even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Christ's word was *a comforting word*. How the look on this woman's face must have been altered when Christ talked to her so! When he answered her never a word, she doubtless had a long and sorrowful face, and probably the big tears stood in her eyes; but not he began to talk in another strain, how happy she felt! The woman was no more sad. So it is even to-day. One word from Christ can comfort you, even if they talk about putting you into an asylum because you are so melancholy. One word from my Master shall be the balm of Gilead to your wounds. He will bind up your broken heart. He will comfort you and speak peace to you, as he did to her. It was a comforting word.

It was also *a commending word*, "O woman, great is thy faith!" She had never been praised like that before. I have no doubt that her husband had praised her. What good husband is there who does not praise his wife, even as it is written of the virtuous woman, "Her husband also, and he praiseth her"? but his praise had never been so sweet as this word from the Lord Jesus. I have no doubt that her daughter had called her all the sweet names she could think of; for she loved her child, and it was only natural to believe that her child loved her. But now, when Christ looks her in the face, and says, "O woman, great" — "ah!" she may have thought; "he is going to say, 'Great is thy sin,' or else, 'Great is thy noise.'" What astonishment must have been hers when he said, "Great is thy faith"! He gave her a gold medal for her faith, ay, something even better than that, she

was put into the class called “Highly commended.” “O woman, great is thy faith!” It was a commending word; and she needed it.

Next, it was *a commanding word*. Notice that, well. Listen to it: “Be it unto thee.” He speaks like a king. And if the Lord now speaks his gracious word with power, as I pray that he may, he will say, “Minister, comfort that woman, who puts her trust in me.” He will say, “Ordinances, comfort those weary ones. Bread and wine, be sweet to the taste of those poor troubled ones.” He will say, “Prayer-meetings, be a joy to those poor tried ones.” It is a commanding voice with which the Lord of hosts speaks, when he says, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.”

In addition to being a commanding word, it was *a creating word*. Why, it was the very word that God himself used when he made the light! He said, “Be light.” He said to the earth, “Be,” and it was. He said to the heavens, “Be,” and they were. The word is a fiat. In the Latin it is precisely that, a *fiat*. So here, that same mighty voice says, “Be it unto thee. Be it unto thee.” O God, send forth a fiat at this moment to some poor weary heart! Create light; create joy; create peace. He can create all of these in your heart now. Oh, that he might do it by the power of his almighty grace! The faith of this poor Canaanite thus obtained for its reward a creative fiat from the lips of Christ.

Further, it was *a complying word*. You can see all these adjectives begin with the same letter: it was a comforting word, a commending word, a commanding word, a creating word and a complying word. “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt — just as you please, whatever you wish for, and in the way you wish to have it.” Christ capitulates to a conquering faith. Nothing ever conquered him yet but faith. His love is stronger than death. Death could not conquer Christ, nor could all the powers of hell. But here he surrenders at discretion to a soul that can vanquish him by believing. “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” Do you want more joy? Do you want full salvation? Do you want perfect rest? Behold, he says to each of you who can and do believe in him, “Be it unto you even as thou wilt.”

Thus, lastly, this word became *a completing word*; “her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” From that very hour she was well again.

Christ finished that work speedily. He was not long about it. It does not take so long to save a soul as it does for a lightening flash to become visible. You pass from death to life in an instant. When lost, ruined, condemned, the man casts himself at Christ's feet, immediately he is saved. It is not the work of hours or weeks, or years, when you trust to the finished work of Christ. All that required time, Christ has accomplished. All that now has to be done, can be done in a moment. When a man is thirsty, it does not take him long to drink when the water is there. Remember the invitation with which the Scriptures must conclude, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The water of life is there, take it. When a man is hungry, it does not take him long to eat when the bread is on the table. God can now give you, who came to this Tabernacle afar off from him, grace which shall enable you to be made nigh at once. He can bring you immediately out of the blackness of sin, and make you on the instant whiter than snow."

Believe my Lord and Master. Oh, why do you not believe him? Artful doubts and reasonings cease! I would now take the hammer and the nails, and fasten my unbelief and fear to Christ's cross. Hang there, ye thieves, and die! You destroy men's souls, ye doubts and reasonings! Come here, simple faith, thou who hast no wisdom! A mere child thou art, but; O simple faith, thou hast the key of the kingdom! Come, and welcome, into my heart. Will all of you not also believe, and trust in Christ, even now? If you do, you shall be saved.. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Matthew 15. 21-39

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 560, 599, 550.

EXPOSITION

MATTHEW 15:21-39

*The sermons available for future use are those preached on Lord's-day and Thursday evenings. These were usually shorter than the morning discourses. The publishers will issue, with the Sermon, the Exposition that preceded it as often as they are able to do so. They believe that readers will value all of these utterances of the beloved preacher who is now with the Lord. They have heard of many sermon-readers who regularly turn to the portions of Scripture expounded by Mr. Spurgeon, and even read the hymns sung at the Tabernacle. Such friends will now have a very full report of the services held there during the late Pastor's ministry.

Jesus had been in conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees. He never liked such discussions, and though he was always victorious in every controversy, it grieved his spirit.

Verse 21. *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

He was glad to get away, and made a journey over the hills to get at as great a distance as possible from these cavillers.

And behold, a woman of Canaan came.

A Syro-Phoenician woman, one of the old, condensed race living in Tyre and Sidon.

But he answered her not a word.

Answers to prayers may be delayed; but delays are not always denials. Christ's silence must have been a great trial to the poor woman; but our Lord knew with whom he was dealing.

And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Ah, these disciples made a grand mistake! She did not cry after them; she cried after him; but so they understood it: therefore they said, “Get rid of her; she disturbs us; when we are in the street, we can hear her cry. Send her away; for she crieth after us.” Ah! Poor disciples, she was not so foolish as to cry after you; she was crying after your Master. If any here have come only to hear the preacher, they have made a great mistake; but if you have come for a word from the Master, I pray that you may be gratified.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Christ did what he was sent to do; he was the Messiah, the sent One. He would not go beyond his mission, so he says, “I am sent.” He was sent as a Preacher and a Teacher, not to the Gentiles, but to Israel. He had a larger commission in reserve, and was yet to be a Savior to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; but for the present he was to be a Shepherd to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.

A very short prayer; but how much there was in it!

27. *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.*

It is the faculty of faith to see in the dark. This woman spied out light in what seemed to be a very dark saying. Did Christ call her a dog? Well, dogs have their privileges when they lie under the table. Even if their master does not throw them a crumb, yet they may take that which falls from his hand. If Jesus would but allow any mercy to drop, as it were, accidentally, this woman would be content.

29. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from thence.*

When he had done his business, he was off. Our Lord was a great itinerant; he was always on the move/ He had come all the way to the parts of Tyre and Sidon to help one woman; and when that one woman had been

attended to, he goes back again immediately to his old post by the sea of Galilee.

30. *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.*

In the prayer-meeting, held by the deacons and elders this morning, before I came in here, one of our friends observed in prayer that there might be many lame, blind, and maimed in the congregation, and he prayed that they might be brought to Jesus. Let us, by faith, bring them to him, and lay them at his feet. Oh, that this word, "He healed them," might be true again to-day! Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Oh, for glory to God! There is no glory to god which equals that which comes from blind eyes which have been made to see; and from dumb lips which have been made to speak. The glories of nature and providence are eclipsed by the glories of grace. May we see such things to-day Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Ah, dear friends, they were willing to put up with inconvenience to hear the gospel in those days! Three days of sermon-hearing! People want sermons wonderfully short now, and the sermons must be marvellously interesting, too, or else the people grow dreadfully tired. If dinner-time came around, the dinner-bell, at any time, in these days, would drown all the attraction of the pulpit. But here were people that attended Christ's ministry for three days, and they had nothing to eat. He had compassion upon them, and said to his disciples, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

34. *And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye?*

That is the point. It is idle to enquire about how much you want. "How many loaves have ye?"

35. *And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*

It was a token of Christ's presence and power that they were willing to sit down on the ground. Think of thousands of people taking their places in an orderly way to feed upon seven cakes and a few little fishes! Without any demur, the crowd arranged itself into banquet order at the command of Jesus.

37 *And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.* They were large baskets, too; not like the small food-baskets mentioned when the five thousand were fed. The word used here is the same word that is employed to describe the basket in which Saul was let down by the wall of Damascus. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Now, if the women and children bore the same proportion to the men as they generally do in our congregation, there must have been a very large crowd indeed. Why is the number of the women and children not mentioned? Was it because there were so many? Or was it because their appetites being smaller than the appetites of men, the men are put down as the great eaters, and the women and children, as it were, thrown into the count? What a mercy it is that the Lord adds to the church daily a vast number of men, women, and children! The Lord sends us many more, until we cannot count them!

And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

He had taught the people, and fed them; so now he goes elsewhere to carry similar blessings to others also.

THE TWO GUARDS, PRAYING AND WATCHING

SERMON NO. 2254

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 1ST, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 24TH, 1890.

“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.” — Nehemiah 4:9.

NEHEMIAH, and the Jews with him, were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat and others were angry with them, and tried to stop the work. They determined to pounce upon the people on a sudden, and slay them, and so to put an end to what they were doing. Our text tells us what Nehemiah and his companions did in this emergency: “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”

These people had not only to build the wall of Jerusalem, but to watch against their enemies at the same time. Their case is ours. We have to work for Christ. I hope that all of us who love him are trying to do what we can to build up his kingdom; but we need also to watch against deadly foes. If they can destroy us, of course they will also destroy our work. They will do both, if they can. The powers of evil are mad against the people of God. If they can in any way injure or annoy us, you may rest assured that they will do so. They will leave no stone unturned, if it can serve their purpose. No arrows will be left in the quivers of hell while there are godly men and women at whom they can be aimed. Satan and his allies aim at our hearts every poisoned dart they have.

Nehemiah had been warned of the attack that was to be made upon the city. The Jews who lived near these Samaritans had heard their talk of

what they meant to do, and they came and told Nehemiah of the plotting of the adversaries. We also have been warned. As our Lord said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,” so has he, in his word, told us that there is a great and terrible evil power which is seeking our destruction. If Satan can do it, he will not only sift us as wheat, but he will cast us into the fire that we may be destroyed. Brethren, “we are not ignorant of his devices.” You are not left in a fool’s paradise, to dream of security from trial, and to fancy that you are past temptation.

It is well for these people, also, that, being in danger, and being aware of the malice of their enemies, they had a noble leader to incite them to the right course to be pursued. Nehemiah was well qualified for his work. He gave the Jews very shrewd, sensible, and yet spiritual advice, and this was a great help to them in their hour of need. Beloved, we have a better Leader than Nehemiah; we have our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and we have his Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, and shall abide with us. I beg you to listen to his wise and good advice. I think that he will give it to you through our explanation of the text. He will say to you what Nehemiah, in effect, said to these people, “Watch and pray.” Although the adversaries of the Jews conspired together, and came to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder the work of rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah says, “Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”

In the text, I see *two guards*; first, *prayer*: “We made our prayer unto our God.” The second guard is watchfulness: “We set a watch.” When I have spoken on these two subjects, I shall take as my third topic, *the two guards together*. “We prayed, and we set a watch.” We must have them both, if we would defeat the enemy.

First, then, dear friends, think of THE FIRST GUARD: “We made our prayers unto our God.”

Speaking of this prayer, I would hold it up as a pattern for our prayers in a like condition. It was *a prayer that meant business*. Sometimes when we pray, I am afraid that we are not transacting business at the throne of grace; but Nehemiah was as practical in his prayer as he was in the setting of the watch. Some brethren get up in our prayer-meetings, and say some

very good things; but what they really ask for, I am sure I do not know. I have heard prayers of which I have said, when they were over, "Well, if God answers that prayer, I have not the least idea of what he will give us." It was a very beautiful prayer, and there was a great deal of explanation of doctrine and experience in it; but I do not think that God wants to have doctrine or experience explained to him. The fault about the prayer was, that there was not anything asked for in it. I like, when brethren are praying, that they should be as business-like as a good carpenter at his work. It is of no use to have a hammer with an ivory handle, unless you aim it at the nail you mean to drive in up to the head; and if that is your object, an ordinary hammer will do as well as a fine one, perhaps better. Now, the prayers of Nehemiah and the Jews were petitions for divine protection. They knew what they wanted, and they asked for it definitely. Oh, for more definiteness in prayer! I am afraid that our prayers are often clouds, and we get mists for answers. Nehemiah's prayer meant business. I wish we could always pray in this way. When I pray, I like to go to God just as I go to a banker when I have a cheque to be cashed. I walk in, put the cheque down on the counter, the clerk give me my money, I take it up, and go about my business. I do not know that I ever stopped in a bank five minutes to talk with the clerks; when I have received up my change, I go away and attend to other matters. That is how I like to pray; but there is a way of praying that seems like lounging near the mercy-seat, as though one had no particular reason for being found there. Let it not be so with you, brethren. Plead the promise, believe it, receive the blessing God is ready to give, and go about your business. The prayer of Nehemiah and his companions meant business.

In the next place, it was *a prayer that overcame difficulties*. The text begins with a long word, "nevertheless." If we pull it to pieces, we get three words, never the less; when certain things happen, we will pray never the less; on the contrary, we will cry to our God all the more. Sanballat sneered; but we prayed never the less, but all the more because of his sneers. Tobiah uttered a cutting jest; but we prayed never the less, but all the more because of his mocking taunt. If men make a jest of your religion, pray none the less. If they even become cruel and violent to you, pray none the less; never the less, not a word less, not a syllable less, not a desire less, and not any faith less. What are your difficulties, dear friend, in

coming to the mercy seat? What hindrance lies in your way? Let nothing obstruct your approach to the throne of grace. Turn all stumbling-stones into stepping-stones; and come, with holy boldness, and say, notwithstanding all opposition, “never the less, we made our prayer unto our God.” Nehemiah’s prayer meant business, and overcame difficulties.

Notice, next, that it was *a prayer that came before anything else*. It does not say that Nehemiah set a watch, and then prayed; but “nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch.” Prayer must always be the fore horse of the team. Do whatever else is wise, but not until thou hast prayed. Send for the physician if thou art sick; but first pray. Take the medicine if thou hast a belief that it will do thee good; but first pray. Go and talk to the man who has slandered you, if you think you ought to do so; but first pray. “Well, I am going to do so and so,” says one, “and I shall pray for a blessing on it afterwards.” Do not begin it until you have prayed. Begin, continue, and end everything with prayer; but especially begin with prayer. Some people would never begin what they are going to do, if they prayed about it first, for they could not ask God’s blessing upon it. Is there anybody here who is going out of this Tabernacle to a place where he should not go? Will he pray first? He knows that he cannot ask a blessing on it; and therefore he ought not to go there. Go nowhere where you cannot go after prayer. This would often be a good guide in your choice of where you should go. Nehemiah first prayed, and then set a watch.

Once more, it was *a prayer that was continued*. If I read the passage aright, “we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night,” it means that, as long as they watched, they prayed. They did not pray their prayer, and then leave off, and go away, as naughty boys do when they give runaway knocks at a door. Having begun to pray, they continued praying. So long as there were any enemies about, the prayer and the watching were never parted. They continued still to cry to him who keepeth Israel as long as they set the watchman of the night to warn them of the foe.

When shall we leave off praying, brothers and sisters? Well, they say that we shall do so when we get to heaven. I am not clear about that. I do not believe in the intercession of saints for us; but I remember that it is written

in the book of Revelation, that the souls under the altar cried, “How long, O Lord?” Those souls were waiting for the resurrection, waiting for the coming of Christ, waiting for the triumph of his kingdom; and I cannot conceive of their waiting there without often crying, “O Lord, how long? Remember thy Son, glorify his name, accomplish the number of thine elect.” But certainly, as long as we are here, we must pray. One lady. Who professed that she had long been perfect, said that her mind was in such complete conformity with the mind of God, that she need not pray any longer. Poor creature! What did she know about the matter? She needed to begin at the first letter of the alphabet of salvation; and pray, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” When people imagine they need not to pray, the Lord have mercy upon them!

*“Long as they live let Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.”*

The prayer which Nehemiah offered was, next, *a prayer that was home-made*. There may be some of you who like prayers made for you; and it may be that, if all the congregation are to join in the supplication, and every voice is to speak, the prayer must be prepared even as the hymn is; but ready-made prayers always seem to me very much like ready-made clothes, they are meant to fit everybody, and it is very seldom that they fit anybody. For real business at the mercy-seat, give me a home-made prayer, a prayer that comes out of the deeps of my heart, not because I invented it, but because God the Holy Spirit put it there, and gave it such a living force that I could not help letting it come out. Though your words are broken, and your sentences are disconnected; if your desires are earnest, if they are like coals of juniper, burning with a vehement flame, God will not mind how they find expression. If you have no words, perhaps you will pray better without them. There are prayers that break the backs of words; they are too heavy for any human language to carry.

This prayer, then, whatever it may have been as to its words, was one the pleaders made: “We made our prayers unto our God.”

It is very important to notice, that it was *a prayer that went to the home of prayer*: “We made our prayer unto our God.” You have heard of the man who prayed at Boston, “the hub of the universe”, and the report in the paper the next morning was, that “The Rev. Dr. So-and-so prayed the

finest prayer that was ever addressed to a Boston audience.” I am afraid that there are some prayers of that sort, that are prayed to the congregation. That is not the kind of prayer that God loves. Forget that there is anybody present, forget that a human ear is listening to your accents; and let it be said of your prayer, “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God.”

It is a very commonplace remark to make, that prayer must go to God if it to be of any avail; but it is very necessary to make it. When prayer does not go to God, what is the good of it? When you come out of your closet, and feel that you have only gone through a form, how much are you benefited? Make your prayers unto your God. Speak in his ear, knowing that he is there; and come away knowing that he has replied to you, that he has lifted up the light of his countenance upon you. That is the kind of prayer we need for our protection against our enemies both day and night.

Only once more upon this first point. I gather from the words before me that it was *a prayer saturated with faith*. “We made our prayer unto — God”? No, “unto our God.” They had taken Jehovah to be their God, and they prayed to him as their God. They had a full assurance that, though he was the God of the whole earth, yet he was specially their God; and so they made their prayer unto the God who had given himself to them, and to whom they belonged by covenant relationship. “We made our prayers unto our God.” Those two little words carry a vast weight of meaning. The door of prayer seems to turn on those two golden hinges, — “our God.” If you and I are to be delivered from the evil that is in the world, if we are to be kept building the church of God, we must have for our first guard, mighty, believing prayer, such as Nehemiah and his Jewish friends presented unto the Lord.

I have now to speak to you about THE SECOND GUARD: “We set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”

This setting of the watch was *a work appointed*. “We set a watch.” Nehemiah did not say, “Now, some of you fellows, go and watch,” leaving the post of watchmen open to any who chose to take it; but they “set a watch.” A certain number of men had to go on duty at a certain point, at a certain hour, and remain for a certain length of time, and be on guard against the adversary. “We set a watch.” Brethren, if we are to watch over

ourselves, and we must do so, we must do it with a definite purpose. We must not say, "I must try to be watchful." No, no; you must be watchful; and your watchfulness must be as distinct and definite an act as your prayer. "We set a watch." Some of you have seen the guards changed in the barracks; there is a special time for each company to mount guard. When you go to bed at night, pray the Lord to guard you during the darkness. In the morning, set a watch when you go to your business. Set a watch when you go to the dinner-table; set a watch when you return home. Oh, how soon we may be betrayed into evil unless we set a watch!

It was *a work carefully done*; for Nehemiah says, "We set a watch against them day and night, because of them." Those three last words would be better rendered, "over against them"; that is, wherever there was an enemy, there he set a watch. They are likely to come up this way. Very well, set a watch there. Perhaps they may shift about, and come up this way. Very well, set a watch there. Possibly they may come climbing over the wall in front here. "Well, set a watch there. "We set a watch over against them." One brother has a very hot temper. Brother, set a watch there. Another is very morose at home, critical, picking holes in other people's coats. Brother, set a watch there. One friend has a tendency to pride, another to unbelief. Set a watch wherever the foe is likely to come. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch over against them."

It was *a work continued*; Nehemiah says, "we set a watch against them day and night." What! Is there to be someone sitting up all night? Of course there is. If Sanballat had told them when he meant to attack them, they might have gone to sleep at other times; but as he did not give them that information, they had to set a watch "day and night." The devil will not give you notice when he is going to tempt you; he likes to take men by surprise; therefore, set a watch day and night.

It was *a work quickened by knowledge*. they knew that Sanballat would come if he could, so they set a watch. The more you know of the plague of your own heart, the more you will set a watch against it. The more you know of the temptations that are in the world through lust, the more you should set a watch. The older you are, the more you should watch. "Oh!" says an aged friend, "you should not say that; it is the young people who go wrong." Is it? In the Old Testament or in the New, have you an

instance of a young believer who went astray? The Bible tells us of many old men who were tripped up by Satan when they were not watching; so you have need to set a watch even when your hair turns grey, for you will not be out of gunshot of the devil until you have passed through the gate of pearl into the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

You and I, dear friends, have need to set a watch against the enemies of our holy faith. Some people ask me, "Why do you talk so much about the 'Down-grade'?" Let men believe what they like. Go on with your work for God, and pray to him to set them right." I believe in praying and setting a watch. We have to guard with jealous care "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." When you find, as you do find now, professing Christians and professing Christian ministers denying every article of the faith, or putting another meaning upon all the words than they must have been understood to bear, and preaching lies in the name of the Most High, it is time that somebody set a watch against them. A night-watchman's place is not an easy berth; but I am willing to take that post for my blessed Master's sake. Those professed servants of Christ who enter into an unholy alliance with men who deny the faith will have to answer for it at the last great day. As for us, brethren, when our Lord comes, let him find us watching as well as praying.

But, dear friends, to come home to ourselves, we must set a watch against our own personal adversaries. I hope that, in one sense, you have no personal enemies; that you own nobody a grudge; but that you live in peace and love towards all mankind. But there are Christian people here, who will go to homes where everybody in the house is against them. Many a godly woman goes from the sanctuary to a drunken husband; many children, converted to God, see anything but what they like to see in their homes. What are they to do in such circumstances? Set a watch. Dear woman, how do you know but that you shall be the means of saving your unconverted husband? If so, you must set a watch; do not give him a bit of your mind; you will not convert him that way. And you, dear children, who have come to Christ, and joined the church, mind that you are dutiful and obedient, for otherwise you will destroy all hope of bringing your parents to the Savior. Set a watch. "Oh!" say you, "if I do a little wrong, they magnify it." I know they do; therefore, set a watch; be more careful. Set a watch over your temper, set a watch over your tongue, set a watch

over your actions. Be patient, be gentle, be loving. May the Spirit of God work all this in you!

But there is another set of enemies much more dreadful than these adversaries that are without us, the foes within, the evil tendencies of our corrupt nature, against which we must always set a watch. Perhaps you say, "How can I do this?" Well, first, know what they are. People who are beginning the Christian life should seek to know where their weak points are. I should not wonder, dear friend, if your weak point lies where you think that you are strong. Where you think, "Oh, I shall never go wrong there!" — that is the very place where you are likely to fall. Set a watch wherever any weakness has appeared; and if you have, in the past of your Christian life, grieved the Holy Spirit by anything wrong, set a double watch there. Where you have tripped once, you may trip again; for you are the same man. Set a watch, also, dear friend, whenever you feel quite secure. Whenever you feel certain that you cannot be tempted in a particular direction, that proves that you are already as proud as Lucifer. Set a watch, set a watch, set a watch. Avoid every occasion of sin. If any course of conduct would lead you into sin, do not go in that direction. I heard a man say, as an excuse for drinking, "You see, if ever I take a glass of beer, I seem to lose myself, and I must have two or three more." Well, then, if that is the case with you, do not take a glass of beer. "But," says one, "if I get into company, I forget myself." Then, do not go into company. Better go to heaven as a hermit, than go to hell with a multitude. Pluck out your right eye, and cut off your right hand, sooner than that these should cause you to fall into sin. Do not go where you are likely to be tempted. "Well," says one, "but my business calls me into the midst of temptation." I grant you that your business may compel you to go where there are ungodly men; for how could some live at all, if they had not to come into contact with the ungodly? — they would have to go out of the world. Well, then, if that is your case, put on the whole armor of God, and do not go without being prepared to fight the good fight of faith. Set a watch, set a watch, set a watch.

Watch against the beginnings of sin. Remember, Satan never begins where he leaves off; he begins with a little sin, and he goes on to a greater one. When he first tempts men, he does not aim at all he hopes to accomplish; but he tries to draw them aside by little and little, and he works up by

degrees to the greater sin he wants them to commit. I do not believe that, at the present time, a Christian man can be too precise. We serve a very precise God: “the Lord thy God is a jealous God.” Keep out of many things in which professing Christians now indulge themselves. The question is, whether they are Christians at all. If we must not judge them, at any rate, let us judge for ourselves, and settle it, once for all, that we dare not go where they go; indeed, we have no wish to do so.

Watch for what God has to say to you. In your reading of the Bible, if the Holy Spirit applies a text of Scripture to you with special force, regard it as a hint from your heavenly Father that there is a lesson in it for you. I am often surprised at the way in which the morning text will often instruct me through the whole day. Persons who come to hear the Word of God preached, often find that, within two or three days, there is a reason why the preacher delivered that particular sermon, and a reason why they were led to hear it.

Whenever you see a professing Christian going astray from the way of holiness, do not talk about it, and so increase the mischief. “It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest.” Instead of speaking of another’s fall, set a watch for yourself, and say, “That is when he slipped, that is where I may stumble if the grace of God does not keep me.” Remember our Savior’s words to the three disciples with him in Gethsemane, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

I finish by putting THE TWO GUARDS TOGETHER. “We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them.”

Dear friends, neither of these two guards is sufficient alone. *Prayer alone* will not avail. To pray and not to watch, is presumption. You pretend to trust in God, and yet you are throwing yourself into danger, as the devil would have had Christ do, when he tempted him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. If you pray to be kept, then be watchful.

Prayer without watchfulness is hypocrisy. A man prays to be kept from sin, and then goes into temptation; his prayer is evidently a mere piece of mockery; for he does not carry it out in his practice.

Sometimes, however, ignorance may lead to prayer without watching. There are other things which ought not to be omitted. Let me tell you a

simple story. There was a little school-girl who did not know often her lessons, and there was another girl, who sat near her, who always said her lessons correctly. Her companions said to her, "Jane, how is it that you always know your lessons?" Jane replied, "I pray to God to help me, and so I know them." The next day, the other little girl stood up, but she did not know her lesson; and afterward she said to her friend, "I prayed to God about my lesson, but I did not know it any better than I did yesterday." Jane said, "But did you try to learn the lesson?" "No," she said; "I prayed about it, and I thought that was sufficient." Of course she did not know her lesson without learning it. In the same manner, you must watch as well as pray. There must be the daily guard put upon tongue, and thought, and hand; or else prayer will be in vain.

I have known some people run great risks, and yet say that they have prayed to the Lord to preserve them. I have heard, dozens of times, these words, "I made it a matter of prayer," and I have been ready to grow angry with the man who has uttered them. He has done a wrong thing, and he has excused himself because he says that he made it a matter of prayer. A young man married an ungodly young woman, and yet he said that he made it a matter of prayer! A Christian woman married an ungodly man, and when someone blamed her for disobeying the Word of God, she said that she made it a matter of prayer! If you had really sought divine guidance, you would not have dared to do what the Scriptures expressly forbid to a child of God. Prayer without watching is not sufficient to preserve us from evil.

On the other hand, dear friends, *watching without praying* is equally futile. To say, "I will keep myself right," and never pray to God to keep you, is self-confidence, which must lead to evil. If you try to watch, and do not pray, you will go to sleep, and there will be an end to your watching. It is only by praying and watching that you will be able to keep on your guard. Besides, watching grows wearisome without prayer, and we soon give it up, unless we have a sweet interlude of prayer to give us rest, and to help us to continue watching.

I will not keep you longer when I have said this, *put the two together*, "Watch and pray," or, as my text has it, "Pray and watch." One will help the other. Prayer will call out the watchman, prayer will incite him to keep

his eyes open, prayer will be the food to sustain him during the night, prayer will be the fire to warn him. On the other hand, watching will help prayer, for watching proves prayer to be true. Watching excites prayer, for every enemy we see will move us to pray more earnestly. Moreover, watching is prayer. If there be true watching, the watching itself is prayer. The two blend the one into the other. Beloved friends, I send you away with my text ringing in your ears, “We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night.”

But I have not been speaking to all who are here. Some of you do not pray, some of you cannot set a watch. The message for you is, “Ye must be born again.” You cannot attempt Christian duties till first you have the Christian life; and the only way to get the Christian life is to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to the fountain which he has filled with his precious blood; wash there, and be clean; and then, quickened by his Spirit, set a watch. I am looking to see some people brought to Christ at this service, for although I have been preaching to God’s people, if they will watch for you, and pray for you, there will come a blessing to you through their watching and praying. The Lord grant that it may come to many of you! “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him when he is near.” May many seek and find the Lord to-night; and may many call upon him in truth! “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” God grant that it may be so to everybody here, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Nehemiah 4.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 994, 999, 668

EXPOSITION

NEHEMIAH 4. 1-23

Verse 1. *But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.*

It was needful to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, which had been lying in ruins. They went on pretty briskly, for everyone had a mind to work. There never was a good work yet but what there were some to oppose it, and there never will be till the Lord comes. Sanballat heard what the Jews were doing, and he was very angry. "He was wroth, and took great indignation." He was all on fire with anger that God's work was being continued. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?

The enemies of God's people generally take to sneering. It is a very easy way of showing opposition. Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

No doubt these questions were thought to be very witty and very sarcastic. The enemies of Christ are generally good hands at this kind of thing. Well, if it amuses them, I do not know that it need hurt us much; for, after all, it is their way of paying homage to God's power.

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him.

Such a man as Sanballat never lacks friends. If there is a bad man anywhere, there is sure to be another close at hand. The devil does not make a fire with one stick. When he has set the first one alight, he can generally find a faggot to put near it. Tobiah the Ammonite, who was tarred with the same brush as Sanballat the Horonite, was by him.

5. *Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover*

not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

This was righteous indignation; but Nehemiah is not a perfect model for us. He was not only stern, but he mingled with his severity a measure of bitterness in his prayer that we must not imitate. Sometimes, when we have seen men plotting against God, seeking to ruin the souls of others, and trying to stop us in our endeavor to build up the church of God, we have felt such language as this trembling on our lips. It were better, however, for us to bow the knee, in humble imitation of our Lord upon the cross, and cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

So built we the wall.

You half expected to read, "So we stopped building the wall, and answered Sanballat and Tobiah." Not a bit of it. They kept to their work and let these two men scoff as they pleased/

And all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

They built the wall as high as they meant it to be ultimately; but they carried it all round, and joined it well together. If we cannot do all we would like to do, let us do what we can; and let us endeavor, as far as possible, to finish off the part that we do, waiting for better times to carry the walls higher.

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth

They were "wroth" before; now they were "very wroth." If a work has no opposition from Satan, we may be half afraid it is good for nothing. If you cannot make the devil roar, you have not done him much harm; but the more he roars, the more cause is there for the angels singing the praises of God before the throne.

And conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

It is wonderful how unanimous bad men can be. It has always struck me as a very startling thing, that you have never heard of any division among the devils in hell. There are no sects among the devils; they seem to work together with an awful unanimity of purpose in their wicked design. In this one thing they seem to excel the family of God. Oh, that we were as hearty and united in the service of God as wicked men are in the service of Satan!

10. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, —

Judah, you know, was the lion tribe. Christ is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” But Judah, instead of being lion-hearted, made a noise more like a mouse than a lion, for Judah said, —

The strength of the bearers of burden is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

Poor Judah! He ought to have been bolder and braver; but he was not. It is the same to-day; some who seem to be pillars, prove very weak in the hour of trial, and by their cowardice discourage the rest.

And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

While some were discouraging the people within the city, their enemies, without the walls, were plotting to take them by surprise, and slay them.

And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

These Jews ought to have been helping to build the wall; but they did not come to the help of the Lord’s people. Still, they were sufficiently friendly to tell Nehemiah of the plot that was being hatched by his enemies. God knows how, when his enemies are sinking a mine, to undermine them. If secrecy is necessary to the success of evil, somebody speaks out, and tells the story, so that the plot is discovered.

Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

When Nehemiah knew the danger to which the people were exposed, he took measures to guard against it. I like the common-sense of Nehemiah. He kept families together. "I set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows." Beloved friends, I have no greater joy than such as I had last Tuesday, when I received five children of one family, all brought to Christ. May the Lord make our families to be the guards of the church!

And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them.

Fear may waken us, but it must never be allowed to weaken us. We should put on the armor, and take the sword and spear and bow when there is cause for fear; we should never dream of running away.

15. *Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.*

There was no fighting after all. As soon as the enemy knew that their plot was found out, they did not make any assault. One commentator says: — "Some men, if they had been delivered from danger, would have returned every one to the ale-house; but these men returned every one to his work." They went back to their building, and continued still in the service of the city.

17. *And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*

The sword and the trowel both guarded the city and builded the wall.

For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

What the trumpet was for, we are told directly.

20. *And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what places, therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.*

That is a grand sentence. The moment you hear the trumpet, you are to leave your place on the wall, and come to the point where the enemy is attacking us. But Nehemiah does not say, “You shall fight for us,” he puts it much better, “Our God shall fight for us.” So he will still.

So we labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

They made long days. Christian people do not want merely eight hours a day for Christ. We can sometimes do eighteen hours’ work for him in a day; and we wish that we could do twenty-four.

Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let everyone with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labor on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes.

Nehemiah was a good leader. He did not say, “Go,” he said, “Come”; and he bore the brunt of the service. Like Alexander, who went with the Macedonians into the rough places, and did the hard work, so did Nehemiah. He and those with him did not put off their clothes, even for sleeping.

Saving that every one put them off for washing.

Which was necessary; for cleanliness is next to godliness. The Lord sends us more Nehemiahs, and plenty of people to work with them, who can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and who will also be good builders of the church of God!

GOD JUSTIFIED, THOUGH MAN BELIEVES NOT

SERMON NO. 2255

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 8TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 31ST, 1890.

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

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

I am going to talk of our text, at this time, first, as giving to us *a sorrowful reminder*: “For what if some did not believe?” It is sad to be reminded that there always have been some who did not believe. Next, here is *a horrible*

inference, which some have drawn from this grievous fact, that is, because some did not believe, it has been hinted that their unbelief would make the faith of God or the faithfulness of God without effect; to which, in the third place, the apostle gives *an indignant reply*: “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justifies in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”

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

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

Now, *this is stated very mildly*. The apostle says, “For what if some did not believe?” He might have said, “What if many did not believe?” But he is talking to his Hebrew friends, and he wishes to woo them; so he states the case as gently as he can. Remember, dear friends, the carcasses of all but two who came out of Egypt fell in the wilderness through unbelief. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land; but the apostle does not wish to unduly press his argument, or speak so as to aggravate his hearers; and he therefore puts it, “For what if some did not believe?” Even in his own day, he might have said, “The bulk of the Jewish nation has rejected Christ. Wherever I go, they seek my life. They would stone me to death, if they could, because I preach a dying Savior’s love;” but he does not put it so; he only mentions that some did not believe. Yet this is a very appalling thing, even when stated this mildly. If all here, except one person, were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was announced that that one unbeliever would be pointed out to the congregation, I am sure we would all feel in a very solemn condition. But, dear friends, there are many more than one here who have not believed on the Son of God, and who,

therefore, are not saved. If the unconverted were not so numerous, there is all the greater need for our tears and our compassion.

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

Looking at the other side of the case, it is true that, *at times, the "some" who did not believe meant the majority*. It must be admitted that, sometimes, unbelievers have preponderated even among the hearers of the precious Word. Read the story of Israel through, in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and you will be saddened to find how again and again they did not believe. The history of Israel, from the moment they became a nation, is a very painful one. It is full of the mercy of God; but it is also full of treachery of the human heart. In the days of the judges, the people served God while a good judge ruled over them; but as soon as he was dead, they went astray after false gods. I almost think that the Christian church is in the period of the judges now. When the Lord raises up, here one and there another, to preach his Word faithfully, the people seem to take heed to it; but when the faithful preachers are gone, many of their hearers turn aside again. Blessed be to God, we expect the coming of the King soon; and when the King comes, and the period of the judges shall have ended, then we shall enter upon a time of rest and peace. It may be that, even among hearers of the gospel, those who do not believe preponderate over those who do believe. My text sounds like a solemn knell, and there is something terribly awful about it, like the deep rumbling of underground thunder.

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

I think we may also say, with deep solemnity that *some who have not believed have belonged to the religious and to the teaching class*. In the days of our Lord and his apostles, the scribes and Pharisees were the greatest haters of the doctrine of Christ. Those whom you might have supposed, being most familiar with the Scriptures, the scribes, would soonest have recognized the Messiah, were the men who would not acknowledge him. So it was with the priests, even the chief priests, the men who had to do with the sacrifices and with the temple. They rejected Christ, although they were the religious leaders of the people. Do you suppose it is very different now? Alas, my friends, we may be preachers, and yet not preach the gospel of Christ; we may be members of the church, and yet not savingly know the gospel; we may go in and out of the house of God, and seem to take part in its holy service, and yet, all the while, we may be strangers and foreigners in the presence of the Most High. Believers are not always those whom you would suppose to be believers. The Lord often brings to himself, as in the case of the centurion, of whom we read this morning, far-off ones, rough soldiers, who were not thought likely to feel the power of such gentle teaching as the doctrine of the cross; and they bow before the Savior. But alas! Alas! Among those who appear to be the children of the kingdom, brought up in the worship

of God, there are some, yea, many, who have not believed on Christ; and, saddest of all, even among those who are the teachers of others in the things of God, there are some that have not savingly believed.

Now, dear friends, if we take the whole range of *the nations favored with the gospel*, we shall have to say, and say it, as it were, in capital letters, "SOME DO NOT BELIEVE," and that "some" is a very large number.

The question of the apostle is, "What if some did not believe?" Well, if I had to ask and answer that question, at this time, I would say, "What if some do not believe?" Then they are lost. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing, they shall find life through the sacred name. Let us pray for them. If some do not believe, let us, who do believe, make them the constant subject of our prayers; and then let us tell them what is it to be believed, and bear our witness to the saving power of the gospel. When we have done that, let us scrupulously take care that our life and conduct are consistent with the doctrine that we teach, so that, if some do not believe, they may be won to Christ by the example of those who believe in him. Oh, that every Christian here would seek to bring another person to Christ! I pray you, beloved, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, be not barren nor unfruitful. If you know the great secret, tell it to others. Tell it out; tell it out; we all want stirring up to this blessed work; I am sure we do. I heard of a Christian who always spoke about Christ to, at least, one person every day. I commend the example for your imitation. How many of us could say that we do that? I know there are some here who do ten times as much as that. It has grown to be a habit with them to speak of Christ to every one they meet; but it is not the habit even of all who believe. It takes some Christians a long time to begin to say anything for their Lord. Let us try and labor hard, that, if some people do not believe, we may bring them to the Savior, that God may have praise from them also.

But now I advance a step further, and dwell upon A HORRIBLE INFERENCE drawn from the fact that some did not believe. The inference was, that

their unbelief had made the faith of God, or the faithfulness of God, altogether without effect. I will translate what Paul said without dwelling on his words.

Some will say, "If So-and-so, and So-and-so do not believe the gospel, then *religion is a failure*." We have read of a great many things being failures nowadays. A little time ago, it was a question whether marriage was not a failure. I suppose that, by-and-by, eating our dinners will be a failure, breathing will be a failure, everything will be a failure. But now the gospel is said to be a failure. Why? Because certain gentlemen of professed culture and supposed knowledge do not believe it. Well, dear friends, there have been other things that have not been believed in by very important individuals, and yet they have turned out to be true. I am not quite old enough to remember all that was said about the introduction of the steam-engine, though I remember right well going to see a steam-engine and a railway-train as great wonders when I was a boy. Before the trains actually ran, all the old coachmen, and all the farmers that had horses to sell, would not believe for a moment that an engine could be made to go on the rails, and to drag carriages behind it; and in parliament they had to say that they thought they could produce an engine that could go at the speed of eight miles an hour. They dare not say more, because it would have been incredible if they did. According to the wise men of the time, everything was to go to the bad, and the engines would blow up, the first time they started with a train. But they did not blow up, and everybody now smiles at what those learned gentlemen (for some of them were men of standing and learning) ventured then to say. Look at the gentlemen who now tell us that the gospel is a failure. They are the successors of those who have risen up, one after the other; whose principal object has been to refute all that went before them. They call themselves philosophers; and, as I have often said, the history of philosophy is a history of fools, a history of human folly. Man has gone from one form of philosophy to another, and every time that he has altered his philosophy, he has only made a slight variation in the same things. Philosophy is like a kaleidoscope. The philosopher turns it round, and exclaims that he has a new view of things. So he has; but all that he sees is a few bits of glass, which alter their form at every turn of the toy. If any of you shall live fifty years, you will see that the philosophy to today will be a football of

contempt for the philosophy of that period. They will speak, amidst roars of laughter, of evolution; and the day will come, when there will not be a child but will look upon it as being the most foolish notion that ever crossed the human mind. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I know what has befallen many of the grand discoveries of the great philosophers of the past; and I expect that the same thing will happen again. I have to say, with Paul, "What if some did not believe?" It is no new thing; for there have always been some who have rejected the revelation of God. What then? You and I had better go on believing, and testing for ourselves, and proving the faithfulness of God, and living upon Christ our Lord, even though we see another set of doubters, and another, and yet another *ad infinitum*. The gospel is no failure, as many of us know.

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

Again, dear friends, *has God failed to keep his promise to Israel* because some Israelites did not believe? That is the point that Paul aims at, and the answer is, "No." He did bring Israel into the promised land, though all but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. He did give that promised land to Israel, albeit that, through their unbelief, God smote them, and they were destroyed; yet a nation came up again from their ashes, and God kept his covenant with his ancient people; and to-day he is keeping it. The "chosen seed of Israel's race" is "a remnant, weak and small"; but the day is coming when they shall be gathered in, and we shall then rejoice; for then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also, When Israel has come to her own Lord and King. God has not cast away his people, whom he did foreknow; nor has he broken his covenant made with Abraham, nor will he while the world standeth, even though many believe not on him.

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

I am going a step further. *Will God be unfaithful to his Son* if some do not believe? I have heard sometimes, a fear expressed that Christ will lose those for whom he dies. I thank God that I have no fear about that. "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." I never come to you, and, *in forma pauperis*, ask you to accept Christ, begging and praying you to take Christ, because otherwise he will be a loser by you. It is you who must beg of him. He giveth grace as a king bestows his favors; nay more, he lovingly condescends to entreat you to come to him. Suppose that you wickedly say, "We will not have Christ to reign over us." If you think that you will rob him of honor, and bring disgrace upon him by your rejection, you make a great mistake. If you will not have him, others will. If you who are so wise will not have Christ, there are plenty, whom you reckon to be fools, who will take him to be their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If you who are so gay and frivolous will not have my Lord, you will die in your sins; but there are others who will have him. Do not think that you can by any possibility rob him of his glory. "For what if some did not believe?" This word shall yet become true. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." If myriads reject

him, there will be myriads who will receive him, and in all things he shall have the preeminence; and he will return to his Father not defeated, but more than a conqueror over all his foes.

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

Now suppose that these men, who will not believe, should all concert together to proclaim new views in order to upset the gospel. You see, up to the present time, they never have agreed. One wing of Satan’s army of doubters always destroys the other. Just now the great scientists say to the modern-thought gentlemen, and say to them very properly, “If there is no serpent, and no Eve, and no Adam, and no flood, and no Noah, and no Abraham. As you tell us now that all this is a myth, then your whole old Book is a lie.” I am very much obliged to those who talk thus to the disciples of the higher criticism. They thought that they were going to have all the scientists on their side, to join them in attacking the ancient orthodoxies. There is a split in the enemy’s camp; Amalek is fighting Edom, and Edom is contending against Moab.

But suppose they were all to agree. Well, what would happen then? I thought I saw a vision once, when I was by the seaside. To my closed eyes, there seemed to come down to the beach at Brighton a huge black horse, which went into the water, and began to drink; and I thought I heard

a voice that said, "It will drink the sea dry." My great horse grew, and grew, till it was such a huge creature that I could scarcely measure it; and still it drank, and drank, and drank. All the while the sea did not appear to alter in the least, the water was still there as deep as ever. By-and-by the animal burst, and its remains were washed up on the beach, and there it lay dead, killed by its own folly. That will be the end of this big black horse of infidelity that boasts that it is going to drink up this everlasting gospel.

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

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

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

Then Paul utters *a vehement protestation*: "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Can you picture this great host? Here they come, all the men who ever lived, unnumbered millions! They come marching up; and we stand like the inspecting general at a review, and see them all go by; and as every man passes, he shouts, "The gospel is not true. Christ did not die. There is no salvation for believers in him." The apostle Paul, standing as it were at the saluting-point, and seeing the whole race of mankind go by, says, "God is true, and every one of you is a liar." "Let God be true, but every man a liar." You know the way that we have of counting beads, and if the majority goes in a particular direction, we almost go that way. If you count the heads, and there is a general consensus of opinion, you are apt to

say, "It must be so, for everybody says so." But what everybody says is not therefore true. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." It is a strange, strong expression; but it is not too strong. If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, God is true, and all men are false. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. God cannot change; his word, like himself, is immutable. We are to believe God's truth if nobody else believes it. The general consensus of opinion is nothing to a Christian. He believes God's word, and he thinks more of that than of the universal opinion of men.

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

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

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

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

Now, I could say much more; but I will not except just this, I want those who are the Lord's people to be very brave about the things of God. There has been too much of yielding, and apologizing, and compromising. I

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

The other word that I have to say is a message to the unsaved. If you are opposed to God, I beseech you give up your opposition at once. The battle cannot end well for you unless you yield yourself to God. He is your Maker and Preserver; every argument we can use ought to convince you that you should be on his side. I pray you remember that, for you to contend with God, is for the gnat to contend with the fire, or the wax, to fight with the flame. You must be destroyed if you come into collision with him. Then yield to him at once. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." What is it to kiss the Son? Why, to accept the Lord Christ as your King and Savior. To ask him to be your peace and your salvation. Ask him now, before that clock ceases striking. I pray that some may at this moment say, "I will have Christ, and I will be Christ's." The Lord grant it! This great transaction done now, it shall be done forever; and you and I will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the blessed, and eternally praise him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God. The Lord be with you, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Romans 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 166, 675, 674

EXPOSITION

ROMANS 3

Verse 1. *What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?*

If, after all, both Jew and Gentiles were under sin, what advantage had the Jew by the covenant under which he lived? Or what was the benefit to him of the circumcision which was his distinctive mark?

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The Jews were God's chronicle-keepers. They had to guard the holy Books, "the oracles of God." They had also to preserve the knowledge of the truth by those divers rites and ceremonies by which God was pleased to reveal himself of old time.

For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Did he not, after all, bless the Jews though among them were unbelievers? Could it be that their unbelief would turn God from his purpose to bless the chosen people? Would their want of faith affect God's faithfulness?

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou are judged.

However faithless men might be, God was still true and faithful. Paul quotes the Septuagint, which thus renders David's words.

But if our unrighteousness comment the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

If it so turns out, that even man's sin makes the holiness of God the more illustrious, what shall we say?

Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

Paul spoke as a mere carnal man might be supposed to speak. If ever we are obliged, for the sake of argument, to ask a question which is almost blasphemous, let us do it very guardedly, and say something to show that we really do not adopt the language as our own, just as Paul says, "I speak as a man." If the very sin of man is made to turn to the glory of God, is God unjust in punishing that sin?

God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

God will judge the world; and he does judge the world even now. There are judgments against nations already executed, and recorded on the page of history. If God were unjust, how could he judge the world?

For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

If God has even turned the opposition of evil men to the establishment of his truth, as he has often done; why, then, are men punished for it? These are deep, dark questions, which come out of the proud heart of man, and Paul ventures to answer them.

And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just

We never said, we never even thought, that we might do evil that good should come; nay, if all the good in the world could come of a single evil action, we have no right to do it. We must never do evil with the hope of advancing God's cause. If God chooses to turn evil into good, as he often does, that is no reason why we should do evil; and it is no justification of sin. The murder of Christ at Calvary has brought the greatest possible benefit to us; yet it was a high crime against God, the greatest of all crimes, when man turned deicides, and slew the Son of God.

10. *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no vain: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are under sin; as it is written.*

Paul had already proved in the Epistle that both Jews and Gentiles were guilty before God. Now he quotes a set of texts from Israel's own holy

Books, to show the universal depravity of men. Notice how he rings the changes on the words “all” and “none.”

There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

This is the character of all unregenerate men. It is a true description of the whole race of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles. In their natural state, “there is non righteous . . . there is none that seeketh after God . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Paul does not use flattering words, as those preachers do who prate about the dignity of human nature. Man was a noble creature when he was made in the image of God; but sin blotted out all his dignity.

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:

The Jews are comprehended here, for they are specially “under the law.” The whole chosen seed of Israel, highly privileged as they were, are described in these terrible words that we have been reading, which Paul quoted from their own sacred Books.

That very mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

That is the true condition of the whole world, “guilty before God.” This is the right attitude for the whole human race, to stand with its finger on its lip, having nothing to say as to why it should not be condemned.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

All the law does, is to show us how sinful we are. Paul has been quoting from the sacred Scriptures; and truly, they shed a lurid light upon the condition of human nature. The light can show us our sin; but it cannot take it away. The law of the Lord is like a looking-glass. Now, a looking-glass is a capital thing for finding out where the spots are on your face; but you cannot wash in a looking-glass, you cannot get rid of the spots by looking in the glass. The law is intended to show a man how much he needs cleansing; but the law cannot cleanse him. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The law proves that we are condemned, but it does not bring us our pardon.

22. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon them that believe:

We have no righteousness of our own; but God gives us a righteousness through faith in Christ; and he gives that to everyone who believes.

23. For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

There are degrees of guilt; but all men have sinned. There is no difference in that respect, whatever gradations there may be in sinners.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Dear hearers, are you all justified, that is, made just, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? You are certainly all guilty in the sight of God; have you all been made righteous by faith in the redemption accomplished on the cross by Christ Jesus our Lord? I beg you to consider this question most seriously; and if you must truthfully answer, "No," may God make you tremble, and drive you to your knees in penitence to cry to him for pardon!

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

God holds back the axe which, were it not for his forbearance, would cut down the barren tree. He still forbears, and he is ready to pardon and blot out all the past if you will but believe in his dear Son.

27. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

Where is it? It is to be found in a great many people. It is common enough; but where ought it to be? Where does it get a footing? It is shut out/ There is no room for boasting in the heart that receives Christ. If a man were saved by works, he would have whereof to glory; boasting would not be shut out. But as salvation is all of grace, through faith in Christ, boasting is barred out in the dark, and faith gratefully ascribes all praise to God.

It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles, also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Whether Jews or Gentiles, there was no salvation for them by the works of the law; the only way in which the circumcised or the uncircumcised could be justified was by faith. This principle does not make void God's law; on the contrary, it establishes it, and sets it on the only right and solid foundation. The gospel of the grace of God is the best vindication of his law.

DANIEL'S BAND

SERMON NO. 2256

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 15TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 3RD, 1890.

“O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.” — Daniel 10:11.

IT did not do Daniel any harm to know that he was greatly beloved of God; or else he would not have received that information from heaven. Some people are always afraid that, if Christian people obtain full assurance, and receive a sweet sense of divine love, they will grow proud, and be carried away with conceit. Do not you have any such fear for other people, and especially do not be afraid of it for yourselves. I know of no greater blessing that can happen to any man and woman here, than to be assured by the Spirit of God that they are greatly beloved of the Lord. Such knowledge might do some of us, who are Christians, the greatest conceivable good. Daniel was not injured by knowing that he was greatly beloved. It has often been said that Daniel is the John of the Old Testament, and John is the Daniel of the New Testament. Those two men, Daniel and John, were choice saints. They rose to the greatest height of spiritual obedience, and then to the greatest height of spiritual enjoyment.

The knowledge that they were greatly beloved of God, instead of doing us harm, will be a means of blessings in many ways. If you know, my dear brother, of a surety, that you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will become very humble. You will say, “How could God ever love me?

*‘What was there in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?’ “*

I think a sense of God's love is even more humbling than a sense of our own sin. When the two are blended, they sink the soul very low, not in depression of spirit, but in its estimate of itself.

A sense of God's love will also excite in you great gratitude. "Oh!" you will say, "how can I repay the Lord for such an amazing favor?" You will be conscious that you never can repay him; but you will begin working out all sorts of schemes and plans to try to show how much you value the love of God. You will bring out your alabaster-box from its hiding-place; you will willingly enough break it, and pour the precious ointment upon the dear head of him who has loved you so greatly. I am sure that a certainty of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is one of the greatest promoters of holy gratitude; and holy gratitude is the mother of obedience. When we feel how much we owe, then we seek to know the will of God, and take a delight in doing it. Whatsoever he saith unto us, we are glad to do, as a proof that we really are grateful for "love so amazing, so divine."

This will also consecrate us. I believe that, to know certainly that you are greatly beloved of God, will make you feel that you cannot live as others do. You cannot trifle with sin. He who lives in the heart of the king must be faithful to him. If called to stand in God's immediate presence as a courtier and a favorite, you must take care how you behave yourself, and you will do so. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" In proportion as we are sure of his love, our love to him will burn like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement heat; and everything contrary to the will of God will be consumed in that blessed flame.

A sense of divine love will also strengthen us. What is there that a man cannot do when he is in love even with one of his own race; but when he gets to be in love with God, and knows of a certainty that he is greatly beloved of God, he would cut his way through a lane of devils, he would face an army of angels, and defeat them all; for love is a conquering grace. When faith is side by side with love, it —

*“Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, ‘It shall be done;’ “
And love goes and does it;
For there is nothing which the love of God
Will not enable us to do.*

Moreover, this assurance of God's love will make us very courageous. If thou art a man greatly beloved, and thou knowest it, thou wilt be a brave

man. Let me never come into collision with the sword of that man whom God greatly loves; he will cut me in halves. The love of God makes a hero of the man on whom it is fixed. He is in the thick of the fray; he defies sin, and death, and hell. He will burn for Christ; he would be ready to burn a thousand times over when once he was assured that he was the object of the peculiar love of God, and like Daniel, could be addressed as “a man greatly beloved.”

This will make a man glad. If we are greatly beloved of God, how can we be miserable and discontent? Oh, no! If you are a man greatly beloved, you will trip with light feet over the hills of sorrow. You will be glad in the Lord, even when you have much to depress and discourage you. You will begin the music of heaven even here, for a sense of God’s love in the soul sets all the bells of the heart ringing. He is the gladdest man who has the greatest assurance that he is “a man greatly beloved.”

I have said all this as a preface, to show you that you need not be afraid of knowing that God loves you. Some seem to think that a state of doubt is a state of discretion. It is a state of folly. Full assurance of the faithfulness and truthfulness of God is nothing but common-sense spiritualized. To believe a lie, is folly; but to believe the truth is wisdom. If thou art a believer in Christ, though the very least and weakest of believers, thou art a man greatly beloved. Believe it, and be not afraid to rejoice in it. It will have no influence over thee but that which is sanctifying and health-giving.

Well, now, to help us think of Christ’s great love to us, I am going to talk a little, first, about *the case of Daniel*, the man greatly beloved; secondly, about the case of every believer, *for every believer is a man greatly beloved; and thirdly, about the case of some special saints*, believers who are the elect out of the elect, the choicest of the choice ones of the Most High. Of these it may truly be said that they are men greatly beloved.

First, then, let us consider THE CASE OF DANIEL, who was “a man greatly beloved.

Because Daniel was greatly beloved of God, *he was early tried, and enabled to stand*. While he was yet a youth, he was carried into Babylon, and there he refused to eat the king’s meat, or to drink the king’s wine. He put it to the test whether, if he fed on common pulse, he would not be

healthier and better than if he defiled himself with the king's meat. Now, religion does not stand in meat and drink; but let me say, a good deal of irreligion does, and it may become a very important point with some as to what they eat and what they drink. Daniel was early tested, and because he was a man greatly beloved of God, he stood the test. He would not yield even in a small point to that which was evil. Young man, if God greatly loves you, he will give you an early decision, and very likely he will put you to an early test. If you are greatly loved, you will stand firm, even about so small a thing as what you eat and drink, or something that looks less important than that. You will say, "I cannot sin against God. I must stand fast, even in the smallest matter, in keeping the law of the Lord my God." If thou art enabled to do that, thou art a man greatly beloved.

Afterwards, Daniel *was greatly envied, but found faultless*. He was surrounded by envious enemies, who could not bear that he should be promoted over them, though he deserved all the honor he received. So they met together, and consulted how they would pull him down. They were obliged to make this confession, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." O dear friends, you are greatly beloved is, when your enemies meet to devise some scheme for your overthrow, they cannot say anything against you except what they base upon your religion. If, when they sift you through and through, their eager, evil eyes cannot detect a fault; and they are obliged to fall back upon abusing you for your godliness, calling it hypocrisy, or some other ugly name, you are a man greatly beloved.

Further, Daniel *was delivered from great peril*. He was cast into the lions' den because he was a man greatly beloved of God. I think I see some shrink back, and I hear them say, "We do not want to go into the lions' den." They are poor creatures, but Daniel was worth putting in the lions' den; there was enough of him to be put there. Some men would be out of place among lions; cats would be more suitable companions for them; indeed. They are such insignificant beings that they would be more at home among mice. Lion's dens would not be at all in their line. They would imitate Solomon's slothful man, and say, "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." There is not enough manhood in them to bring them into close quarters with the king of beasts. Even among our hearers there are many poor feeble creatures. A clever man preaches false doctrine,

and they say, "Very good. Was it not well put?" Oh, yes! it is all alike good to some of you, who cannot discern between the true and the false; but Daniel could distinguish between good and evil, and therefore he was thrust into the lion's den. It was, however, a den out of which he was delivered. The lions could not eat him, God loved him too well. The Lord preserved Daniel, and he will preserve you, dear friend, if you belong to "Daniel's band." It is one thing to *sing*: —

***"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;"***

but it is quite another thing to *be* a Daniel, and dare to stand alone, when you are at the mouth of the lions den. If you are like Daniel, you will have no cause for fear even then. If your trial should be like going into a den of lions, if you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will come out again. No lion shall destroy you; you are perfectly safe. The love of God is like a wall of fire round about you.

Once more, Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and therefore *he had revelations from God*. Do not open your eyes with wonder and say, "I wish that I had all the revelations that Daniel had." Listen to what he says: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me;" and again: "As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart." The revelations he received actually made him ill: "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." He whom God loves will see things that will astound him; he will see that which will almost kill him; he will that which will make him faint and sick well nigh unto death. When one said, "You cannot see God and live," another answered, "Then let me see him if I die." So those who are greatly beloved say, "Let me see visions of God whatever it may cost me. Let me have communion with him even though it should break my heart, and crush me in the dust. Though it should fill me with sorrow, and make me unfit for my daily business, yet manifest thyself to me, my Lord, as thou dost unto the world!" Even men greatly beloved, when they deal closely with God, have to find out that they are but dust and ashes in his sight. They have to fall down before the presence of his glorious majesty, as the beloved John did when he fell at Christ's feet as dead.

I will make only one more remark upon Daniel's case, and that is this, *he stood in his lot*. Because he was a man greatly beloved, he had this promise with which to close his marvellous book. "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." He was a man greatly beloved, but he does not understand all that God has revealed; and he is to go his way, and rest quite satisfied that, whether he understood it or not, it would work him no harm; for when the end came, he would have his place and his portion, and he would be with his Lord for ever. The next time you get studying some prophecy of Scripture, which you cannot make out, do not be troubled; but hear the voice of God saying, "Go thy way. Wait awhile. It will all be plain by-and-by. God is with thee. There remains a rest for thee, a crown that no head but thine can wear, a harp that no fingers but thine can play upon, and thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Thus I have briefly describe the case of Daniel.

In the second place, I am going to speak OF THE CASE OF EVERY BELIEVER, who is also greatly beloved of God. I must be very brief, because of the communion service which is to follow.

Every believer has been *called out from others*. My brother, look at the hole in the pit whence thou wast digged. Like Abraham, thou hast been called out from thy family, and from thy father's house. Possibly, you have not a godly relative. Many here are the only ones of their kith and kin that ever knew the Lord, so far as they know of, or can remember. Behold in this the sovereign, electing love of God. Art thou not a man greatly beloved? Even if thou hast come of a godly stock, yet thou hast seen others who seemed to be nearest to the kingdom, and yet have been cast out from it. Admire the grace of God, which has called thee, and thy father, and thy grandfather, and thy brother, and thy wife, and maybe children too. Oh, be grateful, and bless the name of the Lord! But "who maketh thee to differ from another?" Who but God, the Giver of all grace, has made thee to differ from the ungodly around thee? Therefore, adore him for his matchless mercy, his distinguishing grace.

Remember, too, that if thou hast been called out from a sinful world, and transformed into a child of God, this is the token that thou hast been *chosen from the beginning*. God loved thee long before he began to deal

with thee in the way of grace. Ere thou wast born, Christ died for thee; and ere this world was made. God loved thee with an everlasting love.

*“Before the day-star knew its place,
Or planets ran their round,”*

thy name was in his Book; and thine image was on the heart of Christ, whose delights were with the sons of men. Remember his word by the prophet Jeremiah, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Feed on that precious truth, inwardly digest it, let it enter into thy very soul. He hath loved me with an everlasting love; then, surely, I may claim the title of “a man greatly beloved.”

Remember, too, that in the fullness of time, thou wast *redeemed with the precious blood of Christ*. Thy God took upon himself thy nature, and on the cross he bore thy sins in his own body on the tree. The chastisement of thy peace was upon him, and with his stripes thou art healed. The bloodmark in on thee now; thou art one for whom he died in that special way which secures effectual salvation to thee. He loved his church, and gave himself for it; and this is the song of that church on heaven, “Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth.” If thou hast been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, verily, I say unto thee, thou art “a man greatly beloved.”

Thou hast been also *pardoned, and put among the Lord’s children*. Remember thy sin for a moment. Darest thou remember it? Hast thou remembered it? Then forget it, for God hast blotted it out. He has cast all thy sins behind his back. The depths have covered them; there is no one of them left. They sank like lead in the mighty waves of oblivion; and they shall never arise to condemn thee. Thou art forgiven. Perhaps thou wast a drunkard, a swearer, disobedient to parents, or unchaste; but whatever thy sin, the blood of Jesus has cleansed thee, and thou art whiter than the snow; and he has covered thee with the robe of his perfect righteousness, and thou art “accepted in the Beloved.” Art thou not a man greatly beloved? I remember one who came creeping to the Savior’s feet, it was myself, black as night, condemned in my own conscience, and expecting to be driven to the place where hope could never come. I came to Christ

wearing the weeds of mourning; but, in a moment, when I looked to Jesus, he put on me the garments of salvation. He took away my sin, and place a fair crown upon my head, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Blessed be his name! If there is a man in the world who can sing,

*“Oh, ‘twas love, ‘twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me!
It brought my Savior from above,
To die on Calvary;”*

I am that man; and you can sing it, too, dear friend, cannot you? I mean you have been forgiven your trespasses for Christ’s sake. I feel sure that your heart is speaking now, even if your tongue is silent, and it says, “Indeed, as a pardoned man, I am greatly beloved.”

Since the Lord forgave your sin, you have been a praying man, and God has *heard your prayers*. From the horns of the unicorns has he delivered you; out of the depths of the sea have you cried, and he has rescued you, like Jonah. With the psalmist, you can say, “Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.” Are you not greatly beloved? As our dear friend, Dr. Taylor, said in prayer this morning, we have a mercy-seat to which we can always go. Not only have we gone to it in the past, but we may go to it whenever we need. We have the *entree*’ of the King’s palace at will. Are we not men greatly beloved?

Beside that, remember that the Lord has *upheld you* until now. In your pilgrim path, how many times your feet have almost gone! How often you have been tempted, ah! Worse than that, how often you have yielded to temptation; yet here you are, your character not ruined, your soul not lost, your face towards Jerusalem, and the enemy’s foot is not on your neck yet; and it never will be, glory be to the name of the Lord! When I think of all our experience in the way in which the Lord hath led us, I can truly say of all his people that they are men and women greatly beloved.

Now to-night you are invited to *feast with Christ and his church*; not to come and be dogs under the table, but to sit with him at the royal banquet, with his banner of love waving over you. You are invited to be his companions here, his comrades at his feet. Oh, what a festival is this sacred supper! Haman thought himself honored when he was invited to his

king's banquet; but what shall we say who are bidden to come to this high festival?

*“What food luxurious loads the board,
When at the table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!”*

Only one thing more will I say under this head; but the story is so marvellous, that we may be forever telling it, and yet it will never be all told. The love of Christ to some of us has been so wonderful, that when we once begin the theme, we seem to forget all about time, and wish there were no fleeting hours to bid us end our story! Eternity itself will not be too long for telling out “the old, old story, of Jesus and his love.”

But, what I was going to say is this, *we shall be with him soon*. Some of us sit here heavy at heart; and there are wrinkles on the brow, and there is a weariness in the frame which makes the wheels of life drag heavy. Beloved, it is but the twinkling of an eye, so brief is life, and we shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory. Do you ever try to realize the greatness of that love that will take you to be with Christ, to dwell with him, and to share his glory for ever? Can you not put the incorruptible crown on your head, to-night in fancy; nay, in faith? Can you, even now, begin to wave the palm of victory, and strike the harp of everlasting praise? Do you feel as if you could, even now, join the sacred songsters above, and sing the heavenly hymn, the hallelujah chorus of the ages yet to be? As surely as we are in Christ to-night, we shall be with Christ by-and-by. Oh, men greatly beloved, to have such a future as this before you, ought to make your heaven begun below!

Time fails me, so I must speak of THE CASE OF SPECIAL SAINTS, those who are in a peculiar sense men greatly beloved.

There are some men who are, as I said at the beginning of my discourse, elect out of the elect. Remember, that Christ had seventy choice men, his disciples; but then he had twelve choicer men, his apostles; and he had three of these, who were with him when the others were not; and out of these three he had one John, “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” His love is so sweet, that, while I would be grateful to be even outside the seventy, so long as I might be among the five hundred brethren who saw him after he

rose from the dead, yet I would then have the ambition to get in among the seventy; and not for the honor of it, but for the love it would bring, I would like to be out of the eleven; and for the same reason I would fain to be one of the three, and I would, above measure, be thankful if I might be that one whom Jesus loved. Have you not the same holy aspiration?

Well, now, let me tell you that, if you would be among the choicer spirits, greatly beloved of God, you must be *men of spotless character*. Christ loves great sinners; and even saints that fall, and stain their garments, he will not cast away; but you will never enjoy the fullness of Christ's love unless you keep your garments unspotted from the world. You cannot find a fault in Daniel; and if you want to live on earth so as to be in heaven while you are here, and to drink the wine of Christ's love to the bottom of the chalice, even the spiced wine of his pomegranate, you must watch every step, and observe every word; for our Lord is very jealous, and half a word of evil will grieve him. If you would walk in the light as he is in the light, and have constant fellowship with God, I beseech you, be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, and follow after unsullied holiness. The pure in heart shall see God. Oh, that you might everyone have this purity! It is those who have not defiled their garments who shall walk with Christ in white.

The next point is, that men who are greatly beloved are men of decision. When Daniel had the lions' den in prospect, because of his faithfulness to his God, "he went into the house; and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." There was no compromising in Daniel's case. If you want to be greatly beloved, do not attempt any compromise with sin. Have nothing to do with policy, and craft, and holding with the true and the false at the same time. If God is to use you in his service, you must be like the tribe of Levi, separate from your brethren, and you must ever be ready to stand up bravely for God and for his eternal truth at any cost. It is my earnest desire that we may have in this church many men and women of this kind, who will be, as Mr. Moody puts it, out and out for Christ.

Next, if your would be men greatly beloved of God, beyond all the rest of his people, on whom special shinings of his face shall come, you must be

much in communion with him. Daniel fasted and prayed, and communed with God with cries and tears; and God came and revealed himself to him. He was greatly beloved, for he lived near to God. He was no far-off follower of his Lord. He dwelt in the full blaze of the Sun of Righteousness.

If a man is to be greatly beloved of God, he must *live above the world*, as Daniel did. Daniel became a prince, a governor, a man of substance and position; but when Belshazzar promised to clothe him with scarlet, and to put a gold chain about his neck, if he could read and interpret the writings on the wall, he said to the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." Daniel did not want them. When he became great in the land, he walked with God as he had done when he was poor. It is a dangerous thing for some people to be made much of in this world; their hands soon get turned, and they begin to think too much of themselves. He who thinks that he is somebody is nobody; and he whose head swims because of his elevation, will soon have it broken because of his tumbling down from his lofty position. Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and God showed him his great love by setting him in high places, and keeping him there in safety.

Once more, men who are greatly beloved by the Lord *live wholly for God and for God's people*. You see nothing of selfishness about Daniel. He neither seeks to be great nor to be rich. He loves his own people, Israel; he pleads with God for the seed of Abraham. He is patriotic. He loves Jehovah, and he pleads with him for God's own people. Now, if you want to be greatly beloved, give yourself up to the service of God and his church.

***"Ye that are men, now serve him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."***

No man need wish to be born in a time more suitable for heavenly chivalry than this. To stand alone for God in such an evil age as this, is a great honor. I pray that you may be able to avail yourselves of your privileges. How few care to swim against the current! A strong stream is running in opposition to the truth of God. Many say that the Bible is not half inspired. Many are turning away from Christ, refusing to acknowledge he

deity, and some blasphemously speak of his precious blood as a thing of the shambles. O sirs! If somebody does not stand out to-day for the cause of God and truth, what is to become of the nominal church and of a guilty world? If you are loyal to Christ, show it now. If you love him, and his infallible Word, prove it now. Then shall you hear him say to you also, "O man greatly beloved, go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — 1 John 4:9-21.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 810, 808, 735.

EXPOSITION

I JOHN 4:9-21

Verse 9. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

There is love in our creation; there is love in providence; but most of all there is love in the gift of Christ for our redemption. The apostle here seems to say, "Now that I have found the great secret of God's love to us; here is the clearest evidence of divine love that ever was or ever can be manifested toward the sons of men."

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

In us there was no love; there was a hatred of God and goodness. The enmity was not on God's side toward us; but on our side toward him. "He loved us and sent his son." The gift of Christ; the needful propitiation for our sins, was all of love on God's part. Justice demanded the propitiation, but love applied it. God could not be just if he pardoned sin without atonement; but the greatness of the love is seen in the fact that it moved the Father to give his Son to an ignominious death, that he might pardon sinners and yet be just.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Here we have a fact and an argument. We ought to love. We ought to love after God's fashion; not because men loved us. Nor because they deserve anything at our hands. We are too apt to look at the worthiness of those whom we help; but our God is gracious to the unthankful and to the evil. He makes his sun to rise and rain to fall for the unjust as well as for the righteous, therefore we ought to love the unlovely and the unloving. But just as God has a special love for his own people, we who believe in him ought to have a peculiar affection for all who are his.

No man hath seen God at any time.

We do not need to see him to love him. Love knows how good he is, though she hath not beheld him. Blessed are they who have not seen God, yet who love him with heart, and mind, and strength.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you; he dwells in you, he is your nearest and dearest Friend, the Author of all other love. The grace of love comes from the God of love.

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

And his Spirit is the spirit of love. Wherever it comes, it makes man love his fellow-man and seek his good; and if you have that love in your heart, it came from God, and you dwell in God.

And we have seen.

Yes, there is something that we have seen. John writes for himself and his fellow-apostles, and he says, “No man hath seen God at any time,” but —

We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

John saw him live, and saw him die, and saw him when he had risen from the dead, and saw him as he ascended. So he speaks to the matter of eyesight, and bears testimony that, though we have not seen God, we have, in the person of the representative apostles, seen the Son of God who lived and labored and died for us.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he is God.

Let Christ be God to you, and you are saved. If, in every deed, and of a truth. You take him to be the Son of God, and consequently rest your eternal hopes on him, God dwells in you, and you dwell in God.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

How far is this true of all of you? How many here can join with the beloved apostle, and say, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us”? We know it; we have felt it; we are under its power. We know it still, it remains a matter of faith to us; we believe it. We have a double hold of it. “We know,” we are not agnostics. “We believe,” we are not unbelievers.

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

This is not mere benevolence; there are many benevolent people who still do not dwell in love. They wish well to their fellow-men; but not to all. They are full of indignation at certain men for the wrong that they have done them. John’s words teach us that there is a way of living in which you are in accord with God, and with all mankind; you have passed out of the region of enmity into the realm of love. When you have come there, by the grace of God, then God dwells in you, and you dwell in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have a boldness in the day of judgment:

That is a wonderful expression, “boldness in the day of judgment.” According to some, the saints will not be in the day of judgment. Then, what is the use of “boldness in the day of judgment”? As I read my Bible, we shall all be there, and we shall all give an account unto God. I shall be glad to be there, to be judged for the deeds done in my body; not that I hope to be saved by them, but because I shall have a perfect answer to all accusations on account of my sin. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” If I am a believer in Christ, —

***“Bold shall I stand in that grand day,
For who aught to my charge shall I lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”
Because as he is, so are we in this world.***

Happy Christian men, who can say that? If you live among men as Christ lived among men, if you are a savior to them in your measure, if you love

them, if you try to exhibit the lovely traits of character that were in Christ, happy are you.

There is no fear in love; When a man loves with a perfect love, he escapes from bondage. But perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

There is a loving, holy fear, which is never cast out. Filial fear grows as love grows. That sacred dread, that solemn awe of God, we must ever cultivate; but we are not afraid of him. Dear heart, God is your best Friend, your choicest love.

“Yea, mine own God is he,” you can say; and you have no fear of him now. You long to approach him. Though he is a consuming fire, you know that he will only consume what you want to have consumed; and will purify you, and make your gold to shine more brightly because the consumable alloy is gone from it. He will not consume you, but only that which would work for your hurt if it were left within you. Refining fire, go through my heart! Consume as thou wilt! I long to have sin consumed, that I may be like my God. Say you not so, my brethren?

We love him, because he first loved us.

The reason for our love is found in free grace. God first loved us, and now we must love him; we cannot help it. It sometimes seems too much for a poor sinner to talk about loving God. If an emmet or a snail were to say that it loved a queen, you would think it strange, that it should look so high for an object of affection; but there is no distance between an insect and a man compared with the distance between man and God. Yet love doth fling a flying bridge from our manhood up to his Godhead. “We love him, because he first loved us.” If he could come down to us, we can go up to him. If his love could come down to such unworthy creatures as we are, then our poor love can find wings with which to mount up to him.

If a man say, I love God.

Not, “if a man love God,” but if a man say, “I love God.” It is a blessed thing to be able to say, “I love God,” when God himself can bear witness to the truth of our statement; but the apostle says, *If a man say, I love God,* —

And hateth his brother, he is a liar:

It is very rude of you, John, to call people liars. But it is not John's rough nature that uses such strong language; it is his gentle nature. When a loving disposition turns its face against evil, it turns against it with great vehemence of holy indignation. You can never judge a man's character by his books. Curiously enough, Mr. Romaine. Of St. Anne's Church, Blackfriars, wrote the most loving books that could be; yet he was a man of very strong temper indeed. Mr. Toplady wrote some of the sharpest things that were ever said about Arminians; but he was the most loving and gentle young man that ever breathed. St. John, full of love and tenderness, hits terribly hard when he comes across a lie. He was so fond of love, that he cannot have it played with, or mocked or mimicked. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

21. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

This is that "new commandment" which our Lord gave to his apostles, and through them to his whole church. "That ye love one another as I have loved you." John was, in a special sense, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." It was meet, therefore, that he should be the apostle to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring "this commandment" to the remembrance of any who had forgotten it. "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." God help us so to do, of his great grace! Amen.

INEXCUSABLE IRREVERENCE AND INGRATITUDE

SERMON NO. 2257

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 22ND, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 13TH, 1890.

“They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” — Romans 1:20, 21.

THIS first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a dreadful portion of the Word of God. I should hardly like to read it all through aloud; it is not intended to be so used. Read it at home, and be startled at the awful vices of the Gentile world. Unmentionable crimes were the common pleasures of those wicked ages; but the chapter is also a striking picture of heathenism at the present time. After a missionary had gone into a certain part of Hindostan, and had given away New Testaments, a Hindoo waited upon him, and asked him this question: “Did you not write that first chapter in the Epistle to the Romans after you came here?” “No,” replied the missionary, “I did not write it at all; it has been there nearly two thousand years.” The Hindoo said, “Well, if it has not been written since you came here, all I can say is, that it might have been so written, for it is a fearfully true description of the sin of India.” It is also much more true, even of London, than some of us would like to know. Even here are committed those vices, the very mention of which would make the cheek of modesty to crimson. However, I am not going to talk about Hindoos; they are a long way off. I am not going to speak about the ancient Romans; they lived a couple of thousand years ago. I am going to speak about ourselves, and about some persons here whom my text admirably fits. I fear that I am speaking to some who are “without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.”

The first charge against those who are mentioned in my text is, WANT OF REVERENCE. "They knew God," but "they glorified him not as God." They knew that there was a God; they never denied his existence; but they had no reverence for his name, they did not render him the homage to which he is entitled, they did not glorify him as God.

Of many this is still true in this form, *they never think of God*. they go from year to year without any practical thought of God. Not only is he not in their words, but he is not in their thoughts. As the Psalmist puts it, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not at all in his thoughts." The marginal reading is very expressive: "All his thoughts are, There is no God." Whether there is a God, or not, makes no practical difference to the wicked; they have so little esteem for him that, perhaps, if we could prove that there were no God, they would feel easier in their conscience. There must be something very wrong with you when you would rather that there were no God. "Well," says one, "I do not care much whether there is a God or not; I am an agnostic. "Oh!" I said, "that is a Greek word, is it not? And the equivalent Latin word is 'Ignoramus'." Somehow, he did not like the Latin nearly as much as the Greek. Oh, dear friends, I could not bear to be an "ignoramus" or an "agnostic" about God! I must have a God; I cannot do without him. He is to me as necessary as food to my body, and air to my lungs. The sad thing is, that many, who believe that there is a God, yet glorify him not as God, for they do not even give him a thought. I appeal to some here, whether that is not true. You go from the beginning of the week to the end of it without reflecting upon God at all. You could do as well without God as with him. Is not that the case? And must there not be something very terrible in the condition of your heart when, as a creature, you can do without a thought of your Creator, when he that has nourished you, and brought you up, is nothing to you, one of whom you never think?

These people, further, *have no right conceptions of God*. The true conception of God is that he is all in all. If God is anything, we ought to make him everything; you cannot put God in the second place. He is Almighty, All-wise, All-gracious, knowing everything, being in every place, constantly present, the emanations of his power found in every part of the universe. God is infinitely glorious; and unless we treat him as such,

we have not treated him as he ought to be treated. If there be a king, and he is set to open the door or do menial work, he is not honored as a king should be. Shall the great God be made a lackey for our lusts? Shall we put God aside, and say to him, "When I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee: when I have more money, I will attend to religion," or, "When I can be religious, and not lose anything by it, then I will seek thee"? Dost thou treat God so?" Oh, beware, this is high treason against the King of kings! Wrong ideas of God, grovelling thoughts of God, come under the censure of the text, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

Again, dear friends, there are some who think of God a little, but *they never offer him any humble, spiritual worship*. Do not imagine that God can be worshipped by anything which is merely mechanical or external, but which is from the heart. A strange god must that god be who is pleased with what some men call worship. I have been into many a Romish church, and seen upon the altar paper flowers that would have been a disgrace to a tap-room; and I have said, "I God pleased with this kind of thing?" Then I have been into a better building, and I have seen crucifixes and altars adorned like a fine lapidary's shop; and I have said to myself, "They might adorn a bride; but God cares not for jewels." Is your conception of God that he desires your gold and your silver, and your brass and your fine linen, and all these adornments? Thou thinkest that he is such an one as thyself. Surely, thou hast poor conceptions of God. When the organ peals out its melodious tones, but the heart is not in the singing, dost thou think that God has ears like a man, that can be tickled with sweet sounds? Why hast thou brought him down to thy level? He is spiritual; the music that delights him is the love of a true heart, the prayer of an anxious spirit. He has better music than all your organs and drums can ever bring to him. If he wanted music, he would have not asked thee, for winds and wave make melodies transcendently superior to all your chief musicians can compose. Does he want candles when his torch makes the mountains to be great altars, smoking with the incense of praise to the God of creation? Oh, brethren, I fear that it has been true of many who externally appeared to be devout, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God"! Weep over your sin: now have you glorified him as God. Fall on your face, and be nothing before the Most High: now you have

glorified him as God. Accept his righteousness; adore his bleeding Son; trust in his infinite compassion. Now you have glorified him as God, for “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” How far, my dear hearers, have you complied with that requisition?

Further, the people mentioned in my text did not glorify God, *for they did not obediently serve him*. My dear hearer, have *you* served God? Have you looked upon yourself as a servant of God? When you awoke in the morning, did you say, “What does God expect me to do to-day?” When you have summed up the day, have you applied this test, “How far have I endeavored to serve God to-day?” There are many who are the servants of themselves; and there is no master more tyrannical than unsanctified self. Many are toiling, like slaves at the galleys, for wealth, for honor, for respectability, for something for themselves. But, remember, if the Lord be God, and he made us, we are bound to serve him. How is it that God has kept you alive these forty years, perhaps twice forty, and you have never glorified him as God, by rendering him any service whatsoever? This is a very solemn enquiry. I should like everyone whom it concerns to take it home to his own conscience.

There is another charge to be brought against those who glorified not God, although they knew him; that is, *they did not trust him*. The place for man is under the shadow of God’s wings. If he made me, I ought to seek him in the hour of trouble. In the time of my need, I should apply to his bounty. If I feel unhappy, I should look to him for comfort. My dear hearers, are there not some of you who never did trust God yet? You run to your neighbors as soon as ever you are in difficulties. You trust your old uncle; but you never trust your God. Oh, what a wretched business is this, if God, who is all truth and all love, does not have the confidence of his own creatures! Remember how the Lord spake by the mouth of Jeremiah: “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see good when it cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and

shall not be careful in the year of drought; neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The people mentioned in the text knew God, but they did not trust him.

In addition to this, *they did not seek to commune with him*. Are there not some here who never tried to speak to God? It never occurred to you, did it? And God has not spoken to you; at least, you have not known whose voice it was when he did speak. It is a very sad business when a boy, who has been at home with his father and mother for years, has never spoken to them. He came down in the morning, and ate his breakfast; he came in, and devoured his dinner; he took his supper with them by night; but never spoke to them. Would you have a boy of that kind living with you? You would be obliged to say. "John, you must go; it pains me to send you away, but I cannot bear to have you sitting here in silence. If I speak to you, you never answer me." Some of you cannot remember the time when you spoke to God, or God spoke to you: it is so very long ago, if it ever did occur in your past experience. There is a man somewhere here who did speak to God the other day. He called upon God with a foul and blasphemous oath. When he was telling a lie, he called upon God to witness it. Ah! Yes, you have broken the silence; but it would have been better not to have spoken, than to have uttered those vile blasphemies against the Most High. Your horrible words have entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; and, as the Lord liveth, you will have more to answer for them to the great judge of all men, unless you seek his face, and find forgiveness through his Son. Our Savior said that, for every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment; how much more shall they be required to answer for every evil, false, slanderous, blasphemous word they have spoken!

But are there not many persons who have uttered an oath, and are scrupulously careful about speaking the truth, who have never had any spiritual converse with God? Wretched creatures indeed are you, even though you are healthy and prosperous, you have missed the highest good, the best blessing that man can know.

There are some who, although they know God, *they do not want to be reconciled to him*. there is a way of perfect reconciliation between God and man. Whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is at once forgiven; he is

adopted into the family of God; he drinks the wine of the love of God; he is saved with an everlasting salvation. There are many who know this in their minds; but it never excites any desire for it in their hearts. No, whether reconciled or unreconciled, does not trouble them. Knowest thou, O man, that the English of it is, "I defy God; I neither want his love, nor fear his hate; I will lift my face before his thunderbolts and dare him to do his worst."? Oh, fatal defiance of the blessed God! May the Spirit of God work upon thy conscience now, to make thee see the evil of this condition, and turn from it! While I speak, I feel deeply troubled to have to say what I do; but I am only speaking of what many a conscience here must confess to be true. You live, some of you, knowing God, but not glorifying him as God.

Now I take from my text the second accusation, which is certainly quite as sad as the other. Those who are mentioned by Paul are accused of WANT OF GRATITUDE. It is said of them that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

I cannot say anything much worse of a man than that he is not thankful to those who have been his benefactors; and when you say that he is not thankful to God, you have said about the worst thing you can say of him. Now look not merely at the people who lived in Paul's day, but at those who are living now. I will soon prove ingratitude on the part of many. There are many counts in the indictment we have to bring against them in God's High Court of Justice.

First, *God is despised*. You young men and women, who are beginning life, if you are intelligent and wise, say, "We wish that we knew what we ought to do for our own preservation and happiness; and we should also like to know what to avoid lest we should do ourselves harm." Well, now. The book of the law of the ten commands is simply the sanitary regulation of the moral world, telling us what would damage us, and what would benefit us. We ought to be very thankful to have such plain directions. "Thou shalt." "Thou shalt not." But see. God has taken the trouble to give us this map of the way, and to direct us in the right road; yet some have despised the heavenly guide. They have gone directly in the teeth of the law; in fact, it looks as if the very existence of the law has been a provocation for them to break it. Is not this a piece of dreadful ingratitude?

Whenever God says, “Thou shalt not,” it is because it would be mischievous to us to do it. Sometimes, in London, when the ice in the parks is not strong enough to bear, they put up boards on which is the word “Dangerous.” Who but a fool would go where that danger-signal is? The ten commands indicate what is dangerous: nay, what is fatal. Keep clear of all that is forbidden.

Next, *God’s day is dishonored* by those who are not thankful to him. God has, in great mercy, given us a day, on day in seven, wherein to rest, and to think of holy things. There were seven days that God had in the week. He said, “Take six, and use them in your business.” No, we must have the seventh as well. It is as if one, upon the road, saw a poor man in distress, and having but seven shillings, the generous person gave the poor man six; but when the wretch had scrambled to his feet, he followed his benefactor to knock him down, and steal the seventh shilling from him. How many do this! The Sabbath is their day for sport, for amusement, for anything but the service of God. They rob God of his day, though it be but one in seven. This is base unthankfulness. May not many here confess that they have been guilty of it? If so, let no more Sabbaths be wasted; but let their sacred hours, and all the week between, be spent in diligent search after God; and then, when you have found him, the Lord’s-day will be the brightest gem of all the seven, and you will sing with Dr. Watts, —

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

Moreover, *God’s Book is neglected* by these ungrateful beings. He has given us a Book; here is a copy of it. Was there ever such a Book, so full of wisdom, and so full of love? Let a man look at it on bended knee; for he may find heaven between those pages. But, when God has taken the trouble to make this wonderful Book, there are many who do not take the trouble to read it. Ah, me, what ingratitude! A father’s love-letter to his son, and his son leaves it unread! Here is a Book, the like of which is not beneath the cope of heaven, and God has exercised even his omniscience to make it a perfect Book, for all ranks and conditions of men, in all periods of the world’s history; and yet, such is man’s ingratitude, that he turns away from it.

But there is something much worse; *God's Son is refused* by the unthankful. God had but one Son, and such a Son; one with himself, infinite, holy, his delight! He took him from his bosom, and sent him to this earth. The Son took our nature, and became a servant, and then died the death of a felon, the death of the cross, and all to save us, all for the guilty, all for men who were his enemies. I feel guilty myself while I am talking about it, that I do not burst into tears. This must be one of the mysteries that the angels cannot comprehend, that after Christ had died, there were found sinners who would not be saved by him. They refused to be washed in the fountain filled with blood; they rejected eternal life, even though it streamed from the five great founts of his wounded body. They chose hell rather than salvation by his blood. They were so in love with their dire enemy, sin, that they would not be reconciled to God, even by the death of his Son. Oh, ingratitude, thou hast reached thy utmost limit now, for thou hast trodden under foot the Son of God, and hast counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hast done despite unto the Spirit of Grace! Is it not terrible?

I might stop here; but, for the sake of pricking the conscience of some, I want to say, dear friends, that there are some persons so ungrateful, that *God's deliverances are forgotten*. Some years ago, I spoke with a soldier who rode in the fatal charge at Balaclava; and when he told me so, I took him by the hand; I could not help it, though he was a stranger to me. The tears were in my eyes, and I said, "Sir, I hope that you are God's man after such a deliverance as that." Almost all the saddles emptied, shot and shell flying to the right and left, death mowing down the whole brigade; yet he escaped. But I did not find that he had given his heart to Christ. Over there is a man who has been in a half-a-dozen shipwrecks; and if he does not mind, he will be shipwrecked to all eternity! One here has had yellow fever. Ah sir, there is a worse fever than that on you now! I cannot speak of all the cases here of strange deliverances; but I do not doubt that I address some who have been between the jaws of death. They have looked over the edge of that dread precipice, beneath which is the fathomless abyss. You vowed that, if God would spare your life, you would never be what you were before; and in truth you are not, for you are worse than ever. You are sinning now against light, and in shameful ingratitude. God have mercy upon you!

How often, dear friends, is there ingratitude on the part of unconverted men in the matter of *God providence ignored!* Why, look at some of you! You never missed a meal in your lives. When you went to the table, there was always something on it. You never had to lose a night's rest for want of a bed. Some of you, from your childhood, have had all that heart could wish. If God has treated you so, while many are crushed with poverty, should he not have some gratitude from you? You had a good mother; you had a tender father; you have gone from one form of relationship to another with increasing comfort. You are spared, and your mother is spared; your wife and children are spared. Indeed, God has made your path very smooth. Some of you are getting on in business, while other men are failing; some of you have every comfort at home, while others have been widowed, and their children have fallen, one after the other. Will you never be grateful? Hard, hard heart, wilt thou never break? Will any mercy bend thee? I do appeal to some here, whose path has been so full of mercies, that they ought to think of God, and turn to him with sincere repentance and faith.

But one says, "I have had good luck." What can be worse than that? Here is unthankfulness to God indeed, when you ascribe his good gifts to "good luck." "Well, you know, but I have been a very hard-working man." I know you have, but who gave you this strength for your work? "I have a good supply of brains while others do not." Did you make your own brains? Do you not feel that any man who talks about his own wisdom, and his own wit, writes "FOOL" across his forehead in capital letters? We owe everything to God; shall we not give God nothing? Shall we have no gratitude to him from whom all our blessings have come? God forgive us if it has been so, and give us grace to alter our past course at once!

Once more, there is another piece of ingratitude of which many are guilty, *God's Spirit is resisted by them.* The Spirit of God comes to them, and gently touches them. Perhaps he has done so to-night while you have been sitting here. You have said, "Do not talk quite so plainly to us. Give us a little comfort, a little breathing space; and do not be quite so hard on us." I hope that it was the Spirit of God rather than the preacher who was dealing with you. At any rate, he has done so a good many times; and you have tried to drive from your heart your best Friend. You have been so ungenerous to him that, when he came to lead you to Christ, you

summoned all your strength, and the devil came to help you, and up till now you have resisted the Spirit of God with some degree of success. The Lord have mercy upon you! But how true is my text still, even of many who are found in the house of prayer, “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful”!

Now I finish with my third point, which is, that THIS IRREVERENCE AND INGRATITUDE WERE AGAINST KNOWLEDGE. “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.”

Will you kindly notice, that, according to my text, *knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice?* “They knew God.” It was no good to them to know God, for “they glorified him not as God.” So my theological friend over there, who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines, it does not matter what you think, or what you know, unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful. Nay, your knowledge may be a millstone about your neck to sink you down in woe eternal, unless your knowledge is turned to holy practice.

Indeed, *knowledge will increase the responsibility of those who are irreverent and ungrateful.* Paul says, “They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” Whatever excuse might be made for those who never heard of God, there was none for these people. My dear hearers, you also are “without excuse.” Many of you have had godly parents, you have attended a gospel ministry, your Sunday-school teachers and Christian friends have taught you the way of salvation; you are not ignorant. If you do not glorify God, if you are not thankful to him, it will be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for you, for they never had the privileges that you have despised. Remember how the Savior upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the might works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” I hardly know which is the greater wonder, that the poor people who saw Christ’s mighty works did not repent, or that those who would have repented if they had seen those works were not permitted to see them.

I wish, dear friends, that you could go out of this state of not glorifying God, and not being thankful. Surely, you only want to have the case stated, and the Spirit of God to speak to your conscience, to cause you to say, "I cannot bear to be in such a dreadful condition without regard to God any longer." May God enable you to repent to-night! Change your mind. That is the meaning of the word "repent." Change your mind, and say, "We will glorify God. There is a Great First Cause. There is a Creator. There must be an omnipotent, all-wise Being. We will worship him. We will say in our hearts, 'This God shall be our God, and we will trust him, if he will but accept us.'"

Then remember the years that are past. They involve a great debt, and you cannot pay it; for, if you go one serving God without a flaw to the end of your life, there is the old debt still due; there are the years that are gone, and "God requireth the years that are past." Well, now, hear what he has done. He has given his dear Son to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree"; and if you will trust Christ, then know of a surety that Christ has put away your sin, and you are forgiven. "Look," — that is his word — "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." When the brazen serpent was lifted up, all that those who were bidden had to do was to look at the serpent of brass; and everyone that looked, lived. If any man of that crowd had looked at Moses, that would have healed him. If he had looked at the fiery serpents, and tried to pull them off, that would not have healed him. But he looked to the brazen serpent, and, as his eyes caught the gleam of the brass, the deadly serpent's bites were healed, and the man lived. Look to Jesus. Look now. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do so!

"I do not feel fit," says one. That is looking to yourself. "I do not feel my need enough." Says another. That is trusting to your sense of need. Away with everything that is in you, or about you, and just trust Christ, and you shall immediately be saved. Whoever, in this great congregation will but look to Jesus shall be saved upon the spot. However great your iniquities, however stony your heart, however despairing your mind, look, look, look, look. And then, when you look to Christ, your ingratitude will be forgiven, and it will die. You will love him who has loved you, and you shall be saved, and saved forever.

When we received eighty-two into the church last Lord's-day evening, I could not help breathing an earnest prayer that this might be the beginning of a revival. May it come to-night, and may many in these two galleries, and down below, be carried away by that blessed tide of mighty grace that shall sweep them off their feet, and land them safe on the Rock of ages!

Will you, dear friends, pray for this? I shall feel that even my poor, weak instrumentality will be quite sufficient for the greatest work if I have your prayers at my back. Will you to-night at the family altar, or at your own bedsides, make it a special subject of prayer that men, who knew God, but glorified him not as God, and were not thankful, may to-night turn to God? If I could get at some of you who are living without Christ, I should like to do what the Roman ambassadors used to do. When they come to a king who was at war with the empire, they said to him, "Will you have peace with Rome, or not?" If he said that he must have time to think it over, the ambassador, with his rod, drew a ring around the man, and said, "You must decide before you cross that line, for, if you do not say 'Peace' before you step out of it, Rome will crush you with her armies." There are no doors to the pews, else I would say, "Shut those doors, and do not let the people out until God decides them." Lord, shut them in! Lord, arrest them: hold them fast, and let them not go till each one of them has said, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2257A

ROMANS 1:1-25

Verse 1. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.*

Paul had not seen the Romans when he wrote this epistle. They were strangers to him, and therefore he begins by asserting his apostleship. “called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” That expression should be true of every Christian minister. We are not apostles; but we are “separated unto the gospel of God.” I do not think that we are called to have anything to do with party politics, or social problems, or any such questions; we are set apart for this purpose. “separated unto the gospel of God.” There are plenty of people who can attend to those things better than we can/ If we mind our own business, or rather, if we mind our Master’s business, we who are ministers will have quite enough to do. “Separated unto the gospel of God.” There are some brethren who in preaching are as timid as mice; but on a political platform they can roar like lions. Had not they better take to what they like best, and give up the work at which they are not at home? For my part, I believe that I am like Paul when he says that he was “separated unto the gospel of God.” I am set apart unto the gospel, cut off from everything else that I may preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God to the perishing sons of men.

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)

Notice, brethren, how reverent the apostles were to Holy Scripture. They had no doubt about its inspiration. They quoted the old Testament, and delighted to make it a kind of basis for the New Testament: “which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

4. *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

What a glorious Lord we serve! He is God's Son: "Jesus Christ our Lord." In his human nature, he is a Man of royal race: "of the seed of David." He was a man, therefore he died: but he rose again, for he was more than man: "declared to be the Son of God with power."

6. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: among whom are you also the called of Jesus Christ:*

That is a sweet name for every truly converted man. "called of Jesus Christ." He has called you personally, he has called you effectually, he has called you out of the world, he has called you into fellowship with himself: "the called of Jesus Christ." The revised version has it: "call to be Jesus Christ's." those who are called by Christ, are called to be his.

8. *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

What contrasts we have in the seventh verse! "In Rome, beloved of God." "In Rome called to be saints." God has beloved ones in the darkest parts of the earth. There is all the more reason for them to be saints because they are surrounded by sinners. They must have had true faith, or they could not have confessed Christ between the jaws of a lion, for they lived in Rome, with Nero hunting after Christians, as if they had been wild beasts, and yet they were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

This man, Paul, did a great deal by prayer. I remember a minister, who is now with the Lord, who was thanked by his people for his wonderful sermons; but he said to them, "You never thanked me for my prayers, yet

they were the best part of my service for you.” When men of God are mighty in prayer, we owe much to them.

Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Paul wanted to go to Rome; but I do not suppose that he ever thought that he would go there at the expense of the government, with an imperial guard to take care of him all the way. We pray, and God gives us the answer to our petitions; but often in a way of which we should never have dreamed. Paul goes to Rome as a prisoner for Christ’s sake. Now suppose Paul had gone to Rome in any other capacity, he could not have seen Caesar, he could not have obtained admission into Caesar’s house. The prison of the Palatine was just under the vast palace of the Caesars; and everybody in the house could come into the guard-room. And have a talk with Paul if they were minded so to do. I suppose that, whatever I might be willing to pay, I could not have preached in the palace of the Queen, even in this nominally Christian country; but Paul was installed as a royal chaplain over Caesar’s household in the guard-room of the Palatine prison. How wonderfully God works to accomplish his divine purposes!

12. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith of you and me.

Paul wanted his faith to establish theirs, and their faith to establish his. Christians grow rich by and exchange of spiritual commodities; and I am afraid some Christians are very poor because they do not engage in the spiritual bartering with one another. You know how it was in the old time, “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another.” Shall I tell you how it is now? They that fear not the Lord speak often one against another. That is a very sad difference. Oh, for more Christian communion; for when we blend our “mutual faith;”, we are “comforted together”; each believer grows stronger as he cheers his brother in the Lord!

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Ah! Paul, you could not go when you wished. Caesar must convoy you. Your Master would have you go to Rome under the protection of the eagles of your empire. God has servants everywhere: he can make Satan himself provide the body-guard for his faithful apostle's journey.

I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

Paul felt a debt to everybody. The God who saved him, had saved him that he might preach the gospel in every place he could reach. Brethren, if you have received much from God, you are so much the debtor to men; and you are debtors not only to the respectable, but to the disreputable, debtors not only to those who come to a place of worship, but to the dwellers in the slums, "to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; to the wise and to the unwise."

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Many other people were ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It was too simple; it had not enough of mystery about it; it had not enough of worldly wisdom about it. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," and then gives his reason for not being ashamed of it, —

17. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The gospel tells us about this living by faith, this believing, this receiving righteousness through believing, and not through working. This is the sweet story of the cross, of which Paul was not ashamed.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Those last words may be read, "Who *hold down* the truth in unrighteousness." They will not let the truth work upon their hearts; they will not allow it to operate in their minds; but they try to make it an excuse for their sin. Is there anybody here who is holding down the truth to prevent its entering his heart? I fear that there are some such persons, who have come here for years, and the truth has pricked them, troubled

them, made them lie awake at night; but they are holding it down, like one who grasps a wild animal by the ears, and holds it down for fear it should bite him. Oh, sirs, when you are afraid of the truth, you may be well be afraid of hell! When you and the truth quarrel, you had better end your fighting soon, for you will have the worst of it if you do not yield: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness."

20. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Men who never heard the gospel can see God in his works if they open their eyes. There is written upon the face of nature enough to condemn men if they do not turn to God. There is a gospel of the sea, and of the heavens, of the stars, and of the sun; and if men will not read it, they are guilty, for they are wilfully ignorant of what they might know, and ought to know.

22. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

The way to be a fool is to pretend to be wise. A short cut to wisdom is the confession of folly. The near way to folly is the profession of wisdom.

24. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

It is very easy to make a beast of yourself when you have made a beast to be your god, as the Egyptians did, when they worshipped the god that they had made in the form of an ox, or a crocodile, or a cat.

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

There are many preachers who have “changed the truth of God into a lie”; and by their exaltation of man, they have “worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.” God save all of us from such idolatry as that! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 545, 527, 606.

WHERE IS THE LORD?

SERMON NO. 2258

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 29TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1890.

“Then he remembered the days of old Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.” — Isaiah 43:11-14.

I told you, in the reading, that Israel had a golden age, a time of great familiarity with God, when Jehovah was very near to his people in their sufferings, and was afflicted in their affliction, when he helped them in everything they did, and the angel of his presence saved them. But after all that the Lord had done for them, there came a cold periods. The people went astray from the one living and true God. They fell into the ritualism of the golden calf. They must have something visible, something that they could see and worship. Even after they were brought into the promised land, and the Lord had wrought great wonders for them, they turned aside to false gods, till they worshipped strange deities, that were no gods; and provoked Jehovah to jealousy. “They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.” Not that he ceased to love his chosen, but he must be just, and he could not patronize sin, so he sent their enemies against them, and they were sorely smitten, and brought very low. Then it was that they began to remember the days of old, and to sigh for him whom they had treated so ill, and they said one to another, “Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit

within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord cause him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people to make thyself a glorious name.”

But I shall ask you to notice, first, that the text contains *a sacred, loving remembrance*. It dwells very much upon what God did in the old times, when he was familiar with his people, and they walked in the light of his countenance. After that, I shall call your attention to *an object clearly shining* in the text. We get it twice over. In the twelfth verse, we read, “To make himself an everlasting name.” In the fourteenth verse, “To make thyself a glorious name.” When I have spoken of those two things, I shall dwell more at length upon *an anxious enquiry*, which is put here twice: “Where is he?” In the eleventh verse you get this repeated question, “Where is he? Where is he?”

So then, to begin with, we go back to God’s dealings with his people, and with us, and we have A SACRED, LOVING REMEMBRANCE. The people remembered what God did to them. What was it?

As it is here described, he first of all *gave them leaders*. “Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?” Moses and Aaron, and a band of godly men who were with them, were the leaders of the people, through the sea and through the wilderness. Brethren, we are apt to think too little of our leaders. First of all we think too much of them, and afterwards we think too little of them. We seem to swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. Man is reckoned as if he were everything to some, and God becomes nothing to such; but, without unduly exalting man, we can truly say that it really is a great blessing to the church when God raises up men who are qualified to lead his people. Israel did not go out of Egypt as a mob; they were led out by their armies. They did not plunge into the Red Sea as an undisciplined crowd; but Moses stood up there with his uplifted rod, and led them on that memorable day. We may as well sigh for the glorious days of old, when God gave his people mighty preachers of his Word. There have been epochs in history that were prolific of great leaders of the Christian

church. No sooner did Luther give his clarion call, than God seemed to have a bird in every bush; and Calvin, and Farel, and Melancthon, and Zwingle, and so many besides that I will not attempt to make out the list, joined with him in his brave protest against the harlot-church of Rome. "The Lord gave the Word: and great was the company of those that published it." The church remembers those happy days, with earnest longing for their return. They were giants in those days; mighty men of renown, well fitted by the Lord to lead his people.

We are next told that God *put his spirit within these shepherds*. They would have been nothing without it. Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within them? A man with God's Holy Spirit within him, can anybody estimate his worth? God says that he will make a man more precious than the gold of Ophir; but, to a man filled with his Spirit, mines of rubies or of diamonds cannot be set in comparison. When the eleven apostles went forth, on the day of Pentecost, endowed by the Spirit of God, there were forces in the world whose very tramp might make it quiver beneath their feet. God send us once more many of his servants, within whom he has put his Spirit in an eminent and conspicuous manner, and then we shall see bright days indeed! The command to such still is, "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high."

Then there was, in the next place, as a happy memory for the church, *a great manifestation of the divine power*. "That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name." "The right hand of Moses," by itself, was no more than your right hand or mine; but when God's glorious arm worked by the right hand of Moses, the sea divided, and made a way for the hosts of Israel to pass over. As the Psalmist sings, "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap." The right hand of Moses could not have wrought that miracle; but the glorious arm of the Lord did. What we want to-day, brethren, is a manifestation of divine power. Some of us are praying for it day and night. We have expected it. We do expect it. We are longing for it with a hunger and a thirst insatiable. Oh, when will Jehovah pluck his right hand out of his bosom? When will he make bare his arm, as one that goeth to his work with might and main? Pray, O ye servants of God, for leaders filled with the Spirit, and with the power of God working with them, that multitudes

may be converted unto Christ, and the sea of sin be dried up in the advance of his kingdom!

Then, there came to God's people *a very marvellous deliverance*: "That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." Understand by the word "wilderness" here, an expansive grassy plain; a place of wild grass and herbs, for so it means. And as a horse is led where it is that and level, and he does not stumble, so were the hosts of Israel led through the Red Sea. The bottom of the sea may be stony or gravelly, or it may be full of mire and mud. Probably, there will be huge rocks standing up in the middle of the stream. There may be a sudden fall from one stratum of rock to the other; and to come up from the sea on the further bank would be hard work for struggling people carrying burdens, as these Israelites did; for they went out of Egypt harnessed and laden, bearing their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders. But God made that rough sea bottom to be as easy travelling for them as when a horse is led across a flowery meadow. Beloved, God has done so with his church in all time. Her seas of difficulty have had no difficulty about them. He has come in all the glory of his power, and smoothed the way for the ransomed to pass over. Has it not been so with you, my brethren?

And, as a blessed ending to their trials, God *brought them into a place of rest*: "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord causeth him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people." In the desert they rested a good deal; but in Canaan they rested altogether. As the cattle come down from the mountains, where they have been picking up their food, when the plains are fat with grass, and they feed to their full, and lie down and rest, so did God deal with his people, bringing them from all the mountains of their trouble into a sweet valley, a land that flowed with milk and honey, where they might rest. This is a memorial, a sketch of the past.

I read it, first, literally as a sketch of Israel's history. I read it, next, as a sketch of the church's history. There have been times with the church as at Pentecost, and the Reformation, when, though she had wandered, God returned to her, and made bare his arm, and raised up shepherds, and put his Spirit upon them, and then led his people straight ahead through every difficulty, and gave them rest. You are most of you acquainted with the

history of the period before Luther's day. It did not seem likely then that the gospel would be preached everywhere throughout Northern Europe; but it was so, and God singularly preserved the first Reformers' lives when they were very precious. Zwingli died in battle; but he should not have been fighting, and he might have died a natural death. But Calvin, and Luther, and the rest of them, for the most part, remained until their work was done, and they quietly passed away; and the churches, despite long persecution, had comparative rest. It was so here, and it was so across the border in our sister church of Scotland. She cannot forget the covenanting blood, and the putting to death of those who were for the Crown Rights of King Jesus; but, at last, she had her time of rest. Time would not fail me to tell you the long list of shepherds that God gave to his covenanting church, the mighty men who, being dead, yet speak to us by their works, and who, while they lived, made the church of God in Scotland to be glorious with the presence of her Lord.

Well now, the same thing has happened also to us as individuals. We have had our cloudy and dark day, but God has appeared for our help. Some of you could tell how God led you through the deep as through a prairie. You went a way that you never knew, a new way, an untrodden path, as though it were the bottom of a sea but newly dry; but the Lord led you as a groom leads a horse, so that you did not stumble, and before long you came up out of the depths unharmed. With Moses and the children of Israel, you sang the praises of him who had triumphed gloriously; and then you began to learn another song, not so martial, but very sweet: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." In conflicts for the God of Israel, and his everlasting truth, some of us have been counted as the mire of the streets; but therein we do rejoice, and will rejoice; for Jehovah liveth, and he will bring up his people again from Bashan. He will bring them up from the depths of the sea, and there shall be rest again in the midst of Israel, if men are but faithful to God, and faithful to his truth.

Thus much upon the sacred memory of the past.

But now, in the second place, I want you to notice, AN OBJECT CLEARLY SHINING, like the morning star. I see, through the text, God's great motive in working these wonders for his people. *It was God who did it all; my*

text is full of God. He brought them up out of the sea. He put his Holy Spirit within them. He led them with his glorious arm. He led them through the deep. He caused them to rest. He did it all. When the history of the church is written, there will be nothing on the page but God. I know that her sin is recorded; but he hath blotted that out; and at the end, there will remain nothing but what God has done. When your life and mine shall ring out as a psalm amid the harps of glory, it will be only, "Unto him that loved us and laved us, be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "*Non nobis, Domine.*" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." So will sing all of us who are the Lord's redeemed, when we have come up out of the great tribulation, and have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

But then, why had God done all this? Did he do it because of his people's merits, or numbers, or capacities? He tells them, many a time, "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." God finds in himself the motive for blessing men who have no merits. If God looked for any motive in us, he would find none. He would see in us many reasons why he should condemn us; but only in himself could he discover the motive for his matchless mercy.

God works his great wonders of grace with the high motive of *making known to his creatures his own glory*, manifesting what he is and who he is, that they may worship him. He tells us in the text that he "led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name." So he has done, for to this day the highest note of praise to God that we know of, is the one that tells of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and when this world is burnt up, the song will go up to God in heaven will be the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Still, if we want a figure and a foretaste of the ultimate victories of God over all his people's enemies, we have to go back to the Red Sea, and look at Miriam's twinkling feet, and hear her fingers making the timbrel sound as she cries, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." He did it to make himself an ever-enduring name, and he has succeeded in that object.

Isaiah adds that the Lord led his people, and brought them into their rest, to make himself “a glorious name.” God is glorious in the history of Israel. God is glorious in the history of his church. God is glorious in the history of every believer. The life of a true believer is a glorious life. For himself he claims no honor, but by his holy life he brings great glory to God. There is more glory to God in every poor man and woman saved by grace, and in the one unknown obscure person, washed in the Redeemer’s blood, than in all the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who know nothing of free grace and dying love. So you see, beloved, the motive of God in all that he did; and I dwell upon it, though briefly, yet with much emphasis, because this is a motive that can never alter. What if the church of to-day be reduced to a very low condition, and the truth seems to be ebbing out from her shores, while a long stretch of the dreary mud of modern invention lies reeking in the nostrils of God; yet he that wrought such wonders, to make himself a name, still has the same object in view. He will be glorious. He will have men know that he is God, and beside him there is none else. Thus saith the Lord God, “All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” “The earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” O brethren, he is a jealous God still; and when the precious blood of Christ is insulted, God hears it, and forgets it not. When the inspiration of the blessed Book is denied, the Holy Ghost hears it and is grieved, and he will yet bestir himself to defend his truth. When we hear the truth that we love, the dearest and most sacred revelations from our God, treated with a triviality that is nothing less than profane, if we are indignant, so is he, and shall not God avenge his own elect. Which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with his adversaries. God’s motive is his own glory. He will stand to that, and he will vindicate it yet; and we need to have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a fear, about the ultimate result of a collision between God and the adversaries of his truth. Shall not the moth, that dashes at the candle, die in that flame? How shall the creatures of a day stand out against our God, who is a consuming fire? Here, then, is the hope of the people of God, the constant persistent, invariable motive of God to make himself glorious in the eyes of men.

My third point is, AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY, which I find twice over in my text. Believing in what God has done, and believing that his motive still remains the same, we begin to cry, "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?"

This question suggests that *there is some faith left*. "Where is he?" He is somewhere. Then, he lives. Beloved, the Lord God omnipotent still liveth and reigneth. Many usurpers have tried to turn him from his throne; but he still sits upon it, and reigns amongst his ancients gloriously. He was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

He is; but where is he? The question implies that *some were beginning to seek him*. Where is he? Those were brave days when he was here on the moors, or on the hills of Scotland, or at the stakes of Smithfield, or the prisons of Lambeth Palace. Those were glorious days when Christ was here, and his people knew it, and rejoiced in him. Then the virgin daughter of Zion shook her head at the harlot of Rome, and laughed her to scorn; for she lay in the bosom of her King, and rejoiced in his love. O beloved, do we begin to long after him again? I hope that we do. I trust the cry of many loyal hearts is, "Come back, king Jesus! When thou art away, all things languish. Adown the streets of Mansoul ride again, O Prince Emmanuel! Then shall the city ring with holy song, and every house shall be bedecked with everything that is beautiful and fair. Only come back!" If the King may but have his own again, I shall be content to sing old Simeon's song, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word!" The church longs for the King's coming. Where is he? Where is he?

It shows now, dear friends, that she has *begun to mourn over his absence*. I like the reduplicated word. "Where is he? Where is he?" Not, "Where is Moses? Where are the leaders? The fathers, where are they?" Let them keep where they are. But where is he that made the fathers? Where is he that sent us Moses and Aaron? Where is he that divided the waters, and led his people safely? Where is he? Oh, it is a question that I put to all your hearts! Oh, if he were here! One hour of his glorious arm; just a day of his almighty working; and what should we not see? We will not ask for

tongues of fire, or mighty rushing winds. Let him be here as he may; but if he only be here, the battle is turned at the gate, and the day of his redeemed is come. We sigh for his appearing.

Where is he, then? As the text asks. Well, *he is hidden because of our sins*. The church has been tampering with his truth. She has given into the hands of critics the Word of God, to cut it with a penknife, to rend away this and tear out that. She has been dallying with the world. She has tried to gain money for her objects by the basest of means. She has played the harlot in what she has done; for there are no amusements too vile or too silly for her. Even her pastors have filled a theater of late, to sit there and mark with their applause the labors of the play-actors! To this pass have we come at last, to which we never came before — no, not in Rome's darkest hour; and if you, who profess to be God's servants, do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you! The time has surely come when there should go up one great cry unto the Lord Jehovah that he would make bare his arm again; for well may we say, "Where is he? Where is he?"

For your comfort, the next verse to my text tells you where he is. *He is in heaven*. They cannot expel him from his throne. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." By every possible contrivance, in these modern days, they have tried to drive Christ out of his own church. A Christless, bloodless gospel defiles many a pulpit, and Christ is thus angered; but he is in heaven still. At the right hand of God he sits; and let this be our continual prayer to him, "Look down from heaven, O Lord! Cast an eye upon thy failing, faltering, fickle church. Look down from heaven."

"Where is he?" Well, *he is himself making an enquiry*; for, as some read the whole passage, it is God himself speaking. He remembered the days of old, Moses and his people; and when he his himself, and would not work in wrath, yet he said to himself, "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?" When God himself, who is always a stranger here, — for are we not strangers with him and sojourners, as all our fathers were? — When God himself begins to ask where he is, and to regret those happier days, something will come of it. "Ye that make mention of the Lord — ye that are the Lord's remembrances — keep not

silence, and give him no rest, — take no rest, and give him no rest, — till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” “That little cloud”, said one of old, when Julian the apostate threatened to extirpate Christianity, “That little church will soon be gone.” All that I see to-day of darkness, is but a wave of smoke. Behold, the Lord God himself shall chase it away with a strong west wind. He doth but blow with his wind, and the clouds disappear; and what stands before us to-day shall be as nothing.

I thought, as I came here to-night, that the man who drives the tram car gave me a lesson on how I should look upon all future time. He starts, say at Clapham, with his car. If he could have a view of all that was on the road between Clapham and the Elephant and Castle, the carts, the wagons, and other traffic that are exactly where he wants to go, and he were to add all those obstacles together, he might be foolish enough to say, “I shall not complete my course to-night;” but, you see, he starts, and if anything is on the rails, it moves off; and if, perhaps, some sluggish, heavily-laden coal wagon is slow to move, he puts his whistle to his mouth, and gives a shrill blast or two, and lo, it is gone! So when the church, serving her God, begins to look far ahead through prophecy, which she never did understand, and never will, she will think she will never reach her journey’s end. But she will; for God has laid the line. We are on the rails, and the rails do not come to an end till the journey’s end is reached; and as we go along, we shall find that everything in our way will move before us; and if it does not, we will pray a bit. We will blow our whistles, and the devil himself will have to move, though all his black horses shall be dragging along the brewer’s dray, or what else belongs to him. He will have to get off our track, assuredly as God lives; for if Jehovah sends us on his errands, we cannot fail. The old Romans picture Jove as hurling thunderbolts. Sometimes God makes his servants thunderbolts, and when he hurls them, they will go crashing through everything until they reach their mark. Wherefore; be not for a moment discouraged; but trust you in God, and be glad without a shadow of fear.

If any here have never trusted in God, never made him their Friend, or been reconciled to him by the death of his Son, I pray them to think of their present condition. Opposed to God! You are standing in the way of an express train. You are urged to get out of the way. You will not! You

are going to throw that train off the rails, you say. Poor fool, I could put mine arms about your neck, and forcibly drag you from the iron way; for assuredly, if you remain there, nothing can come of it but your everlasting destruction. Wherefore, flee, flee, I pray you, from the wrath to come. The train of divine judgment comes thundering along the iron road even now. It shakes the earth. Awake! Rise! Flee! God help you to do so! Behold, the Savior stands with open arms to be your shelter. Fly to him, and trust in him, and live for ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2258A

ISAIAH 43-44

Chapter 43. Verses 1-6. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them into my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.*

It is a dark and terrible time; no one at God's side, his people discouraged, Edom triumphant. Then comes the one great Hero of the gospel, the Christ of God; and by his own unaided strength he wins for his people a glorious victory. He is as terrible to his foes as he is precious to his friends. He stands before us as the one hope of his ancient church. There is a picture Isaiah was inspired to paint. Now the prophet goes on to say: —

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord,

Are you, dear friends, mentioning the lovingkindnesses of the Lord; or are you silent about them? Learn a lesson from the prophet Isaiah. Talk about what God has done for you, and for his people in all time: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." Let this be the resolve of every one of us who has tasted that the Lord is gracious.

*“Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
 And sing thy great Redeemer’s praise:
 He justly claims a song from me,
 His lovingkindness, oh, how free !
 “He saw me ruin’d in the fall,
 Yet loved me, notwithstanding all;
 He saved me from my lost estate,
 His lovingkindness, oh, how great ! “*

And the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

This is a verse full of sweets; but I must not dwell upon it. My object at this time is to read much, and to say little by way of comments; so I cannot stay to pick out the sweetnesses here. There are very many. This passage is a piece of a honeycomb. Read it when you get home; pray over it, suck the honey out of it, and praise the Lord for it.

For he said,

In the old time, when God called his people out of Egypt, he said this.

Surely they are my people, children that will not lie:

Or, children that will not act deceitfully; or, will not deal falsely.

So he was their Savior.

He thought well of them. He treated them as though they were trustworthy. He took them into his confidence. He said, “Surely they will not deceive me.” This is speaking after the manner of men, of course; for God knows us, and is never deceived in us. We may deceive others; we may even deceive ourselves; but we can never deceive him.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Happy Israel! These were her golden days, when she was faithful to God, and God communed very closely with her. Then God was very near to his people, so near that he is represented as carrying them in his arms. He

could be seen in a bush; he could be seen in a cloud; he could be seen working with a rod; he was so familiar with his people.

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

This was a great change in dispensation, though there was no change in the heart of God. He deals roughly with his people when they rebel against him. They would not be improved by tenderness, so now they must be scourged by his rod, and come under his displeasure. When men turn from God, he is “turned to be their enemy.”

Then he remembered the days of old,

His people were never out of his mind, even when they wandered away from him. He remembered the love of their espousals, when they went after him into the wilderness. He remembered the days of old, the happier days, when his people walked closely with him. They also remembered these days. It is strange that they should ever have forgotten them.

Moses, and his people, saying. Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

Now comes a prayer suggested by their condition of sorrow and desertion.

Look down from heaven,

Thou art still there, though we have wandered. Look down upon us from heaven, O, Lord!

16. And behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

That last sentence may be read, “Thy name is, our Redeemer, from everlasting.” This is a sweet plea with God: “We have offended thee; but we are still thy children. We have wandered from thee; but we are still thine own, bought with a price. Thy name of ‘Redeemer’ is not a temporary one; it is from everlasting to everlasting, therefore look on thy poor children again. Leave us not to perish.”

18. *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants’ sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness.*

Or, “Thy holy people.”

19. *Have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were no called by thy name.*

“Thou didst give us the land by an everlasting covenant; but we have had it only a little while. Lo, the enemy has come in, and driven thine Israel away from her heritage! Can it be so, always, O Lord?” Happy times seem very short when they are over; and when they are succeeded by dark trials, we say, “The people of thy holiness, thy holy people have possessed it but a little while. Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are now become (for this is the true rendering of the passage) like those over whom thou hast never borne rule, those who were never called by thy name.” That is a sad condition for the church of God to be in; and I am afraid that it is getting into that condition now, sinking to a level with the world, leaving its high calling, quitting the path of the separated people, and becoming just like those whom God never knew, and who were never called by his name. It is a pitiful case; and here comes a prayer like the bursting out of a volcano, as though the hearts of gracious men could hold in the agonising cry no longer: —

Chapter 44. Verses 1,2. *Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth,*

Or, much better, “as when the brushwood burneth”; for if God does but come to his people, they are ready to catch the flame, like the dry heather

which is soon ablaze; and his enemies also shall be like brushwood before the fire.

3. *The fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou comest down, the mountain flowed down at thy presence.*

O Lord, come again! Thou didst come in the past; repeat thy former acts, and let us see what thou canst do for the avenging of thy people.

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

God is ready to help. He has everything in preparation before our needs begin. He has laid in supplies for all our wants. Before our prayers are presented, he has prepared his answers to them; blessed be his name! You remember how Paul uses this passage, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The spiritual man is a privileged man.

Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways:

God does not wait for us to return to him. He meets us. He comes to us the moment that we turn our feet towards his throne. While we are, like the prodigal, a great way off, he sees us, and has compassion upon us, and runs to meet us.

Behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

In thy faithfulness, in thy love, in thyself, in thy ways of mercy there is continuance. This is our safety. What are we? Here is the answer: —

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

It is not a flattering picture that the prophet draws. Even our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, fit only for the fire; what must our righteousnesses be like? We, ourselves, are like the sere leaves on the trees; and just as the wind carries away the faded leaves of autumn, so our sins, like a mighty blast, carry us away.

And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee:

That is a wonderful description of prayer. When a man rouses himself from sinful lethargy, and stirs himself up to take hold of God in prayer, he will become an Israel, a prince prevailing with God.

8. *For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father;*

Adoption does not come to an end because of sin. Regeneration or sonship does not die out; it cannot die out. I am my father's son, and so I always shall be; and if I am my heavenly Father's son, I shall never cease to be so. "Now, O Lord, thou art our Father!" This truth must not be perverted into an argument for sinning; it ought rather to keep us from sinning, lest we should grieve such wondrous love.

We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wrath very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. The holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

The prophet touches the minor key, and weeps and wails for the sorrows of his people; but he does not neglect to pray. In the next chapter God breaks out, and says, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." How much more quickly is he found of them who do seek him! Verily, God does hear prayer; and he will hear prayer; let us not cease to pray to him as we look round on the sad state of the professing church at this time, and with Isaiah let us cry, "Wilt thou

refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 107 (Song I), 953, 954

THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY OF SALVATION

SERMON NO. 2259

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 5TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 6TH, 1890.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” — John 1:11-13.

EVERY thing here is simple; everything is sublime. Here is that simple gospel, by which the most ignorant may be saved. Here are profundities, in which the best-instructed may find themselves beyond their depth. Here are those everlasting hills of divine truth which man cannot climb; yet here is that plain path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err, nor lose his way. I always feel that I have no time to spare for critical and captious persons. If they will not believe, neither shall they be established. They must take the consequences of their unbelief. But I can spare all day and all night for an anxious enquirer, for one who is blinded by the very blaze of the heavenly light that shines upon him, and who seems to lose his way by reason of the very plainness of the road that lies before him. In this most simple text are some of the deep things of God, and there are souls here that are puzzled by what are simplicities to some of us; and my one aim shall be, so to handle this text as to help and encourage and cheer some who would fain touch the hem of the Master's garment, but cannot for the press of many difficulties and grave questions which rise before their minds.

Let us go to the text at once, and notice, first, *a matter which is very simple*: “As many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his

name”; secondly, *a matter which is very delightful*: “to them gave he power to become the sons of God”; and thirdly, *a matter which is very mysterious*: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Here is, first, A MATTER WHICH IS VERY SIMPLE; receiving Christ, and believing on his name. Oh, that many here may be able to say, “Yes, I understand that simple matter. That is the way in which I found eternal life”!

The simple matter of which John here speaks is receiving Christ, or, in other words, believing on his name.

Receiving Christ is *a distinctive act*. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The very people you would have thought would have eagerly welcomed Christ did not do so; but here and there a man stood apart from the rest, or a woman came out from her surroundings, and each of these said, “I receive Christ as the Messiah.” You will never go to heaven in a crowd. The crowd goes down the broad road to destruction; but the way which leadeth to life eternal is a narrow way; “and few there be that find it.” They that go to heaven must come out one by one, and say to him that sits at the wicket-gate, “Set my name down, sir, as a pilgrim to the celestial city.” They who would enter into life must fight as well as run, for it is an uphill fight all the way, and few there be that fight it out to the end, and win the crown of the victors.

Those who received Christ were different from those who did not receive him; they were as different as white is from black, or light from darkness. They took a distinctive step, separated themselves from others, and came out and received him whom others would not receive. Have you taken such a step, dear friend? Can you say, “Yes, let others do as they will, as for me, Christ is all my salvation, and all my desire; and at all hazards I am quite content to be counted singular, and to stand alone; I have lifted my hand to heaven, and I cannot draw back. Whatever others may do, I say, ‘Christ for me’ “?

As it was a distinctive act, so it was *a personal one*: “To as many as received him.” They had to receive Christ each one by his own act and deed. “Even to them that believe on his name.” Believing is the distinct act

of a person. I cannot believe for you any more than you can believe for me; that is clearly impossible. There can be no such thing as sponsorship in receiving Christ, or in faith. If you are an unbeliever, your father and mother may be the most eminent saints, but their faith does not overlap and cover your unbelief. You must believe for yourself. I have had to even remind some that the Holy Ghost himself cannot believe for them. He works faith in you; but you have to believe. The faith must be your own distinct mental act. Faith is the gift of God; but God does not believe for us; how could he? It is for you distinctly to believe. Come, dear hearer, have you been trying to put up with a national faith? A national faith is a mere sham. Or have you tried to think that you possess the family faith? "Oh, we are all Christians, you know!" Yes, we are all hypocrites; that is what that comes to. Unless each one is a Christian for himself, he is a Christian only in name, and that is to be a hypocrite. Oh, that we might have the certainty that we have each one laid our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God! God grant that, if we have never done so before, we may do so this very moment!

Mark, next, that, as it was a distinctive and personal act, so *it related to a Person*. I find that the text runs thus, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That religion which leaves out the person of Christ, has left out the essential point. Thou art not saved by believing a doctrine, though it is well for thee to believe it if it be true. Thou art not saved by practicing an ordinance, though thou shouldst practice it if thou art one of those to whom it belongs. Thou art not saved by any belief except this, believing on Christ's name, and receiving him. "I take in a body of divinity," says one. Do you? There is no body of divinity that I know of but Christ, the son of God in human flesh, living, bleeding, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come; thou must lean on him; for the promise is only to as many as receive him.

This reception of Christ *consisted in faith in him*: "As many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name." He was a stranger, and they took him in. He was food, and they took him in, and fed on him. He was living water, and they received him, drank him up, took him into themselves. He was light, and they received the light. He was life, and they received the life, and they lived by what they received. As the empty cup

receives from the flowing fountain, so do we receive Christ into our emptiness. We, being poor, and naked, and miserable, come to him, and we receive riches, and clothing, and happiness in him. Salvation comes by receiving Christ. I know what you have been trying to do; you have been trying to give Christ something. Let me caution you against a very common expression. I hear converts continually told to give their hearts to Jesus. It is quite correct, and I hope they will do so; but your first concern must be, not what you give to Jesus, but what Jesus gives to you. You must take him from himself as a gift to you, then will you truly give your heart to him. The first act, and, indeed, the underlying act all the way along, is to receive, to imbibe, to take in Christ, and that is called believing on his name. Note that "name." It is not believing a fanciful christ; for there are many christs nowadays, as many christs as there are books, nearly; for every writer seems to make a christ of his own; but the christ that men make up will not save you. The only Christ who can save you is the Christ of God, that Christ who, in the synagogue at Nazareth, found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

You are to believe on *the Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures*. You are to take him as you find him here; not as Renan, not as Strauss, or anybody else, pictures of him; but as you find him here. As God reveals him, you are to believe on his name: "the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"; Emmanuel, God with us; Jesus, saving from sin; Christ anointed of the Father. You are to believe on his name, not on the Christ of Rome, nor the Christ of Canterbury, but the Christ of Jerusalem, the Christ of the eternal glory; no christ of a dreamy prophecy, with which some are defaming the true prophetic spirit of the Word, no christ of idealism, no man-made christ; but the eternal God, incarnate in human flesh, as he is here pictured by Psalmist, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, very God of very God, yet truly man, in your stead suffering, bearing the sin of men in his own body on the tree. It is believing in this Christ that will effectually save your soul. To believe is to trust. Prove that you believe in Christ by risking everything upon him.

*“Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
I risk my whole eternity.”*

On his who lived for me, and died for me, and rose again for me, and has gone into heaven for me; on him I throw the whole weight of past, present, and future, and every interest that belongs to my soul, for time and for eternity.

This is a very simple matter, and I have noticed a great many sneers at this simple faith, and a great many depreciatory remarks concerning it; but, let me tell you, there is nothing like it under heaven. Possessing this faith will prove you to be a son of God; nothing short of it ever will. “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God;” and he has given that power to nobody else. This will prove you to be absolved, forgiven. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;” but if thou hast no faith in Christ Jesus, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Because thou hast not believed on the Son of God, thou art condemned already. One grain of this faith is worth more than a diamond the size of the world; yea, though thou shouldst thread such jewels together, as many as the stars of heaven for number, they would be worth nothing compared with the smallest atom of faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

But whence comes this wonderful power of faith? Not from the faith, but from him on whom it leans. What power Christ has! The power of his manhood suffering, the power of his Godhead bowing on the cross, the power of the God-man, the Mediator, surrendering himself as the greatest sacrifice for sin; why, he who toucheth this, hath touched the springs of omnipotence! He who comes, by faith, into contact with Christ, has come into contact with boundless love, and power, and mercy, and grace. I marvel not at anything that faith brings when it deals with Christ. Thou hast a little key, a little rusty key, and thou sayest, “By use of this key I can get all the gold that I want.” Yes, but where is the box to which you go for the gold? When you show me, and I see that it is a great chamber filled full of gold and silver, I can understand how your little key can enrich you when it opens the door into such a treasury. If faith be the key which unlocks the fullness of God, “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell,” then I can understand why faith brings such boundless

blessings to him who hath it. Salvation is a very simple business. God help us to look at it simply and practically, and to receive Christ, and believe on his name!

Now, secondly, here is A MATTER WHICH IS VERY DELIGHTFUL: “To them gave he power to become sons of God.”

If I had a week to preach from this text, I think that I should be able to get through the first head; but at this time I can only throw out just a few hints. Look at the great and delightful blessing which comes to us by our faith in Christ. We give Christ our faith, and he gives us power to become sons of God, the authority, liberty, privilege, right, — something more than mere strength or force — to be sons of God.

When we believe in Jesus, he indicates to us *the Great Father’s willingness to let us be his sons*. We who were prodigals, far away from him, perceive that, when we receive Christ, the Father, who gave us Christ, is willing to take us to be his sons. He would not have yielded up his Only-begotten if he had not willed to take us into his family.

When we believe in Jesus, *he bestows on us the status of sons*. We were slaves before; now we are sons. We were strangers, aliens, enemies; and every word that means an evil thing might have been applied to us; but when we laid hold on Christ, we were adopted by some great citizen, and publicly acknowledged in the forum as being henceforth that man’s son, was regarded as such, so, as soon as we believe in Jesus, we get the status of sons. “Beloved, now we are the sons of God.”

Then Christ does something more for us. *He gives us grace to feel our sonship*. As we sang just now, —

***“My faith shall ‘Abba, Father,’ cry,
And thou the kindred own.”***

God owns us as his children, and we own him as our Father; and henceforth, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” is no meaningless expression, but it comes welling up from the depths of our heart.

Having given us grace to feel sonship, *Christ gives us the nature of our Father*. He gives us “power to become the sons of God.” We get more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness. By his divine Spirit,

shed abroad in our hearts, we become more and more the children of our Father who is in heaven, who doeth good to the undeserving and the unthankful, and whose heart overflows with love even to those who love not him.

When this nature of sons shall be fully developed, *Christ will bestow his glory upon us*. We shall be in heaven, not in the rear rank, as servants, but nearest to the eternal throne. Unto angels he has never said, "Ye are my sons"; but he has called us sons, poor creatures of the dust, who believe in Jesus; and we shall have all the honor, and joy, and privilege, and delight that belong to the princes of the blood royal of heaven, members of the imperial house of God, in that day when the King shall manifest himself in his own palace.

Some of us could draw parallels, about being made sons, from our own lives. You were once a very tiny child; but you were a son then as much as you are now. So is it with you who have only just begun to believe in Christ; he has given you authority and right to become sons of God. Very early in our life, our father went down to the registrar's office, and wrote our name in the roll as his sons. We do not recollect that, it was so long ago; but he did it, and he also wrote our name in the family Bible, even as our Father in heaven has enrolled our names in the Lamb's Book of Life. You recollect that, as a child, you did not go into the kitchen, to dine with the servants; but you took your seat at the table. It was a very little chair in which you first sat at the table; but as you grew bigger, you always went to the table, because you were a son. The servants in the house were much bigger than you, and they could do a great many things that you could not do, and your father paid them wages. He never paid you any; they were not his sons; but you were. If they had put on your clothes, they would not have been his sons. You had privileges that they had not. I remember that, in the parish where my home was, on a certain day in the year, the church-bell rang, and everybody went to receive a penny roll. Every child had one, and I recollect having mine. I claimed it as a privilege, because I was my father's son. I think there were six of us, who all had a roll; every child in the parish had one. So there are a number of privileges that come to us very early in our Christian life, and we mean to have them, first, because our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the right to have them; and, next, because, if we do not take what he bought for us,, it will be

robbing him, and wasting his substance. As he has paid for it all, and has given us the right to have it, let us take it.

You were put to school because you were a son. You did not like it; I daresay that you would rather have stopped at home at play. And you had a touch of the rod, sometimes, because you were a son. That was one of your privileges: “for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” One day you were in the street with other boys, doing wrong, and your father came along, and punished you. He did not touch your companions, for they were not his sons. You smile at those little things, and you did not at the time count your punishments as privileges; but they were. When the chastening of the Lord comes, call it a privilege, for that is what it is. There is no greater mercy that I know of on earth than good health except it be sickness; and that has often been a greater mercy to me than health.

It is a good thing to be without a trouble; but it is a better thing to have a trouble, and know how to get grace enough to bear it. I am not so much afraid of the devil when he roars, as I am when he pretends to go to sleep. I think that, oftentimes, a roaring devil keeps us awake; and the troubles of this life stir us up to go to God in prayer, and that which looks to us ill turns to our good. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

Now I come to my last point, that is, A MATTER WHICH IS MYSTERIOUS. We are not only given the status of children, and the privilege of being called sons, but this mysterious matter is one of heavenly birth: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

This new birth is *absolutely needful*. If we are ever to be numbered amongst God’s children, we must be born again, born from above. We were born in sin, born children of wrath, even as others; to be God’s children, it is absolutely necessary that we should be born again.

The change wrought thereby is *wonderfully radical*. It is not a mere outside washing, nor any touching up and repairing. It is a total renovation. Born again? I cannot express to you all that the change means, it is so deep, so thorough, so complete.

It is also *intensely mysterious*. What must it be to be born again? “I cannot understand it.” Says one. Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel, and he did not understand it. Does anybody understand it? Does anybody understand his first birth? What know we of it? And this second birth; some of us have passed through it, and know that we have, and remember well the pangs of that birth, yet we cannot describe the movements of the Spirit of God, by which we were formed anew, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, according to that word from him who sits on the throne, “Behold, I make all things new!” It is a great mystery.

Certainly it is *entirely superhuman*. We cannot contribute to it. Man cannot make himself to be born again. His first birth is not of himself, and his second birth is not one jot more so. It is a work of the Holy Ghost, a work of God. It is a new creation; it is a quickening; it is a miracle from beginning to end.

Here is the point to which I call your special attention, it is *assuredly ours*. Many of us here have been born again. We know that we have, and herein lies the evidence of it, “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” If thou believest on Christ’s name, thou art born of God. If thou hast received Christ into thy soul, thou hast obtained that birth that comes not of blood, nor of the will of parents, nor of the will of man, but of God. Thou hast passed from death unto life.

Let no man sit down here, and cover his face, and say, “There is no hope for me. I cannot understand about this new birth.” If thou wilt take Christ, to have and to hold, henceforth and for ever, as thy sole trust and confidence, thou hast received that which no line of ancestors could ever give thee; for it is “not of blood.” Thou dost possess that which no will of the father and mother could ever give thee; for it is “not of the will of the flesh.” Thou hast that which thine own will could not bring thee; for it is “not of the will of man.” Thou hast that which only the Giver of life can bestow; for it is “of God.” Thou art born again; for thou hast received Christ, and believed on his name. I do not urge you to look within, to try and see whether this new birth is there. Instead of looking within thyself, look thou to him who hangs on yonder cross, dying the Just for the unjust,

to bring us to God. Fix thou thine eyes on him, and believe in him; and when thou seest in thyself much that is evil, look away to him; and when doubts prevail, look to him; and when thy conscience tells thee of thy past sins, look to him.

I have to go through this story almost every day of the year, and sometimes half a dozen times in a day. If there is a despairing soul anywhere within twenty miles, it will find me out, no matter whether I am at home, or at Mentone, or in any other part of the world. It will come from any distance, broken down, despairing, half insane sometimes; and I have no medicine to prescribe except "Christ, Christ, Christ; Jesus Christ and him crucified. Look away from yourselves, and trust in him." I go over and over and over with this, and never get one jot further. Because I find that this medicine cures all soul sicknesses, while human quackery cures none. Christ alone is the one remedy for sin-sick souls. Receive him; believe on his name. We keep hammering at this. I can sympathize with Luther when he said, "I have preached justification by faith so often, and I feel sometimes that you are so slow to receive it, that I could almost take the Bible, and bang it about your heads." I am afraid that the truth would not have entered their hearts if he had done so. This is what we aim at, to get this one thought into a man, "Thou art lost, and therefore such an one as Christ came to save."

One said to me just lately, "Oh, sir, I am the biggest sinner that ever lived!" I replied, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "But I have not any strength." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died." "Oh! But," he said, "I have been utterly ungodly." "Christ died for the ungodly." "But I am lost." "Yes," I said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man has come to save that which was lost." I said to this man, "You have the brush in your hand, and at every stroke it looks as if you were quoting Scripture. You seem to be making yourself out to be the very man that Christ came to save. If you were to make yourself out to be good and excellent, I should give you this word — Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He did not die for the good, but for the bad. He gave himself for our sins; he never gave himself for our righteousness. He is a Savior. He has not come yet as a Rewarder of the righteous; that will be in his Second

Advent. Now he comes as the great Forgiver of the guilty, and the only Savior of the lost. Wilt thou come to him in that way?" "Oh! But," my friend said, "I have nothing to bring to Christ." "No," I said, "I know that you have not; but Christ has everything." "Sir," he said, "you do not know me, else you would not talk to me like this;" and I said, "No, and you do not know yourself, and you are worse than you think you are, though you think that you are bad enough in all conscience; but be you as bad as you may, Jesus Christ came on purpose to uplift from the dunghill those whom he sets among princes by his free, rich, sovereign grace."

Oh, come and believe in him, poor sinner! I feel that, if I had all your souls, I would believe in Christ for their salvation; I would trust him to save a million souls if I had them, for he is mighty to save. There can be no limit to his power to forgive. There can be no limit to the merit of his precious blood. There can be no boundary to the efficacy of his plea before the throne. Only trust him, and you must be saved. May his gracious Spirit lead you to do so now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2259A

JOHN 1:1-34

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired these words, inspire us through them as we read them!

Verse 1. *In the beginning was the Word.*

The divine Logos, whom we know as the Christ of God. “In the beginning was the Word.” The first words of this gospel remind us of the first words of the Old Testament: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Even then “the Word” was; he existed before all time, even from everlasting.

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in his eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In his glory he was “with God.” In his nature he “was God.”

The same was in the beginning with God.

*As we have been singing —
“Ere sin was born, or Satan fell;”*

ere there was a creation that could fall, “the same was in the beginning with God.”

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

He that hung upon the cross was the Maker of all worlds. He that came as an infant, for our sake, was the Infinite. How low he stooped! How high he must have been that he could stoop so low!

In his was life;

Essentially, Eternally.

5. *And the light was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

It never has done so; it never will. You may sometimes call the darkness, the ignorance of men, or the sin of men. If you like, you may call it the wisdom of men, and the righteousness of men, for that is only another form of the same darkness. “The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

How very different is the style of this verse from the one that precedes it! How grand, how sublime, are the Evangelist’s words when he speaks of Jesus! How truly human he becomes, how he dips his pen in ordinary ink, when he writes: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” Yet that was a noble testimony to the herald of Christ. John the Baptist was “a man sent from God.”

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

Dear friends, if you and I know our real destiny, and are the servants of God, we are sent that men might, through us, believe in Jesus. John was a special witness; but we ought all to be witnesses to complete the chain of testimony. Every Christian man should reckon that he is sent from God to bear witness to the great Light, that, through him, men might believe.

9. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

There was no light from John except what he reflected from his Lord. All the light comes from Jesus. Every man who comes into the world with any light borrows his light from Christ. There is no other light; there can be no other. He is the “Light of the World.”

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

This is a sad verse. He was a stranger in his own house. He was unknown amidst his own handiwork. Men whom he had made, made nothing of him. "The world knew him not;" did not recognize him.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

That favored circle, the Jewish nation, where revelation had been given, even there, there was no place for him. He must be despised and rejected even by his own nation.

13. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

To receive Christ, a man must be born of God. It is the simplest thing in all the world, one would think, to open the door of the heart, and let him in; but no man lets Christ into his heart till first God has made him to be born again, born from above.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

They who saw Christ on earth were highly privileged; but it is a spiritual sight of him alone that is to be desired, and we can have that even now. How full of grace, how full of truth, he is to all those who are privileged to behold him!

16. *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*

I wish that we could all say that. Even out of this company, many can say it; and linking our hands with those who have gone before us, and those who are still with us in the faith, we say unitedly, "Of his fullness have all we received," and we hope to receive from it again to-night, for it is still his fullness. There is never a trace of declining in him. It was fullness when the first sinner came to him; and it is fullness still; it will be fullness to the very end. "And grace for grace." We get grace to reach out to another grace, each grace becoming a stepping-stone to something higher. I do not believe in our rising on the "stepping-stones of our dead selves." They are poor

stones; they all lead downwards. The stepping-stones of the living Christ lead upwards; grace for grace, grace upon grace, till grace is crowned with glory.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

We know that the law came by Moses. The law has often burdened us, crushed us, convinced us, condemned us. Let us be equally clear that grace and truth come by this divine channel, "Jesus Christ."

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

We do not want to see God apart from Christ. I am perfectly satisfied to see the Eternal Light through his own chosen medium, Christ Jesus. Apart from that medium, the light might blind my eyes. "No man hath seen God at any time." Who can look on the sun? What mind can look on God? But Christ does not hide the Father; he manifests him. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. Then said thy unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice

Not "I am the Word," but "I am the voice." Christ is the essential Word; we are but the voice to make that word sound across the desert of human life.

Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

You see, even as a voice, John was not original. That straining after originality, of which we see so much to-day, finds no warrant among the true servants of God. Even though John is only a voice, yet he is a voice that quotes the Scriptures: "Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." The more of Scripture we can voice, the better. Our words, what are they? They are but air. His Word, what is it? It is "grace

and truth.” May we continually be lending a voice to the great Words of God that have gone before!

And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Ah! Dear friends, although it was a lowly expression that John used, you and I often feel that we want something that goes lower even than that. What are we worthy to do for Christ? Yet there are times when, if there is a shoe-latchet to be unloosed, we are too proud to stoop to do it. When there is something to be done that will bring no honor to us, we are too high and mighty to do it. O child of God, if you have ever been in that condition, be greatly ashamed of yourself! John was first in his day, the morning-star of the Light of the gospel, yet even he felt that he was not worthy to do the least thing for Christ. Where shall you and I put ourselves? Paul said that he was “less than the least of all the saints.” He ran away with a title that might have been very appropriate for us. Well, we must let him have it, I suppose; and we must try to find another like it; or if we cannot find suitable words, God help us to have the humble feeling, which is better still!

29. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John preached a sacrificial Savior, a sin-bearing Savior, a sin-atonement Savior. You and I have nothing else to preach. Let each of us say —

*“Tis all my business here below
To cry, Behold the Lamb!”*

31. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not:

Although John knew the Savior personally, he did not know him officially. He had a token given to him by God, by which he was to know the Messiah; and he did not officially know him till he had that token fulfilled.

But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John would not know of his own judgment. No doubt he was morally certain that Jesus was the Christ. He had been brought up with him; he knew his mother, he had heard of his wondrous birth; John and Jesus must have been often together; but he was not to use his own judgment in this case, but to wait for the sign from heaven; and until he witnessed it, he did not say a word about it. When he saw the Holy Ghost descend upon him, then he knew that it was even he.

And I saw, and bore record that this is the Son of God.

Hear ye, then, the witness of John. The Christ, who came from Nazareth to be baptized of him in Jordan, he on whom the Holy Ghost descended like a dove, “this is the Son of God.” This is the sin-bearing Lamb. Oh, that you and I might fulfill John’s expectation, for he spoke that we might believe. He, being dead, yet speaketh. May we believe his witness, and be assured that “this is the Son of God”!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 249, 549, 728.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

SERMON NO. 2260

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 12TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 9TH, 1890.

*“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.
— Psalm 147:3.*

OFTEN we have read this Psalm, we can never fail to be struck with the connection in which this verse stands, especially its connection with the verse that follows. Read the two together: “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” What condescension and grandeur! What pity and omnipotence! He who leads out yonder ponderous orbs in almost immeasurable orbits, nevertheless, is the Surgeon of men's souls, and stoops over broken hearts, and with his own tender fingers closes up the gaping wound, and binds it with the liniment of love. Think of it; and if I should not speak as well as I could desire upon the wonderful theme of his condescension, yet help me by your own thoughts to do reverence to the Maker of the stars, who is, at the same time, the Physician for broken hearts and wounded spirits.

I am equally interested in the connection of my text with the verse that goes before it: “The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.” The church of God is never so well built up as when it is built up with men of broken hearts. I have prayed to God in secret many a time, of late, that he would be pleased to gather out from among us a people who have a deep experience, who should know the guilt of sin, who should be broken and ground to powder under a sense of their own inability and unworthiness; for I am persuaded that, without a deep experience of sin, there is seldom much belief in the doctrine of grace, and not much enthusiasm in praising the Savior's name. The church needs to

be built up with men who have been pulled down. Unless we know in our hearts our need of a Savior, we shall never be worth much in preaching him. That preacher who has never been converted, what can he say about it? And he who has never been in the dungeon, who has never been in the abyss, who has never felt as if he were cast out from the sight of God, how can he comfort many who are outcasts, and who are bound with the fetters of despair? May the Lord break many hearts, and then bind them up, that with them he may build up the church, and inhabit it!

But now, leaving the connection, I come to the text itself, and I desire to speak of it so that everyone here who is troubled may derive comfort from it, God the Holy Ghost speaking through it. Consider, first, *the patients and their sickness*: “He healed the broken in heart.” Then, consider, *the Physician and his medicine*, and for a while turn your eyes to him who does this healing work. Then, I shall want you to consider, *the testimonial to the great Physician* which we have in this verse: “He healed the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Lastly, and most practically, we will consider, *what we ought to do* towards him who healeth the broken in heart.

First, then, consider THE PATIENTS AND THEIR SICKNESS. They are broken in heart. I have heard of many who have died of a broken heart; but there are some who live with a broken heart, and who live all the better for having had their hearts broken; they live another and higher life than they lived before that blessed stroke broke their hearts in pieces.

There are many sorts of broken hearts, and Christ is good at healing them all. I am not going to lower and narrow the application of my text. The patients of the great Physician are *those whose hearts are broken through sorrow*. Hearts are broken through disappointment. Hearts are broken through bereavement. Hearts are broken in ten thousand ways, for this is a heart-breaking world; and Christ is good at healing all manner of heart-breaks. I would encourage every person here, even though his heart-break may not be of a spiritual kind, to make an application to him who healed the broken in heart. The text does not say, “the spiritually broken in heart”, therefore I will not insert an adverb where there is none in the passage. Come hither, ye that are burdened, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; come hither, all ye that sorrow, be your sorrow what it may; come

hither, all ye whose hearts are broken, be the heart-break what it may, for he healeth the broken in heart.

Still, there is a special brokenness of heart to which Christ gives the very earliest and tenderest attention. He heals *those whose hearts are broken for sin*. Christ heals the heart that is broken because of its sin; so that it grieves, laments, regrets, and bemoans itself, saying, "Woe is me that I have done this exceeding great evil, and brought ruin upon myself! Woe is me that I have dishonored God, that I have cast myself away from his presence, that I have made myself liable to his everlasting wrath, and that even now his wrath abideth upon me!" If there is a man here whose heart is broken about his past life, he is the man to whom my text refers. Are you heart-broken because you have wasted forty, fifty, sixty years? Are you heart-broken at the remembrance that you have cursed the God who has blessed you, that you have denied the existence of him without whom you never would have been in existence yourself, that you have lived to train your family without godliness, without any respect to the Most High God at all? Has the Lord brought this home to you? Has he made you feel what a hideous thing it is to be blind to Christ, to refuse his love, to reject his blood, to live an enemy to your best Friend? Have you felt this? O my friend, I cannot reach across the gallery to give you my hand; but will you think that I am doing it, for I wish to do it? If there is a heart here broken on account of sin, I thank God for it, and praise the Lord that there is such a text as this: "He healeth the broken in heart".

If there is a broken-hearted person anywhere about, many people despise him. "Oh," they say, "he is melancholy, he is mad, he is out of his mind through religion!" Yes, men despise the broken in heart, but such, O God, thou wilt not despise! The Lord looks after such, and heals them.

Those who do not despise them, at any rate avoid them. I know some few friends who have long been of a broken heart; and when I feel rather dull, I must confess that I do not always go their way, for they are apt to make me feel more depressed. Yet would I not get out of their way if I felt that I could help them. Still, it is the nature of men to seek the cheerful and the happy, and to avoid the broken-hearted. God does not do so; he heals the broken in heart. He goes where they are, and he reveals himself to them as the Comforter and the Healer.

In a great many cases people despair of the broken-hearted ones. "It is no use," says one, "I have tried to comfort her, but I cannot do it." "I have wasted a great many words," says another, "on such and such a friend, and I cannot help him. I despair of his ever getting out of the dark." Not so is it with God; he healeth the broken in heart. He despairs of none. He shows the greatness of his power, and the wonders of his wisdom, by fetching men and women out of the lowest dungeon, wherein despair has shut them.

As for the broken-hearted ones themselves, they do not think that they ever can be converted. Some of them are sure that they never can; they wish that they were dead, though I do not see what they would gain by that. Others of them wish that they had never been born, though that is a useless wish now. Some are ready to rush after any new thing to try to find a little comfort; while others, getting worse and worse, are sitting down in sullen despair. I wish that I knew who these were; I should like to come round, and just say to them, "Come, brother; there must be no doubting and no despair to-night, for my text is gloriously complete, and is meant for you. 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.'" Notice that fifth verse, "Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite." Consequently, he can heal the broken in heart. God is glorious at a dead lift. When a soul cannot stir, or help itself, God delights to come in with his omnipotence, and lift the great load, and set the burdened one free.

It takes great wisdom to comfort a broken heart. If any of you have ever tried it, I am sure you have not found it an easy task. I have given much of my life to this work; and I always come away from a desponding one with a consciousness of my own inability to comfort the heart-broken and cast-down. Only God can do it. Blessed be his name that he has arranged that one Person of the Sacred Trinity should undertake this office of Comforter; for no man could ever perform its duties. We might as well hope to be the Savior as to be the Comforter of the heart-broken. Efficiently and completely to save or to comfort must be a work divine. That is why the Holy Divine Spirit, healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds with infinite power and unfailing skill.

Now, secondly, we are going to consider THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS MEDICINE: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Who is this that healeth the broken in heart?

I answer that *Jesus was anointed of God* for this work. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted." Was the Holy Spirit given to Christ in vain? That cannot be. He was given for a purpose which must be answered, and that purpose is the healing of the broken-hearted. By the very anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit, you may be sure that our Physician will heal the broken in heart.

Further, Jesus was *sent of God* on purpose to do his work; "He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted." If Christ does not heal the broken-hearted, he will not fulfill the mission for which he came from heaven. If the broken-hearted are not cheered by his glorious life and the blessings that flow out of his death, then he will have come to earth for nothing. This is the very errand on which the Lord of glory left the bosom of the Father to be veiled in human clay, that he might heal the broken in heart; and he will do it.

Our Lord was also *educated* for this work. He was not only anointed and sent; but he was trained for it. "How?" say you. Why, he had a broken heart himself; and there is no education for the office of comforter like being place where you yourself have need of comfort, so that you may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith you yourself have been comforted of God. Is your heart broken? Christ's heart was broken. He said, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness." He went as low as you have ever been, and deeper than you can ever go. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was his bitter cry. If that be your agonized utterance, he can interpret it by his own suffering. He can measure your grief by his grief. Broken hearts, there is no healing for you except through him who had a broken heart himself. Ye disconsolate, come to him! He can make your heart happy and joyous, by the very fact of his own sorrow, and the brokenness of his own heart. "In all our afflictions he was afflicted." He was tempted in all points like as we are", "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." For a broken heart, there is no physician like him.

Once more, I can strongly recommend my Lord Jesus Christ as the Healer of broken hearts, because he is so *experienced* in the work. Some people are afraid that the doctor will try experiments upon them; but our Physician will only do for us what he has done many times before. It is no matter of experiment with him; it is a matter of experience. If you knock to-night at my great Doctor's door, you will, perhaps say to him, "Here is the strangest patient, my Lord, that ever came to thee." He will smile as he looks at you, and he will think, "I have saved hundreds like you." Here comes one who says, "That first man's case was nothing compared with mine; I am about the worst sinner who ever lived." And the Lord Jesus Christ will say, "Yes, I saved the worst man that ever lived long ago, and I keep on saving such as he. I delight to do it." But here comes one who has a curious odd way of broken-heartedness. He is an out-of-the-way fretter. Yes, but my Lord is able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He can lay hold of this out-of-the-way one; for he has always been saving out-of-the-way sinners. My Lord has been healing broken hearts well nigh nineteen hundred years. Can you find a brass-plate anywhere in London telling of a physician of that age? He has been at the work longer than that; for it is not far off six thousand years since he went into this business, and he has been healing the broken in heart ever since that time.

I will tell you one thing about him that I have on good authority, that is, he never lost a case yet. There never was one who came to him with a broken heart, but he healed him. He never said to one, "You are too bad for me to heal;" but he did say, "Him that cometh to me, I will in now wise cast out." My dear hearer, he will not cast you out. You say, "You do not know me, Mr. Spurgeon." No, I do not; and you have come here to-night, and you hardly know why you are here; only you are very low and very sad. The Lord Jesus Christ loves such as you are, you poor, desponding, doubting, desolate, disconsolate one. Daughters of sorrow, sons of grief, look ye here! Jesus Christ has gone on healing broken hearts for thousands of years, and he is well up in the business. He understands it by experience, as well as by education. He is "mighty to save." Consider him; consider him; and the Lord grant you grace to come and trust him even now!

Thus I have talked to you about the Physician for broken hearts; shall I tell you what his chief medicine is? It is his own flesh and blood. There is no cure like it. When a sinner is bleeding with sin, Jesus pours his own blood into the wound; and when that wound is slow in healing, he binds his own sacrifice about it. Healing for broken hearts comes by the atonement, atonement by substitution, Christ suffering in our stead. He suffered for every one who believeth in him, and he that believeth in him is not condemned, and never can be condemned, for the condemnation due to him was laid upon Christ. He is clear before the bar of justice as well as before the throne of mercy. I remember when the Lord put that precious ointment upon my wounded spirit. Nothing ever healed me until I understood that he died in my place and stead, died that I might not die; and now, to-day, my heart would bleed itself to death were it not that I believe that he "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "With his stripes we are healed," and with no medicine but this atoning sacrifice. A wonderful heal-all is this, when the Holy Ghost applies it with his own divine power, and lets life and love come streaming into the heart that was ready to bleed to death.

My time flies too quickly; so, thirdly, I want you to consider THE TESTIMONIAL TO THE GREAT PHYSICIAN which is emblazoned in my text. It is God the Holy Ghost who, by the mouth of his servant David, bears testimony to this congregation to-night that the Lord Jesus heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. If I said it, you need no more believe it than I need believe it if you said it. One man's word is as good as another's if we be truthful men; but this statement is found in an inspired Psalm. I believe it; I dare not doubt it, for I have proven its truth.

I understand my text to mean this: *he does it effectually*. As I said last Thursday night, if there is a person cast down or desponding within twenty miles, he is pretty sure to find me out. I laugh sometimes, and say, "Birds of a feather flock together;" but they come to talk to me about their despondency, and sometimes they leave me half desponding in the attempt to get them out of their sadness. I have had some very sad cases just lately, and I am afraid that, when they went out of my room, they could not say of me, "He healeth the broken in heart." I am sure that they could say, "He tried his best. He brought out all the choicest arguments he could think of to comfort me." And they have felt very grateful. They

have come back sometimes to thank God that they have been a little bit encouraged; but some of them are frequent visitors; and I have been trying to cheer them up by the month together. But, when my Master undertakes the work, “He healeth the broken in heart,” he not only tries to do it, he does it. He touches the secret sources of the sorrow, and takes the spring of the grief away. We try our bests; but we cannot do it. You know it is very hard to deal with the heart. The human heart needs more than human skill to cure it. When a person dies, and the doctors do not know the complaint of which he died, they say, “It was heart disease.” They did not understand his malady; that is what that means. There is only one Physician who can heal the heart; but, glory be to his blessed name, “He healeth the broken in heart,” he does it effectually.

As I read my text, I understand it to mean, *he does it constantly*. “He healeth the broken in heart.” Not merely, “He did heal them years ago”; but he is doing it now. “He *healeth* the broken in heart, and *bindeth up* their wounds.” What, at this minute? Ten minutes to eight? Yes, he is doing this work now. “He healeth the broken in heart,” and when the service is over, and the congregation is gone, what will Jesus be doing then? Oh, he will still be healing the broken in heart! Suppose this year 1890 should run out, and the Lord does not come to judgment, what will he be doing then? He will still be healing the broken in heart. He has not used up his ointments. He has not exhausted his patience. He has not in the least degree diminished his power. He still healeth. “Oh dear!” said one, “If I had come to Christ a year ago, it would have been well with me.” If you come to Christ to-night, it will be well with you, for “he healeth the broken in heart.” I do not know who was the inventor of that idea of “sinning away the day of grace.” If you are willing to have Christ, you may have him. If you are as old as Methuselah — and I do not suppose that you are older than he was — if you want Christ, you may have him. As long as you are out of hell, Christ is able to save you. He is going on with his old work. Because you are just past fifty, you say the die is cast; because you are past eighty, you say, “I am too old to be saved now.” Nonsense! He *healeth*, he *healeth*, he is still doing it, “he healeth the broken in heart.”

I go further than that, and say that *he does it invariably*. I have shown you that he does it effectually and constantly; but he does it invariably. There

never was a broken heart brought to him that he did not heal. Do not some broken-hearted patients go out at the back door, as my Master's failures? No, not one. There never was one yet that he could not heal. Doctors are obliged, sometimes, in our hospitals to give up some persons, and say that they will never recover. Certain symptoms have proved that they are incurable. But, despairing one, in the divine hospital, of which Christ is the Physician, there never was a patient of his who was turned out as incurable. He is able to save to the uttermost. Do you know how far that is — "to the uttermost"? There is no going beyond "the uttermost", because the uttermost goes beyond everything else, to make it the uttermost. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Where are you, friend "Uttermost"? Are you here to-night? "Ah!" you say, "I wonder that I am not in hell." Well, so do I; but you are not, and you never will be, if you cast yourself on Christ. Rest in the full atonement that he has made; for he healeth always, without any failure, "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

As I read these words, it seems to me that *he glories in doing it*. He said to the Psalmist, by the Holy Spirit, "Write a Psalm in which you shall begin with Hallelujah, and finish with Hallelujah, and set in the middle of the Psalm this as one of the things for which I delight to be praised, that I heal the broken in heart." None of the gods of the heathen were ever praised for this. Did you ever read a song to Jupiter, or to Mercury, or to Venus, or to any of them, in which they were praised for binding up the broken in heart? Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the only God who makes it his boast that he binds up the broken in heart. Come, you big, black sinner; come, you desperado; come, you that have gone beyond all measurement in sin; you can glorify God more than anybody else by believing that he can save even you! He can save you, and put you among the children. He delights to save those that seemed farthest from him.

This is my last point: consider WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO.

If there is such a Physician as this, and we have broken hearts, it goes without saying that, first of all, *we ought to resort to him*. When people are told that they have an incurable disease, a malady that will soon bring them to their grave, they are much distressed; but if, somewhere or other,

they hear that the disease may be cured after all, they say, "Where? Where?" Well, perhaps it is thousands of miles away; but they are willing to go if they can. Or the medicine may be very unpleasant or very expensive; but if they find that they can be cured, they say, "I will have it." If anyone came to their door, and said, "Here it is, it will heal you; and you can have it for nothing, and as much as you ever want of it;" there would be no difficulty in getting rid of any quantity of the medicine, so long as we found people sick. Now, if you have a broken heart to-night, you will be glad to have Christ. I had a broken heart once, and I went to him and he healed it in a moment, and made me sing for joy! Young men and women, I was about fifteen or sixteen when he healed me. I wish that you would go to him now, while you are yet young. The age of his patients does not matter. Are you younger than fifteen? Boys and girls may have broken hearts; and old men and old women may have broken hearts; but they may come to Jesus and be healed. Let them come to him to-night, and seek to be healed.

When you are about to go to Christ, possibly you ask, "How shall I go to him?" Go by prayer. One said to me, the other day, "I wish that you would write me a prayer, sir." I said, "No, I cannot do that, go and tell the Lord what you want." He replied, "Sometimes I feel such a great want that I do not know what it is I do want, and I try to pray, but I cannot. I wish that somebody would tell me what to say." "Why!" I said, "the Lord has told you what to say. This is what he has said: 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.' " Go to Christ in prayer with such words as those, or any others that you can get. If you cannot get any words, tears are just as good, and rather better; and groans and sighs and secret desires will be acceptable with God.

But add faith to them. *Trust the Physician*. You know that no ointment will heal you if you do not put it on the wound. Oftentimes when there is a wound, you want something with which to strap the ointment on. Faith straps on the heavenly heal-all. Go to the Lord with your broken heart, and believe that he can heal you. Believe that he alone can heal you; trust him to do it. Fall at his feet, and say, "If I perish, I will perish here. I believe that the Son of God can save me, and I will be saved by him; but I will never look anywhere else for salvation. 'Lord, I believe; help thou

mine unbelief!" "If you have come as far as that, you are very near the light; the great Physician will heal your broken heart before very long. Trust him to do it now.

When you have trusted in him, and your heart is healed, and you are happy, *tell others about him*. I do not like my Lord to have any tonguetied children. I do not mean that I would want you all to preach. When a whole church takes to preaching, it is as if the whole body were a mouth, and that would be a vacuum. I want you to tell others, in some way or other, what the Lord has done for you; and be earnest in endeavoring to bring others to the great Physician. You all recollect, therefore I need not tell you again, the story that we had about the doctor at one of our hospitals, a year or two ago. He healed a dog's broken leg, and the grateful animal brought other dogs to have their broken legs healed. That was a good dog; some of you are not half as good as that dog. You believe that Christ is blessing you, yet you never try to bring others to him to be saved. That must not be the case any longer. We must excel that dog in our love for our species; and it must be our intense desire that, if Christ has healed us, he should heal our wife, our child, our friend, our neighbor; and we should never rest till others are brought to him.

Then, when others are brought to Christ, or even if they will not be brought to him, be sure to *praise him*. If your broken heart has been healed, and you are saved, and your sins forgiven, praise him. We do not sing half enough. I do not mean in our congregations; but when we are at home. We pray every day. Do we sing every day? I think that we should. Matthew Henry used to say, about family prayer, "They that pray do well; they that read and pray do better; they that read and pray and sing do best of all." I think that Matthew Henry was right. "Well, I have no voice," says one. Have you not? Then you never grumble at your wife; you never find fault with your food; you are not one of those who make the household unhappy by your evil speeches. "Oh, I do not mean that!" No, I thought you did not mean that. Well, praise the Lord with the same voice that you have used for complaining. "But I could not lend a tune," says one. Nobody said you were to do so. You can at least sing as I do. My singing is of a very peculiar character. I find that I cannot confine myself to one tune; in the course of a verse I use half-a-dozen tunes; but the Lord, to whom I sing, never finds any fault with me. He never blames

me, because I do not keep this tune or that. I cannot help it. My voice runs away with me, and my heart too; but I keep on humming something or other by way of praising God's name. I would like you to do the same. I used to know an old Methodist; and the first thing in the morning, when he got up, he began singing a bit of a Methodist hymn; and if I met the old man during the day, he was always singing. I have seen him in his little workshop, with his lapstone on his knee, and he was always singing, and beating with his hammer. When I said to him once, "Why do you always sing, dear brother?" he replied, "Because I always have something to sing about." That is a good reason for singing. If our broken hearts have been healed, we have something to sing about in time and throughout eternity. Let us begin to do so to the praise of the glory of his grace, who "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." God bless all the broken hearts that are in this congregation to-night, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

PSALM 147

This is one of the Hallelujah Psalms; it begins and ends with “Praise ye the LORD.” May our hearts be in tune, that we may praise the Lord while we read these words of praise!

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD:*

It is not enough for the Psalmist to do it himself. He wants help in it, so he says, “Praise ye the LORD.” Wake up, my brethren; bestir yourselves, my sisters; come, all of you, and unite in this holy exercise! “Praise ye the LORD.”

1. *For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*

When a thing is good, pleasant, and comely, you have certainly three excellent reasons for attending to it. It is not everything that is good; but here you have a happy combination of goodness, pleasantness, and comeliness. It will do you good to praise God. God counts it good, and you will find it a pleasant exercise. That which is the occupation of heaven must be happy employment. “It is good to sing praises unto our God,” “it is pleasant,” and certainly nothing is more “comely” and beautiful, and more in accordance with the right order of things, than for creatures to praise their Creator, and the children of God to praise their Father in heaven.

2. *The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:*

Praise his name for that. You love his church; be glad that he builds it up. Praise him who quarries every stone, and puts it upon the one foundation that is laid, even Jesus.

2. *He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*

Praise him for that. If you were once an outcast, and he has gathered you, give him your special personal song of thanksgiving.

3. *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*

Praise him for that, ye who have had broken hearts! If he has healed you, surely you should give him great praise.

4. *He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.*

He who heals broken hearts counts the stars, and calls them by their names, as men call their servants, and send them on their way. Praise his name. Can you look up at the starry sky at night without praising him who made the stars, and leads out their host?

5. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.*

Praise him, then; praise his greatness, his almightiness, his infinite wisdom. Can you do otherwise? Oh, may God reveal himself so much to your heart that you shall be constrained to pay him willing adoration!

6. *The LORD lifteth up the meek:*

What a lifting up it is for them, out of the very dust where they have been trodden down by the proud and the powerful! The Lord lifts them up. Praise him for that.

6. *He casteth the wicked down to the ground.*

Thus he puts an end to their tyranny, and delivers those who were ground beneath their cruel power. Praise ye his name for this also. Excuse me that I continue to say to you, "Praise ye the Lord," for, often as I say it, you will not praise him too much; and we need to have our hearts stirred up to this duty of praising God, which is so much neglected. After all, it is the praise of God that is the ultimatum of our religion. Prayer does but sow; praise is the harvest. Praying is the end of preaching, and praising is the end of praying. May we bring to God much of the very essence of true religion, and that will be the inward praise of the heart!

7. *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:*

“Unto our God.” How that possessive pronoun puts a world of endearment into the majestic word “God”! “This God is our God.” Come, my hearer, can you call God your God? Is he indeed yours? If so, “Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.”

8. *Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*

They did not talk about the “law of nature” in those days. They ascribed everything to God; let us do the same. It is a poor science that pushes God farther away from us, instead of bringing him nearer to us. HE covers the heaven with clouds, HE prepares the rain for earth, HE makes the grass to grow upon the mountains.

9. *He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.*

Our God cares for the birds and the beasts. He is as great in little things as in great things. Praise ye his name. The gods of the heathen could not have these things said of them; but our God takes pleasure in providing for the beasts of field and the birds of the air. The commissariat of the universe is in his hand: “Thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.”

10, 11. *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. —*

Kings of the olden times rejoiced in the thews and sinews of their soldiers and their horses; but God has no delight in mere physical strength. He takes pleasure in spiritual things, even in the weakness which makes us fear him, even that weakness which has not grown into the strength of faith, and yet hopes in his mercy. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”

12. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.*

Let whole cities join together to praise God. Shall we live to see the day when all London shall praise him? Shall we, ever, as we go down these streets, with their multitudes of inhabitants, see the people standing in the doorways, and asking, “What must we do to be saved?” Shall we ever see

every house with anxious enquirers in it, saying, "Tell us, tell us, how can we be reconciled to God?" Pray that it may be so. In Cromwell's day, if you went down Cheapside at a certain hour of the morning, you would find every blind drawn down; for the inmates were all at family prayer. There is no street like that in London now. In those glorious Puritan times, there was domestic worship everywhere, and the people seemed brought to Christ's feet. Alas, it was but an appearance in many cases; and they soon turned back to their own devices! Imitating the Psalmist, let us say, "Praise the Lord, O London; praise thy God, O England!"

13. *For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.*

As a nation, we have been greatly prospered, defended, and supplied; and the church of God has been made to stand fast against her enemies, and her children have been blessed.

14, 15. *He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.*

Oriental monarchs were very earnest to have good post arrangements. They sent their decrees upon swift dromedaries. They can never be compared with the swiftness of the purpose of God's decree. "His word runneth very swiftly." Oh, that the day would come when, over all the earth, God's writ should run, and God's written Word should come to be revered, believed, and obeyed!

16. *He giveth snow like wool:*

Men say, "it" snows; but what "it" is it that snows? The Psalmist rightly says of the Lord, "HE giveth snow." They say that according to the condition of the atmosphere, snow is produced; but the believer says, "He giveth snow like wool." It is not only like wool for whiteness; but it is like it for the warmth which it gives.

16. *He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.*

The simile is not to be easily explained; but it will often have suggested itself to you who, in the early morning, have seen the hoar frost scattered abroad.

17. *He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?*

None can stand before his heat; but when he withdraws the fire, and takes away the heat, the cold is equally destructive. It burns up as fast as fire would. "Who can stand before his cold?" If God be gone, if the Spirit of God be taken away from his church, or from any of you, who can stand before his cold? The deprivation is as terrible as if it were a positive infliction. "Who can stand before his cold?"

18. *He sendeth out his word, and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.*

The frozen waters were hard as iron; the south wind toucheth them, and they flow again. What can God not do? The great God of nature is our God. Let us praise him. Oh, may our hearts be in a right key to-night to make music before him!

19. *He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes unto Israel.*

This is something greater than all his wonders in nature. The God of nature is the God of revelation. He hath not hidden his truth away from men. He hath come out of the eternal secrecies, and he hath showed his word, especially his Incarnate Word, unto his people. Let his name be praised.

20. *He hath not dealt so with any nation:*

Or, with any other nation. He revealed his statutes and his judgments to Israel; and since their day, the spiritual Israel has been privileged in like manner: "He hath not dealt so with any nation."

20. *And as for his judgments, they have not known them.*

Even to-day there are large tracts of country where God is not known. If we know him, let us praise him.

20. *Praise ye the LORD.*

Hallelujah! The Psalm ends upon its key-note: "Praise ye the LORD." So may all our lives end! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 386, 537, 587.

ONE WORKER PREPARING FOR ANOTHER

SERMON NO. 2261

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 19TH, 1892,*

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 14TH, 1890.

*This sermon is intended for reading on *the first anniversary of the beloved preacher's birthday since his death*. While he was with us, he always looked for special contributions for the Stockwell Orphanage at this season. He did not seek birthday presents for himself; but he desired that all friends, who wished to show their love to him, would do so by helping to maintain his fatherless family of 500 children. We trust that no one will allow this useful institution to suffer because *his* voice can no longer plead for it; but that, through this sermon, each reader will hear him saying, "Dear friend, the Orphanage still needs thy loving and generous assistance; thou hast often helped it by thy gifts in the past, *and thou mayest add hereto*; or if thou hast not given to it, others have, *and thou mayest add thereto*."

Contributions will be gratefully received by the Treasurer, Spurgeons' orphan Home, Stockwell Orphanage, Chapman Road, London. Collecting-cards and boxes may be obtained of the Secretary. The *Annual Festival* will be held on *Wednesday afternoon and evening, June 22nd*. All friends are invited to be present.

"Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight: for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto." — *1 Chronicles 22: 14.*

THE building of the temple is an admirable type of the building of the Church of God. I am afraid that there are some present with us at this time

who have never helped to build the spiritual temple for Christ. They are not, themselves, living stones. They are no part of God's spiritual house; and they have never helped to bring their cedar, or iron, or gold to the great Builder of the Church. In fact, there may be some here who have rather helped to pull it down, some who have delighted to throw away the stones, and who have tried to hide from the divine Builder the precious material which he intends to use in the sacred edifice. Judge your own hearts; and if you cannot say that you are a living stone, if you have not helped to build up the Church of Christ, may you repent of your sin, and may the grace of God convert you! But if you are workers for the Lord, if your hearts are right with God, I think that I shall be able to say some things that will encourage you to work on, even if you should not for a time see any immediate results from your work.

There were many who helped to build the temple: David gathering the materials; Solomon, the master mason, by whose name the temple would afterwards be called; the princes helping him in the great work; strangers, foreigners, and aliens, who dwelt throughout Israel and Judah; these all took their share, and even the Tyrians and Zidonians had a part in the work. Now, we have here many ministers of God and students, Davids and Solomons; but I pray that many, who are strangers as yet, may be enlisted in this holy service by our great Lord and King, and that some, who are farthest off from Christ, Tyrians and Zidonians, who have gone far away from God, may be enabled, by divine grace, to contribute their share to this glorious work of building a house for the living God, a house not made of gold, and silver, and stone, and timber, but a spiritual house for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In considering our text, let us notice, first, that **DAVID HAD ZEALOUSLY DONE HIS PART**, although he might not build the temple. There are many servants of God whose names are little known, who, nevertheless, are doing a work that is essential to the building up of the Church of God. I have known many such, who have never lived to realize any great success; their names have never been written upon any great temples that have been built; but, nevertheless, they have worthily done their part, even as David did.

You see, then, first, that *David had gathered the materials*. Many a man collects people together, and yet he has not the fashioning of them. He is the founder of a Christian congregation; but he does not live to see many conversions. He gets together the raw materials upon which another shall work. He ploughs and he sows; but it wants another man to come and water the seed, and perhaps another to gather the harvest. Still, the sower did his work, and deserves to be remembered for what he did. David did his part of the work, in getting together the materials for the temple.

Besides which, *he fashioned some of the materials*. He had the stone cut from the quarry, and many of them shaped to take their places, by-and-by, in silence in the temple, when it should be reared without sound of hammer or axe. So there are teachers and preachers who help to form the characters of their scholars and hearers, by working away upon their minds and hearts. They will never build up a great church; but still they are knocking the rough edges off the stones. They are preparing and fashioning them; and by-and-by the builder will come and make good use of them.

David had prepared the way for Solomon's temple. It was by his fighting that the time of peace came, in which the temple could be erected. Though he is called a man of blood, yet it is needful that the foes of Israel should be overthrown. There could be no peace till her adversaries had been crushed; and David did that. You do not hear much about the men who prepare the way for others, Somebody else comes along, and apparently does all the work; and his name is widely known and honored; but God remembers the heralds, the pioneers, the men who prepare the way, the men who, by casting out devils, routing grievous errors, and working needful reforms, prepare the way for the triumphal progress of the gospel.

Moreover, *David found the site for the temple*. He discovered it; he purchased it; and he handed it over to Solomon. We do not always remember the men who prepare the sites for the Lord's temples. Luther is rightly remembered; but there were reformers before Luther. There were hundreds of men and women who burned for Christ, or who perished in prison, or who were put to cruel deaths for the gospel. Luther comes who the occasion has been made for him, and when a site has been cleared for him upon which to build the temple of God. But God remembers all those

pre-Reformation heroes. It may be your lot, dear friend, to clear a site, and to make the occasion for others; and you may die before you see even a cornerstone of your work laid; for it will be yours when it is finished, and God will remember what you have done.

Further, *it was David who received the plans from God.* The Lord wrote upon his heart what he would have done. He told him, even to the weight of the candlesticks and lamps, everything that was to be arranged. Solomon, wise as he was, did not plan the temple. He had to borrow the designs from his father, who received them direct from God. Many a man is far-seeing; he gets the plan of the gospel into his heart, he sees a way in which great things can be done, and yet he is scarcely permitted to put his own hand to the work. Another will come by-and-by, and will carry out the plan that the first one received; but he must not forget the first man, who went into the secret place of the Most High, and learned in the place of thunder what God would have his people do.

David did one thing more; before he died, *he gave a solemn charge to others*; he charged Solomon, and the princes, and all the people, to carry out the work of building the temple. I revere the man who, in his old age, when there is weight in every syllable that he utters, concludes his life by urging others to carry on the work of Christ. It is something to gather about your last bed young men who have years of usefulness before them, and to lay upon their consciousness and their heart the duty of preaching Christ crucified, and winning the souls of men for the Lord.

So you see that David had done his part toward the building of the temple. I should like to ask every believer here, *Have you done your part?* You are a child of God; God has loved you, and chosen you; you have been redeemed with precious blood. You know better than to think of working in order to save yourself; you are saved; but have you diligently done all that you can for your Lord and Master? It was well said, in the prayer-meeting before this service, that there are several thousand members of this church who could not preach, and there were some who did preach of whom the same thing might be said, for it was poor preaching, after all; and our brother said in prayer, "Lord, help us who cannot preach, to pray for the man who does!" Have you, dear friend, who cannot preach, made a point of praying for the pastor of the church to which you belong? It is a

great sin on the part of church-members if they do not daily sustain their pastor by their prayers.

Then there is much else that you can do for Christ, in your family, in your business, and in the neighborhood where you live. Could you go to bed to-night, and there close your eyes for the last time, feeling, "I have finished the work which God gave me to do. I have done all that I could for the winning of souls"? I am afraid that I address some who have a talent wrapped in a napkin, hidden away in the earth. My dear man, go home, and dig it up, before it gets altogether covered with rust, to bear witness against you. Take it up, and put it out to heavenly interest, that your Lord may have what he is entitled to receive. O Christian men and women, there must be very much unused energy in the Church of God! We have a great dynamo that is never used. Oh, that each one would do his own part, even as David did his!

We shall soon be gone; our day lasts not very long. "The night cometh when no man can work." Shall it be said of you, or of me, that we wasted our daylight; and then, when the evening shadows came, we were uneasy and unhappy, and though saved by divine grace, we died with sad expressions of regret for wasted opportunities? It is not very long that I sat by the bedside of one who was wealthy, I might say very wealthy. I prayed with him. I had hoped to have found him rejoicing in the Lord, for I knew that he was a child of God; but he was a child of God with a little malformation about the fingers. He could never open his hand as he ought to have done. As I sat by his side, he said, "Pray God, with all your might, that I may live three months, that I may have the opportunity of using my wealth in the cause of Christ." He did not live much more than three hours after he said that. Oh, that he had woke up a little sooner to do for the Master's church and cause what he ought to have done! Then he would not have had that regret to trouble him in his last hours. He knew the value of the precious blood, and he was resting in it; and I had great joy in knowing that all his hope and all his trust were in his Lord, and he was saved; but it was with a great deal of regret and trembling. I would spare any of you who have wealth such trouble on your dying bed.

If there is a young man here, who has the ability to preach the gospel, or to be doing something for Christ, and he is doing nothing, I am sure that it

will be a pain to him one of these days. When conscience is thoroughly aroused, and his heart is getting nearer to God than it has been, he will bitterly regret that he did not avail himself of every occasion to talk of Christ, and seek to bring souls to him. I should like these practical thoughts to go round these galleries, and through this area, till some men and women shall say, "We have not done our part, as David did; but by God's grace we will do so, and he shall have all the praise."

That is my first head, then, David had zealously done his part.

But, secondly, there is a remarkable fact in the text, DAVID HAD DONE HIS PART IN TROUBLE. Read it: "Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold;" and so on. In the margin of your Bibles, you will find the words, "in my poverty." It is strange that David should talk about poverty when his gifts amounted to many millions of pounds.

David thought little of what he had prepared. He calls it poverty, I think, because it is the way of the saints to count anything that they do for God to be very little. The most generous men in the world think the least of what they give to God's cause. David, with his millions that he gives, says, "In my poverty I have prepared for the house of the Lord." As he looked at the gold and silver, he said to himself, "What is all this to God?" And the brass and the iron, that could not be reckoned, it was so much and so costly; he thought it was all nothing to Jehovah, who fills heaven and earth, whose grandeur and glory are altogether unspeakable. If you have done the most that you can for God, you will sit down, and weep that you cannot do ten times as much. You that do little for the Lord will be like a hen with one chick; you will think a great deal of it. But if you have a great number of works, and you are doing much for Christ, you will wish that you could do a hundred times as much. Your song will be, —

***"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"***

Oh, to be multiplied a thousand-fold, that we might, anywhere and everywhere, serve Jesus with heart, and mind, and soul, and strength! So, David here considers that what he did was very little.

Yet, *it was proof of his sincerity*, that he should be saving all this wealth, and preparing for the house of his God in the time of trouble, was a proof of great sincerity. Some Christians want to have all sunshiny weather, and the birds must sing all day and all night to please them. If they receive a rebuke or somebody seems a little cold to them, they will do no more. I have seen many, who called themselves Christians, who were like a silly child at play, who says, when something offends him, "I won't play anymore." They run away at the first rough word that they hear. But David, in the day of his trouble, when his heart was ready to break, still went on with his great work of providing for the house of God. Some who have attended this house of prayer have been absent, and when we have enquired the reason, they have said that they had become so poor that they did not like to come. Oh, dear friends, we would like to see you, however poor you are! Why, if you are in trouble, you should come all the more; for where could you go to find comfort better than to the house of God? Never, I pray you, stay away on account of poverty. David said that he had prepared for the house of his God in the time of his trouble; and that proved his sincerity. One said to me, "Ever since I have been a Christian, everything has seemed to go wrong with me." Suppose that everything should be taken away from you, should you not be grateful that you have an eternal treasure in heaven, and that these losses, which might have broken your heart if you have not known the Savior, are now sent in heavenly discipline to you, and are working for your good? It shows that a man is right with God when he can walk with Christ in the mire and in the slough. God does not want you to wear silver slippers, and to walk on a well-mown, well-rolled grassy lawn, all the way to heaven.

David prepared for the house of the Lord in his trouble; and I have no doubt that *it was a salve to his sorrow*. To have something to do for Jesus, and to go right on with it, is one of the best ways to get over a bereavement, or any other mental depression. If you can pursue some great object, you will not feel that you are living for nothing. You will not sit down in despair; for, whatever your trouble may be, you will still have this to live for, "I want to help in building the Church of God, and I will do my part in it whatever happens to me. Come poverty or wealth, come sickness or health, come life or death, as long as there is breath in my body, I will go on with the work that God has given me to do." Do I speak

to any who are in great trouble? If you are a Christian, the best advice that I can give you is this, get to work for Christ, and you will forget your trouble. If you are not a Christian, I advise you to trust the Savior at once, for he is the only solace of spiritual sorrow.

Again, *it was an incentive to service* when David, in his trouble, prepared for the house of the Lord. There were many things in trouble that would tend to damp his ardor, and make him feel as if he could not hold on any longer; but he said to himself, "I must go on with this work for God. His temple must be 'exceeding magnificent', and my son Solomon must build it, so I must go on gathering the materials." So he just roused himself afresh, and went on with his work with new earnestness, whenever his trouble would otherwise have depressed him.

It must also have given an elevation to David's whole life. To have a noble purpose, and to pursue that purpose with all your might, prevents your being like "dumb driven cattle", and lifts you out of the mist and fog of the valley, and sets your feet upon the hill-top, where you can commune with God. I would suggest to your younger friends that they should begin their Christian life with a high purpose, and that they should never forget that purpose; and if trouble should come, they should say, "Let it come; my face is set, like a flint, to do this work to which my Lord has called me, and I will pursue it with all my might." It may seem as if there were no spiritual help in such advice as this; but, believe me, there is. If God shall give you grace to go on with your life-work, he will thereby give you grace to overcome your life-trouble.

Ye would be like your Master, ask not to have a smooth path, and great success. Remember what a life of sorrow he lived. He was grief's close acquaintance. Yet although he saw but a small Church rising before his bodily eye, he knew that he was doing the work that God had given him to do, and he went on with it through agony and bloody sweat, through shame and spitting. He was not more in earnest when he rode in state through the streets of Jerusalem than he was when he hung on the cross of Calvary. He was resolved to do his work; and in trouble he did it, and he amassed treasure beyond all conception for the building of his Church. Riches of grace and wonders of glory he gathered together by his suffering and his death. If you would be like your Lord, you must be able to say

with David, “Behold, in my trouble, I have prepared for the house of the Lord.” God give his troubled ones to enter into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in this respect!

I am glad that I have come to my third point, for my strength well-nigh fails me. What I have to say here is this: DAVID’S WORK FITS ON TO THE WORK OF ANOTHER. That should be a great joy to some of you who do not see much coming of what you are doing. Your work is going to fit on to somebody else’s work.

This is *the order of God’s providence* for his Church. It does not happen that he gives a whole piece of work to one man; but he seems to say to him, “You go and do so much; then I will send somebody else to do the rest.” How this ought to cheer some of you up, the thought that your work may be no failure, though in itself it may seem to be so, because it fits on to the work of somebody else who is coming after you, and so it will be very far from a failure! You have sometimes seen a man take a contract to put in the foundations of a house, and to carry it up to a certain height. He has done that; he will not be the builder of that house; that will be the work of the next contractor, who carries up the walls, and puts on the roof, and so forth. Yes, but he who did the foundation-work did a great deal, and he is as much the builder of the house as the man who carries up the walls. So, if you go to a country town or village, and you preach the gospel to a few poor folk, you may never have seemed very successful; but you have been preparing the way for somebody else who is coming after you.

I am told that my venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, used often, in his pulpit, to pray for somebody, of whom he knew nothing, who would follow him in the ministry of the church, and greatly increase it. He seemed to have in his mind’s eye some young man, who, in after years, would greatly enlarge the number of the flock, and he often prayed for him. He died, and passed away to heaven, about the time that I was born. Older members of the church have told me that they have read to answer to Dr. Rippon’s prayers in the blessing that has been given to us these many years. If you keep your eyes open, you will see the same thing happen again. You will notice how one shall do his work, which shall be necessary to some larger work that somebody else will do after him. This

is God's way, so that the second man, the Solomon coming after David, may do his work all the better because of what his father has done before him. Solomon had not to spend years in collecting the materials for the temple; he might not have got through the building if he had that task. His good old father had done all that for him; and all that he had to do was to spend the money that David had gathered, work up the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, bring in the big stones, and put them in their places, and build the house for God. I daresay that Solomon often thought gratefully of his father David, and what he had done; and you and I, if God blesses us, ought always to think with thanksgiving of the Davids who went before us. If you have success in your class, my sisters, remember that there was an excellent Christian woman who had the class before you. You come, young man, into the Sunday-school, and you think that you must be somebody very great because you have had several conversions in your class. How about the brother who had given up the class through ill-health? You took his place: who knows which of you will have the honor at the last great day? I was about to say, Who cares? For we do not live for honor, we live to serve God; and if I can serve God best by digging out the cellar, and you can serve God best by throwing out that ornamental bay window, my brother, you go on with your bay window, and I will go on with my cellar, for what matters it what we do so long as the house is built, and God is glorified thereby? It is the way of God in providence to set one man to do part of a work which pieces on to that of another man.

But *this is a terrible blow at self*. Self says, "I like to begin something of my own, and I like to carry it out; I do not want any interference from other people." A friend proposed, the other day, to give you a little help in your service. You looked at him as if he had been a thief. You do not want any help; you are quite up to the mark; you are like a wagon and four horses, and a dog under the wagon as well! there is everything about you that is wanted; you need no help from anybody; you can do all things almost without the help of God! I am very sorry for you if that is your opinion. If you never get into God's service, he may say to you, "You shall never begin anything; but shall always come in as the second man;" or, "You shall never finish anything; you shall always be getting ready for somebody else." It is well to have an ambition not to build upon another man's foundation; but do not carry that idea too far. If there is a good

foundation laid by another man, and you can finish the structure, be thankful that he has done his part, and rejoice that you are permitted to carry on his work. It is God's way of striking a blow at your personal pride by allowing one man's work to fit on to another's.

I believe that *it is good for the work to have a change of workers*. I am glad that David did not live any longer; for he could not have built the temple. David must die. He has had a good time of service. He has gathered all the materials for the temple. Solomon comes, with young blood and youthful vigor, and carries on the work. Sometimes, the best thing that some of us old folk can do is to go home, and go to heaven, and let some younger man come, and do our work. I know that there are a great many lamentations about the death of Dr. So-and-So, and Mr. So-and-So; but why? Do you not think that, after all, God can find as good men as those that he has found already? He made those good men, and he is not short of power; he can make others just as good as they have been. I was present at a funeral, where I heard a prayer that rather shocked me. Some brother had said that God could raise up another minister equal to the one that was in the coffin; but prayer was offered by another man, who said that this preacher had been eyes to his blindness, feet to his lameness, and I do not know what beside; and then he said, "Thy poor unworthy dust does not think that thou ever canst or wilt raise up another man like him." So he had not an omnipotent God; but you and I have, and with an omnipotent God it is for the good of the work that David should go to his rest, and that Solomon should come in, and carry on the work.

Certainly, *this creates unity in the Church of God*. If we all had a work of our own, and were shut up to do it, we should not know one another; but now I cannot do my work without your help, my dear friends, and, in some respects, you cannot do your work without my help. We are members one of another, and one helps the other. I hope that I shall never have to do without you. God bless you for all your efficient help! In many Christian works you will have to do without me, one of these days; but that will not matter. There will be somebody who will carry on the work of the Lord; and so long as the work goes on, what matter who does it? God buries the workman, but the devil himself cannot bury the work. The work is everlasting, though the workmen die. We pass away, as star by star grows dim; but the eternal light is never-fading. God shall have the

victory. His Son shall come in his glory. His Spirit shall be poured out among the people; and though it be neither this man, nor that, nor the other, God will find the man to the world's end who will carry on his cause, and give him the glory.

This leaves a place for those who come after. On thing David said to Solomon I like very much, "Thou mayest add thereto." I have quoted that sometimes when the collection has been rather small. I have said to each of our friends who were counting the money, "Thou mayest add thereto." It is not all a bad text for a collection-sermon; but it may also be used in many other ways.

Here are certain preachers of the gospel. Cannot I put my hand on some young man's shoulder, and say to him, "Thou mayest add thereto; thou hast a good voice; thou hast an active brain; begin to speak for God; there are numbers of godly men in the gospel ministry; if thou art called of God, thou mayest add thereto"? We have a good Sunday-school, though some of you have never seen it. We have a number of loving and earnest teachers; "thou mayest add thereto." Go thou, and teach likewise; or engage in some other work for which the Lord has qualified you.

I wonder whether there is an unconverted man here this evening, or unconverted woman, whom God has ordained to bless, and to whom he will speak to-night, some stranger whom he will bring in by his almighty grace, some servant of the devil who shall to-night be made a servant of Christ. My Master has a large number of servants; "thou mayest add thereto." If thou wilt yield thyself to Christ, thou mayest come, and help God's people. We want recruits; we are always wanting them. May God lead some, who have been on the side of sin and self, to come out, and say, "Set my name down amongst God's people. By the grace of God, I am going to be on Christ's side, and help to build his temple." Come along, my brother; come along, my sister; we are glad of your help. The work is not all done yet; you are not too late to fight the Lord's battles, nor to win the crown of the victors. The Lord has a large army of the soldiers of the cross; and "thou mayest add thereto." God save thee! Christ bless thee! The Spirit inspire thee! May it be so with very many, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2261A

1 CHRONICLES 21:25-30; 22.

David was commanded to go to Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite, to rear an altar unto the Lord in his threshingfloor. There had been a terrible plague in Jerusalem, in consequence of David's great sin in numbering the people; and they were falling in thousands by the sword of the angel of vengeance. David went up to the threshingfloor or Ornan on Mount Moriah. Ornan was willing to give it to him, but he determined to buy it. We read in the twenty-fifth verse; —

Verses 25-28. *So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. At that time when David saw that the LORD has answered him in the threshingfloor or Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.*

There was the place for the temple, where the angel sheathed his sword. Christ Jesus, in his great atonement, is the corner-stone of the temple where divine justice sheathes its sword. There let the house of God be built. Every true Church of God is founded on the glorious doctrine of the atoning sacrifice. It was a threshingfloor, too; and God has built his Church on a threshingfloor. Depend upon it, the flail will always be going in every true Church, to fetch out the wheat from the chaff. We must have tribulation if we are in the Church of God. The threshingfloor will always be needed until we are taken up to the heavenly garner above.

21:30-22:1. *For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at the season in the high places of Gibeon. But David could not go before it to enquire of God;*

for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.

Now he knew where the temple was to be built; and of a certainty he had discovered that long-predestined site of which God said, "Here will I dwell." This was the very hill whereon Abraham offered up his son Isaac; a hill, therefore, most sacred by covenant to the living God. He delighted to remember the believing obedience of his servant Abraham, and there he would have his temple built.

And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.

Observe here a very gracious eye to us who are Gentiles. The temple was built on the threshingfloor of a Jebusite; Ornan was not of the seed of Israel, but one of the accursed Jebusites. It was his land that must be bought for the temple; and now David would employ the strangers who lived in the midst of Israel, but were not of the chosen race, to quarry the stones for the house of God. There was a place for Gentiles in the heart of God, and they had a share in the building of his temple.

4. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.

Here are the Gentiles again, the Zidonians and the men of Tyre; those that went down to the sea in ships, that had no part nor lot with Israel. There were to bring the cedar wood to David. What an opening of doors of hope there was for poor castaway Gentiles in that fact!

And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it.

This was beautiful and thoughtful on David's part. It might be too great a strain upon the young man to collect the materials for the temple as well

as to build it; therefore David will take his part, and prepare the materials for the house of the Lord. If we cannot do one thing, let us do another; but, somehow, let us help in the building of the Church of God. The Church today seems but a poor thing; but it is to be “exceeding magnificent.” The glory of the world is to be the Church of God; and the glory of the Church of God is the Christ of God. Let us do as much as we can to build a spiritual house for our Lord’s indwelling.

So David prepared abundantly before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God:

And it was well that it was in his mind. God often takes the will for the deed. If you have a large-hearted purpose in your mind, cherish it, and do your best to carry it out: but if for some reason you should never be permitted to carry out your own ideal, it shall be equally acceptable to God, for it was in your heart.

But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.

In very much of that fighting David had been faultless; for he fought the battles of the people of God. Still, there are some things that men are called to do, for which they are not to be condemned; but they disqualify them for higher work. It was so in David’s case; he had been a soldier, and he might help to build the temple by collecting the materials for it, but he must not build it.

Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest;

God’s Church is to be a place of rest. God’s temple was built by “a man of rest.”

And I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

Then the house of the Lord would be built; no stain of blood would be upon it. The only blood therein should be that of holy sacrifices, symbolical of the great Sacrifice of Christ.

11. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee.

May such a blessing come upon every young man here! May the Lord be with thee, my son! May the Lord prosper thee, and may he make thee a builder of his house in years to come!

Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.

How much wisdom will be wanted by the young brethren present who hope to be builders of the house of God! When the Lord says to you, "Ask what I shall give you," ask for divine wisdom, ask to be taught of him, and ask that you may have grace to do his will in all things.

Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfill the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses and concerning Israel: be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

It is a great thing for a Christian to keep his courage up; and especially for a builder of the Church of God to be always brave, and with a stout heart to do God's will, come what may.

Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of Gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.

We are unable to tell exactly the amount of precious metal prepared by David; we have to take into account the value of gold and silver in his day; it was probably not so great as it is now. We know this much; it was an enormous sum which David had gathered for the building of the house of God.

Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance.

We must have the workmen; they are more precious than the gold. They cannot be put down at any sum of silver: “there are workmen with thee in abundance.”

Hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.

God will find for his Church enough men, and the right sort of men, as long as he has a Church to be built; but he would have us pray him to send forth laborers. We forget that prayer, and hence we have to lament that there are so few faithful servants of God. Cry to the Lord about the lack of laborers; he can soon supply as many as are needed.

Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.

A very nice text for stirring up idle church-members, who are well content with being spiritually fed, but who are doing nothing for the Lord: “Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee!”

18. *David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you?*

What a good reason for working! What an admirable reason for giving! What an excellent reason for helping with the work! “Is not the LORD your God with you?”

And hath he not given you rest on every side?

If he gives you rest, you are to take no rest, but to get to his work. He is the best workman for God who enjoys perfect rest. It is always a pity to go out to preach or teach unless you have perfect rest towards God. When your own heart is quiet, and your spirit is still, then you can work for God with good hope of success.

For he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.

The fighting is over; now go ahead with your building.

Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God;

Do not go to build a house for God, and think that is all that is required. You want spiritual communion with God; and you will not do even the common work of sawing and planing and building aright unless you seek God, and are in fellowship with him.

Arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.

May God teach us some lessons by this reading! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 423, 681, 695

CHRIST'S CURATE IN DECAPOLIS

SERMON NO. 2262

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 27TH, 1890.

“And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, God home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” — Mark 5:17-19.

THAT is a striking name for a man, “he that had been possessed with the devil.” It would stick to him as long as he lived, and it would be a standing sermon wherever he went. He would be asked to tell the story of what he used to be, and how the change came about. What a story for any man to tell! It would not be possible for us to describe his life while he was a demoniac — the midnight scenes among the tombs, the cutting himself with stones, the howling, the frightening away of all the travelers that went near him, the binding with chains, the snapping of the manacles, the breaking of the fetters, and a great many details that he alone could enter into when he told the story among his own familiar friends. With what pathos would he tell how Jesus came that way, and how the evil spirit forced him to confront him! He would say, “That was the best thing that could have happened to me, to be brought to the Master of that desperate legion of demons, which had encamped within my nature, and made my soul to be its barracks.” He would tell how, in a moment, out went the whole legion at the word of Christ.

There are some people who could tell a story very like this man's, a story of slavery to Satan, and deliverance by the power of Christ. If you can tell such a story, do not keep it to yourself. If Jesus has done great things for

thee, be ever ready to speak of it, till all men shall know what Christ can do. I think that great sinners who have been saved are specially called upon to publish the good news, the gospel of the grace of God. If you have been valiant against the truth, be valiant for the truth. If you were not lukewarm when you served Satan, be not lukewarm now that you have come to serve Christ. There are some of us here who might bear the name of “the man who was born blind”, or “the leper that was healed”, or “the woman that was a sinner”; and I hope that we shall all be willing to take any name or any title that will glorify Christ. I do not find that this man ever persecuted Mark for libel because he wrote of him as “he that had been possessed with the devil.” Oh, no! He owned that he was possessed with the devil once; and he glorified God that he had been delivered by the Lord Jesus.

I am going to make a few observations upon the passage I have chosen for a text; and the first observation is this, SEE HOW MEN’S DESIRES DIFFERED. We find in the seventeenth verse that, “they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” In the eighteenth verse, “he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.” The people wanted Christ to go away from them; the man whom he had cured wanted to go wherever he might go. To which class do you belong, my dear friend?

I hope you do not belong to the first class, the class of *the many who pray Jesus to depart from them*. Why did they want him to go?

I think it was, first, because they loved to be quiet, and to dwell at ease. It was a great calamity that had happened; the swine had run into the sea. They did not want any more such calamities, and evidently the Person who had come among them possessed extraordinary power. Had he not healed the demoniac? Well, they did not want him; they did not want anything extraordinary. They were easy-going men, who would like to go on the even tenor of their way, so they asked him to be good enough to go away. There are some people of that kind still living. They say, “We do not want a revival here; we are too respectable. We do not want any stirring preaching here; we are very comfortable. Do not break up our peace.” Such men, when they think that God is at work in any place, are half inclined to go elsewhere. They want to be quiet; their motto is,

“Anything for a quiet life.” “Leave us alone, let us go on our old way,” is the cry of these foolish people, as it was the cry of the Israelites, when they said to Moses, “Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.”

Possibly these people wanted the Savior gone because they had an eye to business. That keeping of the swine was a bad business. As Jews, they had no business with it. They may have said they did not eat them themselves, they only kept them for other people to eat; and now they had lost the whole herd. I wonder what all those swine would have brought to their owners. As they began calculating how much they had lost, they resolved that the Savior must go out of their coasts before they lost anything more. I do not wonder that, when men sell intoxicating liquors, for instance, or when they follow any trade in which they cannot make money except by injuring their fellow-men, they do not want Christ to come that way. Perhaps some of you would not like him to see you pay those poor women for making shirts. I am afraid, if Jesus Christ were to come around, and go into some people’s business houses, the husband would say to his wife, “Fetch down that book where I enter the wages, and hide it away; I should not like him to see that.”

Oh, dear friend, if there be any such reason why you do not Christ to come your way, I pray that the Holy Spirit may convince you that you do need him to come your way. He who has the most objection to Christ is the man who most wants Christ. Be you sure of this, if you do not desire to be converted, if you do not wish to be born again, you are the person above all others needing to be converted, and to be born again. Is it not a most unwise decision when, for the sake of swine, we are willing to part with Christ? “For what shalt it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” He will get a corner in the newspaper, saying that he died worth so many thousands of pounds; and that will not be true, for he was never worth a penny himself. Who would give a penny for him now he is dead? He will cost money to get rid of him, but he cannot not take it with him. He was not worth anything; he used his money for selfish purposes; and never used it for the glory of God. Oh, the poverty of an ungodly rich man!

I do not wonder that these people, taken up with themselves, and with the world, prayed Christ “to depart out of their coasts.” May he not, even

though you may not care to hear him, stop somewhere on the shore? No; when men get excited against religion, they go to great lengths in trying to drive it away from their midst. Many a poor man has lost his cottage, where he had a few prayer-meetings, because the landlord not only did not want Christ himself, but, like the dog in the manger, would not let others have him who did not want him. Are any of you in that condition?

I hope that I have some here who are of another kind, like *this poor man, who prayed him that he might be with him*. Why did he want to be with Jesus? I think he wanted to be his attendant to show his gratitude. If he might but wait on Christ, loose the latchets of his shoes, and wash his feet, or prepare his meals, he would feel himself the happiest man on earth. He would love to be doing something for the One who had cast a legion of devils out of him.

Next, he wished not only to be an attendant to show his gratitude, but a disciple that he might learn more of him. What he did know of Christ was so precious, he had personally had such an experience of his gracious power, that he wanted to be always learning something from every word of those dear lips, and every action of those blessed hands. He prayed him that he might be with him as a disciple who wished to be taught by him.

He wanted also to be with him as a comrade, for not that Christ must go, exiled from Decapolis, he seemed to feel that there was no reason why he should remain there himself. "Lord, if thou must leave there Gadarenes, let me leave the Gadarenes, too! Dost thou go, O Shepherd? Then let me go with thee. Must thou cross the sea, and get thee gone, I know not where? I will go with thee to prison and to death." He felt so linked with Christ that he prayed him that he might be with him.

I think that there was this reason, also, one of fear, at the back of his prayer. Perhaps one of that legion of devils might come back again, and if he could keep with Christ, then Christ would turn the devil out again. I should not wonder but he felt a trembling about him, as if he could not bear to be out of the sight of the great Physician, who had healed him of so grievous an ill. I would say to all here, that we are never safe except we are with Christ. If you are tempted to go where you could not have Christ with you, do not go. Did you ever hear the story of the devil running away with a young man who was at the theater? It is said that John Newton

sent after Satan, and said, "That young man is a member of my church." "Well," replied the devil, "I do not care where he is a member; I found him on my premises, and I have a right to him;" and the preacher could not give any answer to that. If you go on the devil's premises, and he takes you off, I cannot say anything against it. Go nowhere where you cannot take Christ with you. Be like this man, who longs to go wherever Christ goes.

Now, secondly, SEE HOW CHRIST'S DEALINGS DIFFER, and how extraordinary they are. Here is an evil prayer: "Depart out of our coasts." He grants it. Here is a pious prayer: "Lord, let me be with thee." "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not." Is that his way, to grant the prayer of his enemies, and refuse the petition of his friends? Yes, it is sometimes.

In the first case, *when they prayed him to depart, he went*. Oh, dear friends, if Christ ever comes near you, and you get a little touched in your conscience, and feel a throb of something like spiritual life, do not pray him to go away; for if he does go, if he should leave you to yourself, and never come again, your doom is sealed! Your only hope lies in his presence; and if you pray against your one hope, you are a suicide, you are guilty of murdering your own soul.

Jesus went away from these people because it was useless to stop. If they wanted him to go, what good could he do to them? If he spoke, they would not listen. If they heard his message, they would not heed it. When men's minds are set against Christ, what else is to be done but to leave them?

He could spend his time better somewhere else. If you will not have my Lord, somebody else will. If you sit there in your pride, and say, "I want not the Savior," there is a poor soul in the gallery longing for him, and crying, "Oh, that I might find him to be my Savior!" Christ knew that, if the Gaderenes refused him, the people on the other side of the lake would welcome him on his return.

By going away, he even saved them from yet greater sin. If he had not gone, they might have tried to plunge him into the lake. When men begin to pray Christ to depart out of their coasts, they are bad enough for anything. There might have followed violence to his blessed person, so he took himself away from them. Is it not an awful thing that, if the gospel

ministry does not save you, it is helping to damn you? We are a savor to God, always sweet; but in some men, we are a savor of death unto death, while in others we are a savor unto life. O my hearers, if you will not come to Christ, the seat you occupy is misappropriated! There might be another person sitting here, to whom the gospel might be very precious; and our opportunities of preaching it are none too many. We do not like to waste our strength on stony ground, on hard bits of rock that repel the seed. Rock, rock, rock, wilt thou never break; must we continue to sow thee, though no harvest comes from thee? God changes thee, rock; and make thee good soil, that yet the truth may grow upon thee! The evil prayer, then, was answered.

The good prayer was not answered. Why was that? The chief reason was, because the man could be useful at home. He could glorify God better by going among the Gaderenes, and among his own family, and telling what God had done for him, than he could be any attention he could pay to Christ. It is remarkable that Christ took nobody to be his body-servant, or personal attendant during his earthly ministry. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He did not desire this man to be with him to make him comfortable; he bade him go back to his family, and make known the power of Jesus Christ, and seek to win them for God.

Perhaps, too, his prayer was not answered, lest his fear should have been thereby sanctioned. If he did fear, and I feel morally certain that he did, that the devils would return, then, of course, he longed to be with Christ. But Christ take that fear from him, and as good as says to him, "You do not need to be near me; I have so healed that you will never be sick again." A patient might say to his doctor, "I have been so very ill, and through your skill have been restored to health, I should like to be near you, so that, if there should be any recurrence of my malady, I might come to you at once." If the doctor should reply, "You may go to Switzerland, or to Australia, if you like;" it would be the best evidence that the doctor had not fears about him, and it ought to put a quietus to his doubts.

You see, then, how Christ's dealings differ with different men. Have I not known some continue in sin, and yet prosper in business, heaping up wealth, and having all that heart could wish? Have I not known others repent, and turn to God, and from that very day they have had more

trouble than they ever had before, and their way has been strangely rough? Yes, I have seen them, too; and I have not envied the easy ways of the wicked, neither have I felt that there was anything very wonderful about the rough ways of the righteous; for, after all, it is not the way that is the all-important matter, it is the end of the way; and if I could travel smoothly to perdition, I would not choose to do so; and if the way to eternal life is rough, I take it with all its roughness. At the foot of the Hill Difficulty, Bunyan makes his pilgrim sing —

*“The hill, though high, I covet to ascend,
the difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way of life lies here.”*

My third point is this: SEE HOW GOOD A THING IT IS TO BE WITH JESUS. This man entreated of the Lord that he might be with him.

If you have been saved recently, I expect you have a longing in your heart to be with Christ always. I will tell you what shape that longing is likely to take. You were so happy, so joyful, and it was such a blessed meeting, that you said to yourself, “I am sorry it is over; I should like this meeting to have been kept on all night, and the next day, and never to end.” Yes, you were of the mind of Peter, when he wanted to build the three tabernacles on the holy mount, and to stop there the rest of his days; but you cannot do it; it is no use wishing for it. You must go home to that drinking husband or that scolding wife, to that ungodly father or that unkind mother. You cannot stop in that meeting always.

Perhaps you have another idea of what it is to be with Christ. You are so happy when you can get alone, and read your Bible, and meditate, and pray, and you say, “Lord, I wish I could always be this; I should like to be always upstairs in this room, searching the Scriptures, and having communion with God.” Yes, yes, yes; but you cannot do it. There are the children’s socks to be mended, there are buttons to be put on the husband’s shirts, and there are all sorts of odds and ends to be done, and you must not neglect any one of them. Whatever household duties come upon you, attend to them. You wish that you had not to go to the city to-morrow. Would it not be sweet to have an all-night prayer-meeting, and then to have an all-day searching the Scriptures? No doubt it would; but the Lord has not so arranged it. You have to go to business, so just put on

your week-day clothes, and think yourself none the less happy because you have to show your religion in your daily life.

“Ah, well!” says one, and this I very often hear, “I think that I should always be with Christ if I could not get right out of business, and give myself up to the service of the Lord.” Especially do you think that it would be so if you were a minister. Well, I have nothing to say against the ministry of the gospel. If the Lord calls you to do it, obey the call, and be thankful that he has counted you faithful, putting you into the ministry; but if you suppose that you will be nearer to Christ simply by entering the ministry, you are very much mistaken. I daresay that I had about as many of the other people’s troubles brought to me this morning, after I had done the preaching, as would last most men a month. We have to bear with everybody’s trouble, and everybody’s doubt, and everybody’s need of comfort and counsel. You will find yourself cumbered with much serving, even in the service of the Lord; and it is very easy to lose the Master in the Master’s work. We want much grace lest this insidious temptation should overcome us even in our ministry. You can walk with Christ, and sell groceries. You can walk with Christ, and be a chimney-sweep. I do not hesitate to say that, by the grace of God, you can walk with Christ as well in one occupation as another, if it is a rightful one. It might be quite a mistake if you were to give up your business, under the notion that you would be more with Christ if you became a city missionary, or a Bible-woman, or a coleporteur, or a captain in the Salvation Army, or whatever other form of holy service you might desire. Keep on with your business. If you can black shoes well, do that. If you can preach sermons badly, do not do that.

“Ah!” says one, “I know how I would like to be with Christ.” Yes, yes, I know; you would like to be in heaven. Oh, yes; and it is a laudable desire, to wish to be with Christ, for it is far better than being here! But, mind you, it may be a selfish desire, and it may be a sinful desire, if it be pushed too far. A holy man of God was once asked by a fellow-servant of Christ. “Brother So-and-so, do you not want to go home?” He said, “I will answer you by another question. If you had a man working for you, and on Wednesday he said, ‘I wish it was Saturday,’ would you keep him on?” The other thought that he would need a large stock of patience to do so. Why, do you not? You will be glad to see the back of him before Saturday

comes, for he will be no good for work. Have I a right to be wanting to go to heaven if I can do any good to you here? Is it not more of a heaven to be outside of heaven than inside, if you can be doing more for God outside than in? Long to go when the Lord wills; but if not to remain in the flesh be more for the good of the church and the world, and more for the glory of God, waive your desire, and be not vexed with your Master when, after having prayed that you may be with him; it has to be written of you as it was of this man, "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not."

Still, it is a very delightful thing to be with Jesus.

But now, in the fourth place, SEE THAT THERE MAY BE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER THAN THIS. In the sense which I have mentioned, there is something better even than being with Christ.

What is better than being with Christ? Why, to be working for Christ! Jesus said to this man, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

This is *more honorable*. It is very delightful to sit at Jesus' feet; but if the most honorable post on the field of battle is the place of danger; if the most honorable thing in the State is to have royal service allotted to you; then the most honorable thing for a Christian is not to sit down, and sing, and enjoy himself, but to get up, and risk reputation, life, and everything for Jesus Christ's sake. Dear friend, aspire to serve our Lord; it is a more honorable thing even than being with him.

It is also *better for the people*. Christ is going away from the Gaderenes; they have asked him to go, and he is going; but he seems to say to this man, "I am going because they have asked me to go. My leaving them looks like a judgment upon them for their rejection of me; but yet I am not going away altogether. I am going to stop with you; I will put my Spirit upon you, and so will continue with you. They will hear you though they will not hear me." Christ, as it were, resigns the pastorate of that district; but he puts another in his place, not so good as himself, but one whom they will like better; not so powerful and useful as himself, but one better adapted to them. When Christ was gone, this man would be there, and the people would come to him to hear about those swine, and how they ran down into the sea; and if they did not come to him, he would go and tell

them all about it; and so there would be a permanent curate left there to discharge the sacred ministry, now that the great Bishop had gone. I like that thought. Christ had gone to heaven, for he is wanted there, and so he has left you here, dear brother, to carry on his work.. You are not equal to him in any respect; but yet remember what he said to his disciples, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” That is why Christ does not suffer you to be with him at present. You must stop for the sake of the people among whom you live, as “he that had been possessed with the devil” had to remain for the sake of the Gaderenes, to whom he might testify concerning Christ.

His remaining, also, was *better for his family*; and do you not think that, oftentimes, a man of God is kept out of heaven for the sake of his family? You must not go yet, father; those boys still need your example and your influence. Christian mother, you must not go yet; I know that your children are grown up, and they are grieving you very much; but still, if there is any check upon them, it is their poor old mother, and you must stop till you have prayed them to God; and you will do so yet. Be of good courage/ I believe that there are many here who might be in heaven, but that God has some who he intends to bring in by them, so they must stay here a little longer. Though infirm in body, shattered in nerve, and often racked with acute pain, perhaps with deadly disease upon you, and wishing to be gone, you must not go till your work is done.

“Howbeit Jesus suffered him not.” This demoniac must go home, and tell his wife and his children what great things the Lord had done for him. Many eminent preachers have pictured the scene of his going home, so I will try to do it. You may only fancy what it would be if it were your case; and you had been shut up in an asylum, or had been almost too bad even for that. How glad your friends were to have you taken away, and then how much more glad to find you come back perfectly well! I can imagine how the man’s wife would look through the window when she heard his voice. Has he come back in a mad fit? How the children will be filled with terror at the sound of their father’s voice until they were assured that there was indeed a change in him! Ah, poor sinner, you have come here to-night! Perhaps you forget that your children often have to hide away under the bed when father comes home. I know that there are

such persons about, and they may even find their way into the Tabernacle. The Lord have mercy upon the drunkard, and turn his cups bottom upwards, and make a new man of him! Then, when he goes home, to tell of free grace and dying love, and of the wonderful change that God has wrought in him, he will be a blessing to his family and to all about him. It may be, dear friend, that you have to stop here till you have undone some of the mischief of your early life. You have to bring to God some of those whom you tempted, and led astray, and helped to ruin.

So, you see, dear friends, there is something better even than being with Christ; that is working with Christ.

But, lastly, CONSIDER THAT THERE IS YET A CASE WHICH IS BEST OF ALL. We must always have three degrees of comparison. What is the best state of all? To be with Christ is good; to be sent by Christ on a holy errand, is better; but here is something that is best of all, namely; to work for him, and to be with him at the same time. I want every Christian to aspire to that position. Is it possible to sit with Mary at the Master's feet, and yet to run about like Martha, and get the dinner ready? It is; and then Martha will never be cumbered with much serving if she does that, and she will never find fault with her sister Mary. "But, sir, we cannot sit and stir at the same time." No, not as to your bodies; but you can as to you souls. You can be sitting at Jesus' feet, or leaning on his breast, and yet be fighting the Lord's battles, and doing his work.

In order to do this, *cultivate the inner as well as the outer life*. Endeavor not only to do much for Christ, but to be much with Christ, and to live wholly upon Christ. Do not, for instance, on the Sabbath-day, go to a class, and teach others three times, as some whom I know do; but come once and hear the Master's message, and get your soul fed; and when you have had a spiritual feast in the morning, give the rest of the day to holy service. Let the two things run together. To be always eating, and never working, will bring on repletion, and spiritual dyspepsia; but to be always working and never eating, — well, I am afraid that you will not bear that trial so well as the gentleman who yesterday ate his first meal after forty days fasting. Do not try to imitate him. It is not a right and wise thing to do; but very dangerous. Get spiritual food as well as do spiritual work.

Let me say to you, again, *grieve very much if there is the least cloud between you and Christ*. Do not wait until it is as thick as a November fog; be full of sorrow if it is only like a tiny, fleecy cloud. George Muller's observation was a very wise one, "Never come out of your chamber in the morning until everything is right between you and God." Keep in perpetual fellowship with Jesus; and thus you can be with him, and yet be serving him at the same time.

And mind this, *before you begin Christ's service, always seek his presence and help*. Do not enter upon any work for the Lord without having first seen the face of the King in his beauty; and in the work often recall your mind from what you are doing, to him for whom you are doing it, and by whom you are doing it; and when the work is completed, do not throw up you cap, and say, "Well done, self!" Another will say to you, by-and-by, "Well done!" if you deserve it. Do not take the words out of his mouth. Self-praise is no recommendation. Solomon said, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." When we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants; we have only done that which is our duty to do. So, if you are as humble as you are active, as lowly as you are energetic, you may keep with Christ, and yet go about his errands to the ends of the earth; and I reckon this to be the happiest experience that any one of us can reach this side of the gates of pearl. The Lord bless you, and bring you there, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2262A

MARK 5:1-29

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gaderenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.

Our Lord crossed the Sea of Galilee on purpose to rescue this poor man from the power of the unclean spirit that possessed him. He knew that there were many who needed him on the Galilean side of the lake, and he could foresee the storm that would threaten to sink the little ship; yet he calmly said to his disciples (see chapter iv. Verse 35), "Let us pass over unto the other side." As soon as the great Physician landed, a dreadful apparition appeared. "Our of the tombs", an uncanny place, rushed a man, howling and yelling like some wild beast; or worse still, under the influence of Satan, who had taken possession of him.

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

See how the world deals with furiously guilty men. It tries to fetter them, or else to tame them; to keep them in check by fear of punishment, or else to subdue them to a gentleness of morality: poor work this! Christ neither binds nor tames; he changes and renews. Oh, that everywhere his aid were sought, and not so much reliance placed on the fetters of law, or the power of morals!

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

It must have been dreadful for travelers to pass that way at night, or to meet with this terrible madman at any hour of the day. But how terrible must have been the poor creature's own condition! We get just a glimpse of it from the words, "always in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones." See what Satan does with those who are in his power.

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

The devil does not like doing it; but if it will serve his purpose, he will pretend to be a worshipper of Christ. He comes here sometimes; he goes to all sorts of places of worship, and makes men turn worshippers who have no worship in their hearts; for there is no end to the depth of his cunning, and many are they that have served the devil best when they have pretended to worship Christ.

And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Using the lips of this poor man, Satan spoke in him and through him. He is afraid of Christ. This dog of hell knows his Master, and crouches at his feet. He beseeches the "Son of the Most High God" not to torment him before his time.

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

Christ never wastes words over the devil. He speaks to him very shortly and very sharply. It would be well sometimes if we could be more laconic when we are dealing with evil. It does not deserve our words as it did not observe Christ's words. Jesus said to the devil, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

10. *And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. An he besought him much that he would not send him away out of the country.*

The devil can pray; he did so in this case. It is not because a man is fluent in prayer that we are sure of his salvation. It is not because a man prays with such fervor that his knees knock together, that we may conclude that

he is a saint. It may be that he is trembling through fear of God's judgment. Satan besought Christ much.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

Satan would rather vex swine than do no mischief at all. He is so fond of evil that he would work it upon animals if he cannot work it upon men. What unanimity there is amongst the evil spirits! "All the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them."

And forthwith Jesus gave them leave.

The devil cannot enter even a pig with Christ's leave. So he cannot tempt you, my friend, without our Lord's permission. You may rest assured that even this great monster of evil is under Christ's control. He cannot molest you till Jesus gives him leave. There is a chain around the roaring lion, and he can only go just as far as the Lord allows him.

14. And the unclean spirit went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a deep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled,

At which we do not at all wonder. Who would not flee when they thus saw the power of Christ?

15. And told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

You would have thought that it would have been said, "They marvelled, and they praised Christ for this great and wonderful deed." No, "They were afraid." If you see another converted, do not be afraid; but rather have hope that you may be saved yourself. What a beautiful sight these people saw: "they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind."! That thought ought to have made them rejoice instead of being afraid. There are still people who are afraid of what will happen when they see those whom Christ has blessed spiritually as he had healed this man.

17. *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.*

If Jesus should come to you to-night, do not ask him to go away. Open wide the door of your heart, and entreat the Lord to come in, and dwell there for ever and ever. This narrative teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ will go away if he is asked to do so; he will not remain where his room is preferred to his company.

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had companion with thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

He was told to publish what great things *the Lord* had done for him. He went and published what great things *Jesus* had done for him. Did he make any mistake? Oh, no! It is but another name for the same Person: for Jesus is the Lord; and when you speak of him as divine, and talk of him in terms fit only for God, you do but speak rightly; for so he deserveth to be praised. “And all men did marvel.” So our Lord left them all wondering. Leaving this one messenger to bear testimony to him, he went his way elsewhere, to carry blessings to many others on the other side of the sea. The man appears to have gone through the wide district that bore the name Decapolis, and his testimony to the power of Christ was so convincing that, when the Savior revisited that part of the country, he had a very different reception from that which he received on this occasion. (see chapters 7:31-37, 8:1-10).

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 797, 847, 806

CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS

SERMON NO. 2263

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 3RD, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5TH, 1890.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
— *Luke 23:34.*

WHAT tenderness we have here; what self-forgetfulness; what almighty love! Jesus did not say to those who crucified him, “Begone!” One such word, and they must have all fled. When they came to take him in the garden, they went backward, and fell to the ground, when he spoke but a short sentence; and now that he is on the cross, a single syllable would have made the whole company fall to the ground, or flee away in fright.

Jesus says not a word in his own defense. When he prayed to his Father, he might justly have said, “Father, note what they do to thy beloved Son. Judge them for the wrong they do to him who loves them, and who has done all he can for them.” But there is no prayer against them in the words that Jesus utters. It was written of old, by the prophet Isaiah, “He made intercession for the transgressors;” and here it is fulfilled. He pleads for his murderers, “Father, forgive them.”

He does not utter a single word of upbraiding. He does not say, “Why do ye this? Why pierce the hands that fed you? Why nail the feet that followed after you in mercy? Why mock the Man who loved to bless you?” No, not a word even of gentle upbraiding, much less anything like a curse. “Father, forgive them.” You notice, Jesus does not say, “I forgive them,” but you may read that between the lines. He says that all the more because he does not say it in words. But he had laid aside his majesty, and

is fastened to the cross; and therefore he takes the humble position of a suppliant, rather than the more lofty place of one who had power to forgive. How often, when men say, "I forgive you," is there a kind of selfishness about it! At any rate, self is asserted in the very act of forgiving. Jesus take the place of a pleader, a pleader for those who were committing murder upon himself. Blessed be his name!

This word of the cross we shall use to-night, and we shall see if we cannot gather something from it for our instruction; for, though we were not there, and we did not actually put Jesus to death, yet we really caused his death, and we, too, crucified the Lord of glory; and his prayer for us was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I am not going to handle this text so much by way of exposition, as by way of experience. I believe there are many here, to whom these words will be very appropriate. This will be our line of thought. First, *we were in measure ignorant*; secondly, *we confess that this ignorance is no excuse*; thirdly, *we bless our Lord for pleading for us*; and fourthly, *we now rejoice in the pardon we have obtained*. May the Holy Spirit graciously help us in our meditation!

Looking back upon our past experience, let me say, first, that WE WERE IN MEASURE IGNORANT. We who have been forgiven, we who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, we once sinned, in a great measure, through ignorance. Jesus says, "They know not what they do." Now, I shall appeal to you, brothers and sisters, when you lived under the dominion of Satan, and served yourselves and sin, was there not a measure of ignorance in it? You can truly say, as we said in the hymn we sang just now, —

"Alas! I knew not what I did."

It is true, first, that we were ignorant of *the awful meaning of sin*. We began to sin as children; we knew that it was wrong, but we did not know all that sin meant. We went on to sin as young men; peradventure we plunged into much wickedness. We knew it was wrong; but we did not see the end from the beginning. It did not appear to us as rebellion against God. We did not think that we were presumptuously defying God, setting at naught his wisdom, defying his power, deriding his love, spurning his

holiness; yet we were doing that. There is an abysmal depth in sin. You cannot see the bottom of it. When we rolled sin under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we did not know all the terrible ingredients compounded in that deadly bittersweet. We were in a measure ignorant of the tremendous crime we committed when we dared to live in rebellion against God. So far, I think, you go with me.

We did not know, at that time, *God's great love to us*. I did not know that he had chosen me from before the foundation of the world; I never dreamed of that. I did not know that Christ stood for me as my Substitute, to redeem me from among men. I did not know the love of Christ, did not understand it then. You did not know that you were sinning against eternal love, against infinite compassion, against a distinguishing love such as God had fixed on you from eternity. So far, we knew not what we did.

I think, too, that we did not know all that we were doing in *our rejection of Christ, and putting him to grief*. He came to us in our youth; and impressed by a sermon we began to tremble, and to seek his face; but we were decoyed back to the world, and we refused Christ. Our mother's tears, our father's prayers, our teacher's admonitions, often moved us; but we were very stubborn, and we rejected Christ. We did not know that, in that rejection, we were virtually putting him away and crucifying him. We were denying his Godhead, or else we should have worshipped him. We were denying his love, or else we should have yielded to him. We were practically, in every act of sin, taking the hammer and the nails, and fastening Christ to the cross, but we did not know it. Perhaps, if we had known it, we should not have crucified the Lord of glory. We did know we were doing wrong; but we did not know all the wrong that we were doing.

Nor did we know fully *the meaning of our delays*. We hesitated; we were on the verge on conversion; we went back, and turned again to our old follies. We were hardened, Christless, prayerless still; and each of us said, "Oh, I am only waiting a little while till I have fulfilled my present engagements, till I am a little older, till I have seen a little more of the world!" The fact is, we were refusing Christ, and choosing the pleasures of sin instead of him; and every hour of delay was an hour of crucifying Christ, grieving his Spirit, and choosing this harlot world in the place of the lovely and ever blessed Christ. We did not know that.

I think we may add one thing more. *We did not know the meaning to our self-righteousness.* We used to think, some of us, that we had a righteousness of our own. We had been to church regularly, or we had been to the meeting-house whenever it was open. We were christened; we were confirmed; or, peradventure, we rejoiced that we never had either of those things done to us. Thus, we put our confidence in ceremonies, or the absence of ceremonies. We said our prayers; we read a chapter in the bible night and morning; we did — oh, I do not know what we did not do! But there we rested; we were righteous in our own esteem. We had not any particular sin to confess, nor any reason to lie in the dust before the throne of God's majesty. We were about as good as we could be; and we did not know that we were even then perpetrating the highest insult upon Christ; for, if we were not sinners, why did Christ die; and, if we had a righteousness of our own which was good enough, why did Christ come here to work out a righteousness for us? We made out Christ to be a superfluity, by considering that we were good enough without resting in his atoning sacrifice. Ah, we did not think we were doing that! We thought we were pleasing God by our religiousness, by our outward performances, by our ecclesiastical correctness; but all the while we were setting up anti-Christ in the place of Christ. We were making out that Christ was not wanted; we were robbing him of his office and glory! Alas! Christ would say of us, with regard to all these things, "They know not what they do." I want you to look quietly at the time past wherein you served sin, and just see whether there was not a darkness upon your mind, a blindness in your spirit, so that you did not know what you did.

Well now, secondly, WE CONFESS THAT THIS IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE. Our Lord might urge it as a plea; but we never could. We did not know what we did, and so we were not guilty to the fullest possible extent; but we were guilty enough, therefore let us own it.

For first, remember, *the law never allows this as a plea.* In our own English law, a man is supposed to know what the law is. If he breaks it, it is no excuse to plead that he did not know it. It may be regarded by a judge as some extenuation; but the law allows nothing of the kind. God gives us the law, and we are bound to keep it. If I erred through not knowing the law, still it was a sin. Under the Mosaic law, there were sins of ignorance, and for these there were special offerings. The ignorance did not blot out

the sin. That is clear in my text; for, if ignorance rendered an action no longer sinful, they why should Christ say, “Father, forgive them”? But he does; he asks for mercy for what is sin, even though the ignorance in some measure be supposed to mitigate the criminality of it.

But, dear friends, *we might have known*. If we did not know, it was because we would not know. There was the preaching of the Word; but we did not care to hear it. There was this blessed Book; but we did not care to read it. If you and I had sat down, and looked at our conduct by the light of the Holy Scripture, we might have known much more of the evil of sin, and much more of the love of Christ, and much more of the ingratitude which is possible in refusing Christ, and not coming to him.

In addition to that, *we did not think*. “Oh, but,” you say, “young people never do think!” But young people should think. If there is anybody who need not think, it is the old man, whose day is nearly over. If he does think, he has but a very short time in which to improve; but the young have all their lives before them. If I were a carpenter, and had to make a box, I should not think about it after I had made the box; I should think, before I began to cut my timber, what sort of box it was to be. In every action, a man thinks before he begins, or else he is a fool. A young man ought to think more than anybody else, for now he is, as it were, making his box. He is beginning his life-plan; he should be the most thoughtful of all men. Many of us, who are now Christ’s people, would have known much more about our Lord if we had given him more careful consideration in our earlier days. A man will consider about taking a wife, he will consider about making a business, he will consider about buying a horse or a cow; but he will not consider about the claims of Christ, and the claims of the Most High God; and this renders his ignorance wilful, and inexcusable.

Beside that, dear friends, although we have confessed to ignorance, *in many sins we did not know a great deal*. Come, let me quicken your memories. There were times when you knew that such an action was wrong, when you started back from it. You looked at the gain it would bring you, and you sold your soul for that price, and deliberately did what you were well aware was wrong. Are there not some here, saved by Christ, who must confess that , at times, they did violence to their

conscience? They did despite to the Spirit of God, quenched the light of heaven, drove the Spirit away from them, distinctly knowing what they were doing. Let us bow before God in the silence of our hearts, and own to all of this. We hear the Master say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us add our own tears as we say, "And forgive us, also, because in some things we did know; in all things we might have known; but we were ignorant for want of thought, which thought was a solemn duty which we ought to have rendered to God."

One more thing I will say on this head. When a man is ignorant, and does not know what he ought to do, what should he do? Well, he should do nothing till he does know. But here is the mischief of it, that *when we did not know, yet we chose to do the wrong thing*. If we did not know, why did we not choose the right thing? But, being in the dark, we never turned to the right; but always blundered to the left from sin to sin. Does not this show us how depraved our hearts are?: Though we are seeking to be right, when we were let alone, we go wrong of ourselves. Leave a child alone; leave a man alone; leave a tribe alone without teaching and instruction; what comes of it? Why, the same as when you leave a field alone. It never, by any chance, produces wheat or barley. Leave it alone, and there are rank weeds, and thorns, and briars, showing that the natural set of the soil is towards producing that which is worthless. O friends, confess the inmate evil of your hearts as well as the evil of your lives, in that, when you did not know, yet, having a perverse instinct, you chose the evil, and refuse the good; and, when you did not know enough of Christ, and did not think enough of him to know whether you ought to have him or not, you would not have come unto him that you might have life. You needed light; but you shut your eyes to the sun. You were thirsty; but you would not drink of the living spring; and so your ignorance, though it was there, was a criminal ignorance, which you must confess before the Lord. Oh, come ye to the cross, ye who have been there before, and have lost your burden there! Come and confess your guilt over again; and clasp that cross afresh, and look to him who bled upon it, and praise his dear name that he once prayed for you, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now, I am going a step further. We were in a measure ignorant; but we confess that that measurable ignorance was no excuse.

Now, thirdly, WE BLESS OUR LORD FOR PLEADING FOR US.

So you notice when it was that Jesus pleaded? It was, *while they were crucifying him*. They had not just driven in the nails, they had lifted up the cross, and dished it down into its socket, and dislocated all his bones, so that he could say, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint." Ah, dear friends, it was then that instead of a cry or groan, this dear Son of God said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They did not ask for forgiveness for themselves, Jesus ask for forgiveness for them. Their hands were imbrued in his blood; and it was then, even then, that he prayed for them. Let us think of the great love wherewith he loved us, even while we were yet sinners, when we rioted in sin, when we drank it down as the ox drinketh down water. Even then he prayed for us. "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Bless his name to-night. He prayed for you when you did not pray for yourself. He prayed for you when you were crucifying him.

Then think of his plea, *he pleads his Sonship*. He says, "Father, forgive them." He was the Son of God, and he put his divine Sonship into the scale on our behalf. He seems to say, "Father, as I am thy Son, grant me this request, and pardon these rebels. Father, forgive them." The filial rights of Christ were very great. He was the Son of the Highest. "Light of light, very God of very God", the second Person in the Divine Trinity; and he puts that Sonship here before God and says, "Father, Father, forgive them." Oh, the power of that word from the Son's lip when he is wounded, when he is in agony, when he is dying! He says, "Father, Father, grant my one request; O Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and the great Father bows his awful head, in token that the petition is granted.

Then notice, that Jesus here, silently, but really *pleads his sufferings*. The attitude of Christ when he prayed this prayer is very noteworthy. His hands were stretched upon the transverse beam; his feet were fastened to the upright tree; and there he pleaded. Silently his hands and feet were pleading, and his agonized body from the very sinew and muscle pleaded with God. His sacrifice was presented complete; and so it is his cross that takes up the plea, "Father, forgive them." O blessed Christ! It is thus that

we have been forgiven, for his Sonship and his cross have pleaded with God, and have prevailed on our behalf.

I love this prayer, also, because of the *indistinctness* of it. It is “Father, forgive them.” He does not say, “Father, forgive the soldiers who have nailed me here.” He includes them. Neither does he say, “Father, forgive sinners in ages to come who will sin against me.” But he means them. Jesus does not mention them by any accusing name: “Father, forgive my enemies. Father, forgive my murderers.” No, there is no word of accusation upon those dear lips. “Father, forgive them.” Now into that pronoun “them” I feel that I can crawl Can you get in there? Oh, by a humble faith, appropriate the cross of Christ by trusting in it; and get into that big little word “them”! It seems like a chariot of mercy that has come down to earth into which a man may step, and it shall bear him up to heaven. “Father, forgive them.”

Notice, also, what it was that Jesus asked for; to omit that, would be to leave out the very essence of his prayer. *He asked for full absolution for his enemies*: “Father, forgive them. Do not punish them; forgive them. Do not remember their sin; forgive it, blot it out; throw it into the depths of the sea. Remember it not, my Father. Mention it not against them any more for ever. Father, forgive them.” Oh, blessed prayer, for the forgiveness of God is broad and deep! When man forgives, he leaves the remembrance of the wrong behind; but when God pardons, he says, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” It is this that Christ asked for you and me long before we had any repentance, or any faith; and in answer to that prayer, we were brought to feel our sin, we were brought to confess it, and to believe in him; and now, glory be to his name, we can bless him for having pleaded for us, and obtained the forgiveness of all our sins.

I come now to my last remark. Which is this, WE NOW REJOICE IN THE PARDON WE HAVE OBTAINED.

Have you obtained pardon? Is this your song?

*“Now, oh joy! My sins are pardon’d,
Now I can, and do believe.”*

I have a letter, in my pocket, from a man of education and standing, who has been an agnostic; he says that he was a sarcastic agnostic, and he writes praising God, and invoking every blessing upon my head for bringing him to the Savior's feet. He says, "I was without happiness for this life, and without hope for the next." I believe that that is a truthful description of many an unbeliever. What hope is there for the world to come apart from the cross of Christ? The best hope such a man has is that he may die the death of a dog, and there may be an end of him. What is the hope of the Romanist, when he comes to die? I feel so sorry for many of the devout and earnest friends, for I do not know what their hope is. They do not hope to go to heaven yet, at any rate; some purgatorial pains must be endured first. Ah, this is a poor, poor faith to die on, to have such a hope as that to trouble your last thoughts. I do not know of any religion but that of Christ Jesus which tells us of sin pardoned, absolutely pardoned. Now, listen. Our teaching is not that, when you come to die, you may, perhaps, find out that it is all right, but, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He has it now, and he knows it, and he rejoices in it. So I come back to the last head of my discourse, we rejoice in the pardon Christ has obtained for us. We are pardoned. I hope that the larger portion of this audience can say, "By the grace of God, we know that the larger portion of this audience can say, "By the grace of God, we know that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb."

Pardon has come to us through Christ's plea. Our hope lies in the plea of Christ, and specially in his death. If Jesus paid my debt, and he did it if I am a believer in him, then I am out of debt. If Jesus bore the penalty of my sin, and he did it if I am a believer, then there is no penalty for me to pay, for we can say to him, —

***"Complete Atonement Thou Hast Made,
And To The Utmost Farthing Paid
Whate'er Thy People Owed:
Nor Can His Wrath On Me Take Place,
If Shelter'd In Thy Righteousness,
And Sprinkled With Thy Blood***

***“If Thou Hast My Discharge Procured,
And Freely In My Room Endured
The Whole Of Wrath Divine:
Payment God Can Twice Demand,
First Of My Bleeding Surety’s Hand,
And Then Again At Mine.”***

If Christ has borne my punishment, I shall never bear it. Oh, what joy there is in this blessed assurance! Your hope that you are pardoned lies in this, that Jesus died. Those dear wounds of his are bled for you.

We praise him for our pardon because *we do know now what we did*. Oh, brethren, I know not how much we ought to love Christ, because we sinned against him so grievously! Now we know that sin is “exceeding sinful.” Now we know that sin crucified Christ. Now we know that we stabbed our heavenly Lover to his heart. We slew, with ignominious death, our best and dearest Friend and Benefactor. We know that now; and we could almost weep tears of blood to think that we ever treated him as we did. But, it is all forgiven, all gone. Oh, let us bless that dear Son of God, who has put away even such sins as ours! We feel them more now than ever before. We know they are forgiven, and our grief is because of the pain that the purchase of our forgiveness cost our Savior. We never knew what our sins really were till we saw him in a bloody sweat. We never knew the crimson hue of our sins till we read our pardon written in crimson lines with his precious blood. Now, we see our sin, and yet we do not see it; for God has pardoned it, blotted it out, cast it behind his back for ever.

Henceforth *ignorance*, such as we have described, *shall be hateful to us*. Ignorance of Christ and eternal things shall be hateful to us. If, through ignorance, we have sinned, we will have done with that ignorance. We will be students of his Word. We will study that masterpiece of all the sciences, the knowledge of Christ crucified. We will ask the Holy Ghost to drive far from us the ignorance that gendereth sin. God grant that we may not fall into sins of ignorance any more; but may we be able to say, “I know whom I have believed; and henceforth I will seek more knowledge, till I comprehend, with all saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, and know the love of God, which passeth knowledge”!

I put in a practical word here. If you rejoice that you are pardoned, *show your gratitude by your imitation of Christ*. There was never before such a plea as this, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Plead like that for others. Has anybody been injuring you? Are there persons who slander you? Pray to-night, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Let us always render good for evil, blessing for cursing; and when we are called to suffer through the wrong-doing of others, let us believe that they would not act as they do if it were not because of their ignorance. Let us pray for them; and make their very ignorance the plea for their forgiveness: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

I want you to think of the millions of London just now. See those miles of streets, pouring out their children this evening; but look at those public-houses with the crowds streaming in and out. God down our streets by moonlight. See what I almost blush to tell. Follow men and women, too, to their homes, and be this your prayer: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” That silver bell — keep it always ringing. What did I say? That silver bell? Nay, it is the *golden* bell upon the priests garments. Wear it on your garments, ye priests of God, and let it always ring out its golden note, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” If I can set all God’s saints imitating Christ with such a prayer as this, I shall not have spoken in vain.

Brethren, I see *reason for hope in the very ignorance that surrounds us*. I see hope for this poor city of ours, hope for this poor country, hope for Africa, China, and India. “They know not what they do.” Here is a strong argument in their favor, for they are more ignorant than we were. They know less of the evil of sin, and less of the hope of eternal life, than we do. Send up this petition, ye people of God! Heap your prayers together with cumulative power, send up this fiery shaft of prayer, straight to the heart of God, while Jesus from his throne shall add his prevalent intercession, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

If there be any unconverted people here, and I know that there are some, we will mention them in our private devotion, as well as in the public assembly; and we will pray for them in words like these, “Father, forgive

them; for they know not what they do.” May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2263A

LUKE 23:33-46; JOHN 19:25-30

We have often read the story of our Savior's sufferings; but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang, —

*"Come, let us stand beneath the cross;
So may the blood from out his side
Fall gently on us drop by drop;
Jesus, our Lord is crucified."*

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death.

Luke 23:33. *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one of the right hand, and the other on the left.*

They gave Jesus the place of dishonor. Reckoning him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put him between the other two. They heaped upon him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor; and in so doing they unconsciously honored him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever he is. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

How startled they must have been to hear such words from one who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree, must have been started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as his Father, and pray for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There is

was blow for blow; only in the case of Jesus they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Roman must have been startled indeed at such words as these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.

The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling Scriptures while they were raffling for the raiment of the illustrious Sufferer on the cross; yet so it was. In the twenty-second Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Savior's sufferings, and which he probably repeated while he hung on the tree, David wrote, "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." "And the people stood beholding," gazing, looking on the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that; there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race; but these people thought that they did no harm when they "stood beholding." They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures; for the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second Psalm says, "They look and stare upon me."

And the rulers also with them derided him,

Laughed at him, made him the object of course jests.

Saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar.

In mockery, not giving it to him, as they did later in mercy; but in mockery, pretending to present him with weak wine, such as they drank.

And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt: "If thou be the king of the Jews;" that was a bit of their own. "Save thyself;" that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

And a superscription also was written over him in the letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This Is The King Of The Jews.

John tells us that Pilate wrote this title, and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman, and the Jew might alike understand who he was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or he might have written, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS, AND OF THE GENTILES, TOO.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

He, too, borrows this speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words “and us” as a bit of originality. “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.”

But the other answering rebuked him saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

A fine testimony to Christ: “This man hath done nothing amiss;” nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly; but nothing even “amiss.” This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, in the thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up his ghost.

He yielded his life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with his life: “He gave up the ghost.” He was a willing sacrifice for guilty men.

Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

John 19:25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Last at the cross, first at the sepulcher. No woman's lip betrayed her Lord; no woman's hand ever smote him; their eyes wept for him; they gazed upon him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the cross, we feel that we honor the very name of Mary.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith into his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Did the Savior mean, as he gave a glance to John, "Woman, thou art losing one Son; but yonder stands another, who will be a son to thee in my absence"? "Woman, behold thy son!"

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!

"Take her as thy mother, stand thou in my place, care for her as I have cared for her." Those who love Christ best shall have the honor of taking care of his church and of his poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, "They are a great burden to me." Oh, no! Say, "They are a great honor to me; my Lord has entrusted them to my care." John thought so; let us think so. Jesus selected the disciple he loved best to take his mother under his care. He selects those whom he loves best to-day, and puts his poor people under their wing. Take them gladly, and treat them well.

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home

You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and he must needs fulfill that. Think of a dying man prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures and carefully fulfilling all that is there written concerning him: "That the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, I thirst."

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,

For he did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiery. This is not that mixed potion which he refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains: “When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink;” for he would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin; and he would not have his sorrow mitigated; but when this slight refreshment was offered to him, he received it. Having just expressed his human weakness by saying, “I thirst,” he now manifests his all-sufficient strength by crying, with a loud voice as Matthew, Mark, and Luke all testify.

He said, It is finished:

What “it” was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest “it” that ever was/ Turn it over and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow, till it fills the whole earth: “It is finished.”

And he lowered his head, and gave up the ghost.

He did not give up the ghost, and then bow his head, because he was dead; but he bowed his head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon his Father’s bosom, and then gave up the ghost.

Thus have we had two gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them, and learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 561, 279, 278.

SOWING IN THE WIND, REAPING UNDER CLOUDS

SERMON NO. 2264

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 10TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 3RD, 1890.

“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” — Ecclesiastes 11:4.

Sow when the time comes, whatever wind blows. Reap when the times comes, whatever clouds are in the sky. There are, however, qualifying proverbs, which must influence our actions. We are not to discard prudence in the choice of the time for our work. “To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” It is well to sow when the weather is propitious. It is wise to “make hay while the sun shines.” Cut your corn when there is the probability of getting it dry.

But Solomon here is pushing the other side of the matter. He had seen prudence turn to idleness; he had noticed some people wait for a more convenient season, which never came. He had observed sluggards making excuses, which did not hold water. So he, with a blunt word, generalizes, in order to make the truth more forcible. Not troubling about the exceptions to the rule, he states it broadly thus: “Take no notice of winds or clouds. Go one with your work whatever happens. ‘He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.’ “

The first thought that is suggested by these words is this: NATURAL DIFFICULTIES MAY BE UNDULY CONSIDERED. A man may observe the wind, and regard the clouds a great deal too much, and so neither sow nor reap.

Note here, first, that *in any work this would hinder a man*. In any labor to which we set our hand, if we take too much notice of the difficulties, we shall be hindered in it. It is very wise to know the difficulty of your calling, the sorrow which comes with it, the trial which arises out of it, the temptation connected therewith; but if you think too much of these things, there is no calling that will be carried on with any success. Poor farmers, they have a crop of hay and cannot get it in; they may fret themselves to death if they like, and never earn a penny for a seven years' fretting! We say of their calling that it is surrounded with constant trouble. They may lose everything just at the moment when they are about to gather it in. The seed may perish under the clods when it is first sown. It is subject to blight and mildew, and bird, and worm, and I know not what beside; and then, at the last, when the farmer is about to reap the harvest, it may disappear before the sickle can cut it. Take the case of the sailor. If he regards winds and clouds, will he ever be put to sea? Can you give him a promise that the wind will be favorable in any of his voyages, or that he will reach his desired haven without a tempest? He that observeth the winds and clouds, will not sail; and he that regardeth the clouds will never cross the mighty deep. If you turn from the farmer and the sailor, and come to the trader, what tradesman will do anything if he is always worrying about the competition, and about the difficulties of his trade, which is so cut up that there is no making a living by it? I have heard this, I think, about every trade, and yet our friends keep on living, and some of them get rich, when they are supposed to be losing money every year! He that regardeth the rise and fall of prices, and is timid, and will do no trading because of the changes on the market, will not reap. If you come to the working-man, it is the same as with those I have mentioned; for there is no calling or occupation that is not surrounded with difficulties. In fact, I have formed this judgment from what friends have told me, that every trade is the worst trade out; for I have found somebody in that particular line who has proved this to a demonstration. I cannot say that I am an implicit believer in all I hear about this matter. Still, if I were, this would be the conclusion that I should come to, that he that observed the circumstances of any trade or calling, would never engage in it at all; he would never sow; and he would never reap. I suppose he would go to bed, and sleep all the four-and-twenty hours of the day; and after a while, I am afraid he would find it become impossible even to do that, and he would learn that to turn,

with the sluggard, like a door on its hinges, is not unalloyed pleasure after all.

Well now, dear friends, if there be these difficulties in connection with earthly callings and trades, do you expect there will be nothing of the kind with regard to heavenly things? Do you imagine that, in sowing the good seed of the kingdom, and gathering the sheaves into the garner, you will have no difficulties and disappointments? Do you dream that, when you are bound for heaven, you are to have smooth sailing and propitious winds all the voyage? Do you think that, in your heavenly trading, you will have less trials than the merchant who has only to do with earthly business? If you do, you make a great mistake. You will not be likely to enter upon the heavenly calling, if you do nothing else but unduly consider the difficulties surrounding it.

But, next, *in the work of liberality this would stay us*. This is Solomon's theme here. "Cast thy bread upon the waters;" "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;" and so on. He means, by my text, that if anybody occupies his mind unduly with the difficulties connected with liberality, he will do nothing in that line. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.." "How am I to know," says one, "that the person to whom I give my money is really deserving? How do I know what he will do with it? How do I know but what I may be encouraging idleness or begging? By giving to the man, I may be doing him real injury." Perhaps you are not asked to give to an individual, but to some great work. Then, if you regard the clouds, you will begin to say, "How do I know that this work will be successful, the sending of missionaries to a cultivated people like the Hindus? Is it likely that they will be converted?" You will not sow, and you will not reap, if you talk like that; yet there are many who do speak in that fashion. There was never an enterprise started yet but somebody objected to it; and I do not believe that the best work that Christ himself ever did was beyond criticism; there were some people who were sure to find some fault with it. "But," says another, "I have heard that the management at headquarters is not all it ought to be; I think that there is too much money spent on the secretary, and that there is a great deal lost in this direction and in that." Well, dear friend, it goes without saying that if *you* managed things, they would be managed perfectly; but, you see, you cannot do everything, and

therefore you must trust somebody. I can only say, with regard to societies, agencies, works, and missions of all kinds, “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” If that is what you are doing, finding out imperfections and difficulties, it will end in this, you will do nothing at all.

Going a little further, as this is true of common occupations and of liberality, so it is especially true *in the work of serving God*. Now, if I were to consider in my mind nothing but the natural depravity of man, I should never preach again. To preach the gospel to sinners, is as foolish a thing as to bid dead men rise out of their graves. For that reason I do it, because it has pleased God, “by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” When I look upon the alienation from God, the hardness of the human heart, I see that old Adam is too strong for me; and if I regarded that one cloud of the fall, and original sin, and the natural depravity of man, I, for one, should neither sow nor reap. I am afraid that there has been a good deal of this, however. Many preachers have contemplated the ruin of man, and they have had so clear a view of it that they dare not say, “Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones, live.” They are unable to cry, “Dear Master, speak through us, and say, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ “ Some seem to say, “Go and see if Lazarus has any kind of feeling of his condition in the grave. If so, I will call him out, because I believe he can come;” thus putting all the burden on Lazarus, and depending upon Lazarus for it. But we say, “Though he has been dead four days, and is already becoming corrupt, that has nothing to do with us. If our Master bids us call him out from his grave, we can call him out, and he will come; not because he can come by his own power, but because God can make him come, for the now is when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God, and they that shall hear shall live.

But, dear friends, there are persons to whom we should never go to seek their salvation if we regarded the winds and the clouds, for they are peculiarly bad people. You know, from observation, that there are some persons who are much worse than others, some who are not amenable to kindness, or any other human treatment. They do not seem to be terrified by law, or affected by love. We know people who go into a horrible temper every now and then, and all the hope we had of them is blown away, like sere leaves in the autumn wind. You know such, and you “fight

shy” with them. There are such boys, and there are such girls, full of mischief, and levity, or full of malice and bitterness; and you say to yourself, “I cannot do anything with them. It is of no use.” Just so. You are observing the winds, and regarding the clouds. You will not be one of those to whom Isaiah says, “Blessed be ye that sow beside all waters.”

Some one may say, “I would not mind the moral condition of the people, but it is their surroundings that are the trouble. What is the use of trying to save a man while he lives, as he does, in such a horrible street, in one room? What is the use of seeking to raise such and such a woman while she is surrounded, as she is, with such examples? The very atmosphere seems tainted.” Just so, dear friend; while you observe the winds, and regard the clouds, you will now sow, and you will not reap. You will not attempt the work, and of course you will not complete what you do not commence.

So, you know, you can go on making all kinds of excuses for doing nothing with certain people, because you feel or think that they are not those whom God is likely to bless. I know this to be a common case, even with very serious and earnest workers for Christ. Let it not be so with you, dear friends; but be you one of those who obey the poet’s words, —

*“Beside all waters sow;
The highway furrows stock;
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow;
Scatter it on the rock.”*

Let me carry this principle, however, a little further. You may unduly consider circumstances in reference to the business of your own eternal life. You may, in that matter, observe the winds, and never so; you may regard the clouds, and never reap. “I feel,” says one, “as if I never can be saved. There never was such a sinner as I am. My sins are peculiarly black.” Yes, and if you keep on regarding them, and do not remember the Savior, and his infinite power to save, you will not sow in prayer and faith. “Ah, sir; but you do not know the horrible thoughts I have, the dark forebodings that cross my mind!” I know that, dear friend; I do not know them. I know what I feel myself, and I expect that your feelings are very like my own; but, be what they may, if, instead of looking to Christ, you are always studying your own condition, your own withered hopes, your

own broken resolutions, then you will still keep where you are, and you will neither sow nor reap.

Beloved Christians, you who have been believers for years, if you begin to live by your frames and feelings, you will get into the same condition. "I do not feel like praying," says one. Then is the time when you ought to pray most, for you are evidently most in need; but if you keep observing whether or not you are in the proper frame of mind for prayer, you will not pray. "I cannot grasp the promises," says another; "I should like to joy in God, and firmly believe in his Word; but I do not see anything in myself that can minister to my comfort." Suppose you do not. Are you, after all, going to build upon yourself? Are you trying to find your ground of consolation in your own heart? If so, you are on the wrong tack. Our hope is not in self, but in Christ; let us go and sow it. Our hope is in the finished work of Christ; let us go and reap it; for, if we keep on regarding the winds and the clouds, we shall neither sow nor reap. I think it is a great lesson to learn in spiritual things, to believe in Christ, and his finished salvation, quite as much as when you are down as when you are up; for Christ is not more Christ on the top of the mountain than he is in the bottom of the valley, and he is no less Christ in the storm by midnight than he is in the sunshine by day. Do not begin to measure your safety by your comfort; but measure it by the eternal Word of God, which you have believed, and which you know to be true, and on which you rest; for still here, within the little world of our bosom, "he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." We want to get out of that idea altogether.

I have said enough to prove the truth of my first observation, namely, that natural difficulties may be unduly considered.

My second observation is this: SUCH CONSIDERATION INVOLVES US IN SEVERAL SINS.

If we keep on observing circumstances, instead of trusting God, we shall be guilty of *disobedience*. God bids me sow: I do not sow, because the wind would blow some of my seed away. God bids me reap: I do not reap, because there is a black cloud there, and before I can house the harvest, some of it may be spoiled. I may say what I like; but I am guilty of disobedience. I have not done what I was bidden to do. I have made an

excuse of the weather; but I have been disobedient. Dear friends, it is yours to do what God bids you do, whether the heavens fall down or not; and, if you knew they would fall, and you could prop them up by disobedience, you have no right to do it. What may happen from our doing right, we have nothing to do with; we are to do right, and take the consequences cheerfully. Do you want obedience to be always rewarded by a spoonful of sugar? Are you such a baby that you will do nothing unless there shall be some little toy for you directly after? A man in Christ Jesus will do right, though it shall involve him in losses and crosses, slanders and rebukes; yea, even martyrdom itself. May God help you so to do! He that observeth the wind, and does not sow when he is bidden to cast his seed upon the waters, is guilty of disobedience.

Next, we are guilty also of *unbelief*, if we cannot sow because of the wind. Who manages the wind? You distrust him who is Lord of the north, and south, and east, and west. If you cannot reap because of a cloud, you doubt him who makes the clouds, to whom the clouds are the dust of his feet. Where is your faith? Where is your faith? “Ah!” says one, “I can serve God when I am helped, when I am moved, when I can see a hope of success.” That is poor service, service devoid of faith. May I not say of it, “Without faith it is impossible to please God”? Just in proportion to the quantity of faith, that there is in what we do, in that proportion will it be acceptable with God. Observing of winds and clouds is unbelief. We may call it prudence; but unbelief is its true name.

The next sin is really rebellion. So you will not sow unless God chooses to make the wind blow your way; and you will not reap unless God pleases to drive the clouds away? I call that revolt, rebellion. An honest subject loves the king in all weathers. The true servant serves his master, let his master do what he wills. Oh, dear friends, we are too often aiming at God’s throne! We want to get up there, and manage things, —

***“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his judgments, be the god of God.”***

Oh, if he would but alter my circumstances! What is this but tempting God, as they did in the wilderness, wishing him to do other than he does? It is wishing him to do wrong; for what he does is always right; but we must not so rebel, and vex his Holy Spirit, by complaining of what he

does. Do you not see that this is trying to throw the blame of our shortcomings upon the Lord? “If we do not sow, do not blame us; God did not send the right wind. If we did not reap, pray not to censure us; how could we be expected to reap, while there were clouds in the skies?” What is this but a wicked endeavor to blame God for our own neglect and wrong-doing, and to make Divine Providence the pack-horse upon which we pile our sins? God save us from such rebellion as that!

Another sin of which we are guilty, when we are always looking at our circumstances, is this, *foolish fear*. Though we may think that there is no sin in it, there is great sin in foolish fear. God has commanded his people not to fear; then we should obey him. There is a cloud; why do you fear it? It will be gone directly; not a drop of rain may fall out of it. You are afraid of the wind; why fear it? It may never come. Even if it were some deadly wind that was approaching, it might shift about, and not come near you. We are often fearing what never happens. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. Many a person has been afraid of what never would occur. It is a great pity to whip yourselves with imaginary rods. Wait till the trouble comes; else I shall have to tell you the story I have often repeated of the mother whose child would cry. She told it not to cry, but it would cry. “Well,” she said, “if you will cry, I will give you something to cry for.” If you get fearing about nothing, the probability is that you will get something really to fear, for God does not love his people to be fools.

There are some who fall into the sin of *penuriousness*. Observe, that Solomon was here speaking of liberality. He that observeth the clouds and the winds thinks “That is not a good object to help,” and that he will do harm if he gives *here*, or if he gives *there*. It amounts to this, poor miser, you want to save your money! Oh, the ways we have of making buttons with which to secure the safety of our pockets! Some persons have a button manufactory always ready. They have always a reason for not giving to anything that is proposed to them, or to any poor person who asks their help. I pray that every child of God here may avoid that sin. “Freely ye have received, freely give.” And since you are stewards of a generous Master, let it never be said that the most liberal of Lords has the stingiest of stewards.

Another sin is often called *idleness*. The man who does not sow because of the wind, is usually too lazy to sow; and the man who does not reap because of the clouds is the man who wants a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep. If we do not want to serve God, it is wonderful how many reasons we can find.

According to Solomon, the sluggard said there was a lion in the streets. "There is a lion in the way," said he, "a lion is in the streets." What a lie it was, for lions are as much afraid of streets as men are of deserts! Lions do not come into streets. It was idleness that said the lion was there. You were asked to preach the other night, and you could preach, but you said, no, you could not preach. However, you attended a political meeting, did you not, and talked twice as long as you would have done if you had preached? Another friend, asked to teach in Sunday-school, said, "I have no gifts of teaching." Somebody afterwards remarked of you that you had no gifts of teaching, and you felt very vexed, and asked what right had anyone to say that of you? I have heard persons run themselves down, when they have been invited to and Christian work, as being altogether disqualified; and when somebody has afterwards said, "That is true, you cannot do anything, I know," they have looked as if they would knock the speaker down. Oh, yes, yes, yes, we are always making these excuses about winds and clouds, and there is nothing in either of them. It is all meant to save our corn-seed, and to save us the trouble of sowing it.

Do you not see, I have made out a long list of sins wrapped up in this observing of winds and clouds? If you have been guilty of any of them, repent of your wrong-doing, and do not repeat it.

I will not keep you longer over this part of the subject. I will now make a third remark very briefly: LET US PROVE THAT WE HAVE NOT FALLEN INTO THIS EVIL. How can we prove it?

Let us prove it, firstly *by sowing in the most unlikely places*. What says Solomon? "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." Go, my brothers and sisters, and find out the most unlikely people, and begin to work for God with them. Now, try, if you can, to pick out the worst street in your neighborhood, and visit from house to house, and if there is a man or woman more given up than another, make that person the object of your prayers and of your holy endeavors. Cast

your bread upon the waters; then it will be seen that you are trusting God, not trusting the soil, nor trusting the seed.

Next, prove it *by doing good to a great many*. “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” Talk of Christ to everybody you meet with. If God has not blessed you to one, try another; and if he has blessed you with one, try two others; and if he has blessed you to two others, try four others; and always keep on enlarging your seed-plot as your harvest comes in. If you are doing much, it will be shown that you are not regarding the winds and the clouds.

Further, prove that you are not regarding winds and clouds *by wisely learning from the clouds* another lesson than the one they seem made to teach. Learn this lesson: “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth;” and say to yourself, “If God has made me full of grace, I will go and pour it out to others. I know the joy of being saved, if I have had fellowship with him, I will make a point of being more industrious than ever, because God has been unusually gracious to me. My fullness shall be helpful to others. I will empty myself for the good of others, even as the clouds pour down the rain upon the earth.”

Then, beloved, prove it still *by not wanting to know how God will work*. There is a great mystery of birth, how the human soul come to inhabit the body of the child, and how the child is fashioned. Thou knowest nothing about it, and thou canst know. Therefore do not look about thee to see what thou canst not understand, and pry into what is concealed from thee. Go out and work; go out and preach; go out and instruct others. Go out to seek to win souls. Thus shalt thou prove, in very truth, that thou art not dependent upon surroundings and circumstances.

Again, dear friend, prove this *by consistent diligence*. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.” “Be instant in season, out of season.” I had a friend, who had learned the way to put a peculiar meaning upon that passage of Scripture, “Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth.” He thought that the best way was to have money in both pockets; put one hand into each pocket, and then put both hands on the collection plate. I never objected to this interpretation of the passage. Now, the way to serve Christ. Is to do all you possibly can, and then as much more. “No,” says you, “that cannot be.” I do not

know that it cannot be. I found that the best thing I ever did was a thing I could not do. What I could do well, that was my own; but what I could not do, but still did, in the name and strength of the Eternal Jehovah, was the best thing I had done. Beloved, sow in the morning, sow in the evening, sow at night, sow all day long, for you can never tell what God will bless; but by this constant sowing, you will prove to demonstration that you are not observing the winds, nor regarding the clouds.

I now come to my concluding observation: LET US KEEP THIS EVIL OUT OF OUR HEARTS AS WELL AS OUT OF OUR WORK.

And, first, *let us give no heed to the winds and clouds of doctrine* that are everywhere about us now. Blow, blow, ye stormy winds; but you shall not move me. Clouds of hypotheses and inventions, come up with you, as many as you please, till you darken all the sky; but I will not fear you. Such clouds have come before, and have disappeared, and these will disappear, too. If you sit down, and think of man's inventions of error, and their novel doctrines, and how the churches have been bewitched by them, you will get into such a state of mind that you will neither sow nor reap. Just forget them. Give yourself to your holy service as if there were no winds and no clouds; and God will give you such comfort in your soul that you will rejoice before him, and be confident in his truth.

And then, next, *let us not lose hope because of doubts and temptations*. When the clouds and the winds get into your heart, when you do not feel as you used to feel, when you have not that joy and elasticity of spirit you once had, when your ardor seems a little damped, and even your faith begins to hesitate a little, go you to God all the same. Trust him still.

*“And when thine eye of faith grows dim,
Still hold to Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy strength shall be.”*

Do not go up and down like the mercury in the weather-glass; but know what you know, and believe what you believe. Hold to it, and God keep you in one mind, so that none can turn you; for, if not, if you begin to notice these things, you will neither sow nor reap.

Lastly, *let us follow the Lord's mind, and come what will*. In a word, set your face, like a flint, to serve God, by the maintenance of his truth, by your holy life, by the savor of your Christian character; and, that being done, defy earth and hell. If there were a crowd of devils between you and Christ, kick a lane through them by holy faith. They will fly before you. If you have but the courage to make an advance, they cannot stop you. You shall make a clear gangway through legions of them. Only be strong, and of good courage, and do not regard even the clouds from hell, or the blasts from the infernal pit; but go straight on in the path of right, and God being with you, you shall sow and you shall reap, unto his eternal glory.

Will some poor sinner here to-night, whether he sinks or swims, trust Christ? Come, if you feel less inclined to-night to hope, than you ever did before. Have hope even now; hope against hope; belief against belief. Cast yourself on Christ, even though he may seem to stand with a drawn sword in his hand, to run you through; trust even an angry Christ. Though your sins have grieved him, come and trust him. Do not stop for winds to blow over, or clouds to burst. Just as thou art, without one trace of anything that is good about thee, come and trust Christ as thy Savior, and thou art saved. God give you grace to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2264A

ECCLESIASTES 11-12

Chapter 11:1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*

Hoard not thy bread; for if thou dost, it will mildew, it will be of no use to thee. Cast it on the waters; scatter it abroad; give it to the unworthy men if need be. Some here have seen an allusion to the casting of seed into the Nile when it overflowed its banks. When the waters subsided, the corn would grow, and be gathered in “after many days.”

Give a portion to seven,

And if that be a perfect number, give beyond it,

And also to eight;

Give to more than thou canst afford to give to. Help some who are doubtful, some who are outside of the perfect number, and give them a portion, a fair portion. Our Savior went beyond Solomon; for he said, “Give to every man that asketh of thee.”

For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

Thou knowest not what need there may be of thy help; nor what need may come to thee, and how thou thyself mayest be helped by those whom thou helpest now.

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth;

The tree falls the way it is inclined; but when it has fallen, there it must be. God grant that you and I may fall the right way when the axe of death hews us down! Which way are we inclined?

He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

There are great mysteries which we can never comprehend. God alone knows how the soul comes into the body, or even how the body is fashioned. This must remain with him. We do not know how sinners are regenerated. We know not how the Spirit of God works upon the mind of man, and transforms the sinner into a saint. We do not know. There are some who know too much already. I have not half the desire to know that I have to believe and to love. Oh, that we loved God more, and trusted God more! We might then get to heaven if we knew even less than we do.

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

You cannot make the gospel enter into men's hearts. You cannot tell how it does enter and change them. The Spirit of God does that; but your duty is to go on telling it out. Go on spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ; in the morning, and in the evening, and all day long, scatter the good seed of the kingdom. You have nothing to do with the result of your sowing; that remains with the Lord. That which you sow in the morning may prosper, or the seed that you scatter in the evening; possibly God will bless both. You are to keep on sowing, whether you reap or not.

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

Take Christ away, and this is a truthful estimate of human life. Put Christ into the question, and Solomon does not hit the mark at all. If we have Christ with us, whether the days are light or dark, we walk in the light, and our soul is happy and glad; but apart from Christ, the estimate of life which is given here is an exactly accurate one — a little brightness and long darkness, a flash and then midnight. God save you from living a merely natural life! May you rise to the supernatural! May you get out of the

lower life of the mere animal into the higher life of the regenerated soul! If the life of God be in you, then you shall go from strength to strength like the sun that shineth unto the perfect day.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Young man, will you dare, then, to follow your passions, and the devices of your own heart, with this ate the back, “God will bring thee into judgment?” Oh no, the advice of Solomon apparently so evil, is answered by warning at the end, which is also true, —

Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

“Remove sorrow,” or rather, anger, ambition, or anything else that would cause sorrow, “from thy heart; and put away evil from thy flesh.” Let not thy fleshly nature rule thee; thou art in the period when flesh is strong towards evil, when “vanity” is the ruin of many.

Chapter 12:1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

Now we get on solid ground. There is an irony in the advice, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” There is no irony here; there is solid, sound advice: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” May every young man take this advice, and carry it out!

While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,

These arms and hands of ours shake by reason of weakness.

And the strong men shall bow themselves,

These limbs, these legs of ours, begin to bend under the weight they have to support.

And the grinders cease because they are few,

The teeth are gone.

And those that look out of the windows be darkened,

The eyesight begins to fail.

And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

The old man sleeps very lightly; anything awakens him. He hides away from public business. The doors are shut in the streets.

Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way.

There is none of the courage of youth. Daring is gone; prudence, not to say cowardice, sits on the throne.

And the almond tree shall flourish,

The hair is white and grey, like the early peach or almond tree in the beginning of the year.

And the grasshopper shall be a burden,

A little trouble weighs the old man down. He has no energy now. The grasshopper is a burden.

And desire shall fail: because men to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden cord be broken.

Before the spinal cord is broken, or the skull becomes emptied of the living inhabitants.

Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

The circulation of the blood begins to fail, the heart grows weak, it will soon stop. The man's career is nearly over.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

This will happen to us all, either to return to dust or else return to God. Whether we die, and return to dust, or live until the coming of Christ, our spirit shall return to God who gave it. May the return be a joyous one for each of us!

Vanity or vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads,

They prick us onward, as the goad does the bullock, when he is trying to stop instead of ploughing in the furrow.

And as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

The words of the wise are driven home, like nails, and clinched. There is one Shepherd who, by means of his servants' words, leads his flock where he would have them go.

And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much of the study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the duty of man.

Or, "this is the whole of man." It makes a man of him when he fears God and keeps his commandments; he has that which makes him "the whole man."

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Depend upon it that it will be so. At the last great day, there will be a revelation of everything, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Nor need the righteous fear that revelation, for they will only magnify in that day the amazing grace of God which has put all their iniquities away; and

then shall all men know how great the grace of God was in passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 748, 747, 753.

HARVEST JOY

SERMON NO. 2265

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 17TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 6TH, 1890.

*“Thou hast magnified the nation, and increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.”
— Isaiah 9:3.*

NOTICE that I make a correction in the version from which I am reading. The Authorized Version has it, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.” This is not consistent with the connection; the Revised Version has very properly put it, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy.” I have not any learning to display; but I think I could show it to you, if this were the proper time, how the passage came to be read with a “not”, and I could also prove to you that, in this instance, the Revisers were right in making their alteration.

To-night, there are about eighty-two persons, who have confessed Christ before the church, and have been baptized, who are to be received into our fellowship; and we feel very grateful for this large addition to our members; and all the more so because it is no strange thing; but month by month, all the year round, they continue to come, though, not in such large numbers as at this time. God be thanked for thus blessing us! We cannot allow these occasions to pass over without joying before the Lord as men rejoice when they gather in their sheaves of corn.

To bring out your joy, think of how we should feel if we did not have an increase in the church, where very few are ever added to them. The good old people seem quite content to be very few. Their notion is that the way to heaven is very narrow, as indeed it is, and that therefore they must not expect many to find their way. I remember a church where the good old

deacons used to say of the converts, “Summer them and winter them. Keep them out till we have tried them for a very long time.” It came to pass, after the process of “summering and wintering”, that a great many of them never came forward at all. Though they were very excellent people, they never summoned courage enough to join such a church. Did you ever hear a farmer say of his wheat, “Summer it and winter it, and then take it into the barn”? No, farmers are not such fools. But these good men were so very wise that they became otherwise; so they said, “Keep the corn out in the field; else you will bring in some poppies, or some corn-flowers, and we do not want them. Keep the converts out of the church till you are sure that there are no hypocrites among them.” Well, dear friends, we are not at all of this mind. We try to use every caution, and great prudence; and our friends do not come into this church without experiencing an examination, some of them even think it to be an ordeal; yet I find that the more difficult it is to get into a church, the more people want to come into it; and whenever the barriers are lowered, and you tell people that they may come without any test as to the state of their souls, nobody cares to come. Well, we have taken pains and care, and have sought only to welcome the worthy, that is, those who are trusting in Jesus, yet we have had a great number come. But suppose that we had none. Well, I hope every Christian man and woman here would be troubled about it. I should not wonder if the question arose, “Had we not better put somebody else on the platform?” That somebody who is now here would be the first to say, “If I am doing no good, let somebody else come and try; for it would be sad and sickening business to be fishing for souls, and never catching anything.” Last winter, at Menton, I went out in a boat, where I was assured that there were shoals of fish; and I had a line, I should think it was a hundred and fifty feet long, and after waiting hour after hour, and never feeling the fish bite, I gave up the useless occupation. I think every minister is bound to give up the spiritual fishery in any particular place if, after many days’ toil, he has caught nothing for Christ. Rachel says, “Give me children, or I die.” Christ servant says, “Give me converts, or I die.” Indeed, we are dead as far as our ministry is concerned unless God blesses it.

We also feel that we ought to be glad when others are joined to the church, because we look back, with exquisite pleasure, upon our own joining it. I

remember the trouble it cost me to join the church. I think I went to see the pastor some four or five days running; he was always too busy to see me, till at last I told him it did not matter, for I want to go to the church-meeting, and propose myself as a member; and then he, all of a sudden, found time to see me, and so I managed to get into the church, and confess my faith in Christ. Oh, dear friends, that was one of the best days' work I ever did, when I openly declared my faith in Christ, and united myself with his people! I think many here could say the same; they remember when they united with the people of God, and publicly avowed their faith. You do not regret it brethren, do you? I am sure you feel that it was a happy day when you could say, —

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

By the peace of mind which has come to us from joining with the people of God after believing in Christ, we feel glad to see other young soldiers stooping to take up the cross of Christ, and following him, “without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

Looking at our text, I notice in it, first, A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION. If you look carefully at the passage, you will soon see it: “*Thou* hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy.”

Observe, first, that *conversion must be the Lord's work*. The only multiplication of the Church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends: “*Thou* hast multiplied the nation.” If we add to our churches by becoming worldly, by taking in persons who have never been born again; if we add to our churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the life of the worldling, our increase is worth nothing at all; it is a loss rather than a gain. If we add to our churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions, rather than by explaining truth to the understanding; if we add to our churches otherwise than by the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Christ Jesus, the increase is of no worth whatever. A man picked himself up from the gutter, and rolled up against Mr. Rowland Hill, one night as he went home, and he said, “Mr. Hill, I am pleased to see you, sir. I am one of your converts.” Rowland said, “I thought it was very likely you were. You are not one of God's converts, or else you would not be drunk.” There is a great lesson in that answer.

My converts are no good; Rowland Hill's converts could get drunk; but the converts of the Spirit of God, those are really renewed in the spirit of their mind, by a supernatural operation, these are a real increase to the church of God. "Thou hast multiplied the nation." Pray hard that the Lord may continue to send us converts. He never sends the wrong people. However poor they may be, however illiterate, if they are converted, as they will be if the Lord sends them, they will be the very people that we want. May God send us thousands more!

The text also teaches us, with a word of discrimination, that *conversion must be such as the Lord describes* in this chapter: "The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." When God brings men to the church, they are the people who have undergone a very remarkable change. They have come out of darkness, palpable, horrible, into light, marvelous and delightful. God sends no other than these. If you are not changed characters, if you are not new creatures in Christ Jesus, if you cannot say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," the church cannot receive you as you are, and God has not sent you. Now, who can turn us from darkness unto light but God? Who can work this great miracle within the heart? Darkness of heart is very hard to move. Who but God can make the eternal light burst through the natural darkness, and turn us from the power of Satan unto God?

Next, *conversion must have a distinct relation to Christ*. Look down the chapter, just a little way, and you come to this wonderful passage: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We want converts who know this Christ, men and women to whom he is "Wonderful", to whom he has become the "Counselor." We want no additions to the church of those who cannot call him "The mighty God. The everlasting Father." We want men and women to whom Christ has become "The Prince of Peace." If these are added to us, the church groweth exceedingly. If others are added, they do but increase our burden; they become our weakness; in many cases they become our disgrace. Dear hearers, you know whether you are trusting Christ or not. If you are, come and confess him. If you are not, weep in secret places, and cry to God the

Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to you as the Wonderful, Counselor, and the mighty God, and then, when you know him as your Savior, come and join yourself to his people, and God will, in your case, have multiplied the nation.

Once more, about this discrimination, *the joy must be such as God gives*. The text says, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy.” The joy that we ought to have to-night, the joy of any growing church, will be joy such as God gives. That is the kind of joy we desire to have. If anybody wishes to see the church grow that we may excel other churches, that is not the joy that God gives. If we like to see converts because we are glad that our opinions should be spread, God does not give that joy. If we crave converts that we may steal them from other people, God does not give that joy, if it be a joy. I do not think God is the lover of sheep-stealers, and there are plenty such about. We do not desire to increase our numbers by taking Christian people away from other Christian communities. No, the joy which God gives us is clear, unselfish delight in Christ being glorified, in souls being saved, in truths being spread, and in error being baffled. God give us a joy over those who are added to us, which shall be pure, and Christlike, and heavenly! Oh, that he might increase such joy! I think that he *has* increased it.

Did you ever worship in a place where there were more pews than people? Did you ever go to a church or chapel where the preacher could preach upon anything except the gospel of Christ, where you might hear about anything except the precious blood of Christ? That, the minister would be sure not to mention. Then, I like I see you go grumbling down the aisle after every service, or you sit there, and look up at the pulpit, and long for what you never hear, till the Sabbath becomes more wearisome than any day of the week. Oh, dear! Few people; little to be got; very little to be given; a terrible “starvation camp;”, where every man looks at his fellow, and wonders who is going to die next. Well, now, we ought to thank God that it is not so with us. Look on this company gathered here to-night. Think of the congregation we had this morning; remember the deep attention, and think in how many cases God has blessed the Word to the hearers. I never, personally, felt so weak, or felt as great a burden in preaching; yet I never had so large a blessing; there are more converts than

ever. Glory be to God, this is the kind of joy that comes from him, in his Word, in his power, that out of weakness makes his servant strong.

So much by way of discrimination.

Now, secondly, notice a WORD OF DESCRIPTION, which is the main part of the text. The joy of the church in receiving converts may be compared to the joy in harvest. In all nations, the time of reaping the corn, and gathering it into the garner, has been regarded as a festival. What is the joy of harvest?

Well, it is *a joy which we ought to expect*. The husbandman expects a harvest. He says, "It is so many weeks to harvest." He sows his seed with a view to harvest, He turns in a man to clear out the weeds with a view to a harvest. Well, now, every church should be looking out for a spiritual harvest. One said to me, once, "I have preached for several years, and I believe God has blessed the word; but nobody ever comes forward to tell me so." I said to him, "Next Lord's-day, say to the people, 'I shall be in the vestry when the sermon is finished, to see friends who have been converted.'" "To his surprise, ten or twelve came in; and he was quite taken aback; but, of course, quite delighted. He had not looked for a harvest, so of course he did not get it. You know the story I tell of my first student, Mr. Medhurst. He went out to preach on Tower Hill, , Sunday after Sunday. He was not then my student; but one of the young men in the church. He came to me, and said, "I have been out preaching now for several months on tower Hill, and I have not seen one conversion." I said to him, rather sharply, "Do you expect God is going to bless you every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh! No, sir; I do not expect him to do that." "Then," I replied, "that is why you do not get a blessing." We ought to expect a blessing. God has said, "My Word shall not return unto me void;" and it will not. We ought to look for a harvest. He who preaches the gospel with his whole heart, ought to be surprised if he does not hear of conversions; and he ought to begin to say in his heart, "I will know the reason why," and never stop till he has found it out. The joy of the harvest is what we have a right to expect.

The joy of harvest, next, *is a joy which has respect for former toil*. He is bound to rejoice in a harvest who has sorrowed in ploughing, and in the sowing of the seed, and in watching his crop when it was in the ear, and

when frost, and blight, and mildew, threatened to destroy it. Brothers and sisters, many of us here can rejoice with the joy of harvest, because, in those converted to Christ, we see the fruit of our soul's travail. I thank God first, and I thank many of you next, that when I sit to see enquirers, I find that I am very generally the spiritual grandfather of those who come, rather than their father in the faith; for I find that you, whom God gave me in years past are, many of you, diligent in seeking the souls of others. In the case of many of you who join the church, their conversion is due to this sister and to that, to this brother and to that, rather than distinctly to my ministry. I am very glad to have it so. During the last two days I have spoken to two friends, both of whom said to me, "I am your spiritual grandchild." One from America said so this morning. I asked, "How is that?" The answer was, "Mr. So-and-so, whom you brought to Christ, came out to America, and he brought me to Christ." You who have had any part in the conversion of these eighty-two, who are to be received to-night, will rejoice; in proportion as you have sighed, and prayed, and been beaten, and foiled, and disappointed, in that very proportion you will rejoice with the joy of harvest.

But, next, it is a *joy which has solid ground to go upon*. I do not know of a more joyful occasion than when young men and women, and, for the matter of that, old men and women, too, are brought to confess Christ, and to unite with his people. It is a very joyful thing to attend a wedding; but it is always a speculation as to how it will turn out; but when you come to see a soul yield itself to Christ, there is no speculation about that; you have a blessed certainty. Oh, methinks the angels sing more sweetly than ever as they hear a man, or woman, or child say, "I trust in Jesus; I confess his name." When we know and believe that true faith in Christ means present salvation, there is a great joy about that. I heard, the other day, of some preachers who say that there is no such thing as present salvation; and though they constantly preach, they tell the people, every now and then, that they must be saved when they come to die; but there is no such thing as being saved now. I should like to present those brethren with a little "Catechism for the Young and Ignorant;," which Mr. Cruden was wont to give away; for, if they are not "young", they certainly must be "ignorant" of the first principles of the faith. You are saved, dear hearer, if you have believed in Christ Jesus. You are saved even now. If you were

not, I do not see any reason why we should rejoice over you with the joy of harvest.

Moreover, we believe that, if you have trusted Christ, you will be saved eternally. Angels do not rejoice prematurely over repentant sinners. They never have to say to one another, "Gabriel, Michael, you made a very terrible mistake the other day. You rejoiced in the presence of God over that man who, after all, has gone down to hell. You rang the bells too soon." Angels do not do that. Jesus gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand. Therefore, we feel that the confession of Christ is, in itself, a thing to rejoice over; and the immediate salvation that goes with it, and the eternal salvation that is included in it, warrant us in rejoicing with the joy of the harvest.

Moreover, this is *a joy which looks to the future*. Men rejoice in the harvest because they remember that, all through the winter, they will feed upon the food which they are now gathering. The poorest man in London has reason to be thankful for a good harvest; for it will help to make food cheaper. We are to enjoy in days to come what we gather in the harvest-time. There are sixteen girls coming from the Orphanage to join the church, and I am rejoicing in my heart over sixteen women who will, I trust, during a long life glorify Christ; sixteen matrons in the church who shall be Deborahs, Dorcasses, and Phoebes, or whoever else you may like to think of among holy women. The boys also who come, however young they may be, and however little they may appear in some men's eyes, we cannot tell to what they will grow. I may be receiving to-night a Livingstone, or a Moffat, or a Williams, or a Whitefield, or a Wesley, or some other servant of God, who, in some sphere or other, will serve him right nobly.

Beloved, some of us will soon be gone. There are some here who are older than I am, who, in the natural course of things, will soon sleep in the cemetery. Are you not glad to see others coming forward? They will "hold the fort" when you can no longer stand upon its walls; and, on account of this hope of the future, I rejoice with the joy of harvest.

This is *a joy which we may join*; for, in the harvest, anybody who likes may rejoice. There is the proprietor of the field; he rejoices. How greatly

Christ rejoices! There are laborers; they may shout as they bring home the loads; they know what that field of wheat has cost. Let us, who are working for Jesus here, have to joy of harvest. The on-lookers, too, as they go by, see the harvest gathered in, will stop, and even give a shout over the hedge. If you are not yourself saved, you might be glad that other people are. Even if you are not yourself going to heaven, rejoice that others are choosing the blessed road. I invite even you to come, and share with us the joy of harvest. The gleaner, Ruth, over yonder says, "I have stooped many times. I have almost broken my back over the work; and I have only picked up this little handful." I know you, sister; and I am pleased that you should bring even one to Christ. I know you, my brother; and I rejoice with you that you should bring even one child to the Savior. Though you be but a gleaner, join heartily with us to-night in the joy of the harvest.

Then something happens in our harvest that cannot happen in the common harvest; for the harvested ones rejoice, Sheaves cannot sing, ears of wheat cannot lift up their voices; but in our harvest the happiest of all are those who are called by divine grace. And, while they are happy, and we are happy, and all are happy, the angels hovering over the assembly to-night will mark this the first Sabbath in July, and it shall be a red-letter day even to them, so many shall to-night, for the first time, come to the table of their Lord, and here confess his name.

I have a great deal more to say, but our time is nearly gone. I can only say that this is *a joy which has its moderating tone*. "Why!" say you, "what is that?" The farmer says, "I have got that load in very well; but I wonder how it will thresh out." I often think of you who are added to the church, and I think that you are first-rate people, and that I never saw better; but I wonder how you will turn out when you get inside the church. There are members of the church whom I never hear of as doing anything for Christ; they may be working away quietly, but I am afraid that some are not. I know that there are some in this church who are no better than they should be; indeed, that is true of us all; but there are some who are not what they ought to be, as to practical service for Christ. We get many passengers to ride in the coach, but not so many to pull it; plenty of people to eat the fruit, but not so many to plant fresh trees. Yet I say not even this very heavily, or with any great emphasis, for the bulk of the

members of this church are earnestly engaged in the service of God, for which I bless his name. Still that is the question concerning the harvest, "How will it thresh out?"

There is another question: How much of it will be found to be real wheat in the last great day? Ah, we may judge our very best, and examine very carefully; but there always will be the goats in the sheep, and the tares with the wheat; and that is the dash of bitterness in our cup of rejoicing. God grant that we may not have many added to us who will deteriorate instead of growing better! How will they stand at the last great day?

"Well," says one, "I am glad that you make that remark; I have always been opposed to revivals, because they bring in so many, and many of the converts fall away." Dear friends, do you remember Mr. Fullerton's answer to that? I thought it was as good and as complete as it was humorous. He said that when persons say that they do not like revivals because certain of the converts afterwards turn back, and they are like his countryman, who picked up a sovereign; but when he went with it to the bank, it turned out to be a light sovereign, and he only got eighteen shillings for it. Mark you, he found it, so the eighteen shillings were clear gain. Some time after, he saw another sovereign lying in the road, and he would not pick it up; "for," he said, "I lost two shillings by the one I picked up the other day; I shall not take you up; very likely I should only get eighteen shillings for you." So he passed on, and left it where it was. I cannot imagine an Irishman being so unwise; certainly, no Scotchman would have been; and I think no Englishman. However, that is the style of unwisdom of a man who says that at a revival, so many come in, and then so many turn out to be bad. Well, but those who remain are a clear gain, and you ought to desire to have a like gain again and again; you will get rich through such losses, if God will continue to give them to you. However, I hope that I shall not have any light sovereigns to-night. Yet, if these converts so not turn out to be twenty shillings in the pound, but only eighteen shillings, I will be greatly rejoiced to have the eighteen shillings, and God shall have all the glory.

I think that I will here pause, though there is another division of my discourse; and, in closing, I will ask four questions.

First, *What say we of those who never sow?* Well, they will never reap; they will never have the joy of harvest. Am I addressing, in this great assembly, any professing Christians who never sow, never speak a word for Christ, never call at a house, and try to introduce the Savior's name, never seek to bring children to the Savior, take no part in the Sunday-school, or any other service for Christ? Do I address some lazy man here, spiritually alive only for himself? Oh, poor soul, I would not like to be you, because I doubt whether you can be spiritually alive at all! Surely, he who lives for himself is dead while he lives; and you will never know the joy of bringing souls to Christ; and when you get to heaven, if you ever do get there, you will never be able to say, "Here am I, Father, and the children thou hast given me." Thou wilt have to abide eternally alone, having brought no fruit unto God in the form of converts from sin. Shake yourselves up, brothers and sisters, from sinful sloth. "Oh!" says one, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, I will tell you your name; it is Cain. You are your brother's murderer; for every professing Christian, who is not his brother's keeper, is his brother's killer; and be you sure that it is so; for you may kill by neglect quite as surely as you may kill by the bow or by the dagger.

Next, *What say we to those who have never reaped?* Well, that depends. Perhaps you have only just begun to sow. Do not expect to reap before God's time. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." There is a set season for reaping. But, if you have been a very long time sowing, and you have never reaped, may I ask the question, Where do you buy your seed? If I were to sow my garden year by year, and nothing ever came up, I should change my seeds-man. Perhaps that you have bad seed, my dear friend, and have not sown the gospel pure and undiluted. You have not brought it out in all its fullness. Go to the Word of God, and get "seed for the sower" of a kind that will feed your own soul, for it is "bread for the eater"; when you sow that kind of seed, it will come up.

Next, What shall I say to those who know the Lord, but have never confessed him. What shall I say to you? Well, I do not think that I will say what I think; but I think very seriously about persons who have been converted, and yet never tell the man who was the means of saving them that it has happened. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall confess Christ; the dying thief did not confess him, did he? He was not baptized."

No, but he was a dying thief, recollect; and if you are not baptized, I think that you will be a living thief, for you will rob God of his glory, and you will rob his servant also of the comfort which he ought to receive. Our wages are to hear that souls are saved; and, if we do not hear of it, we are robbed of our wages. You muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, if you allow a man to toil and labor, and you get good from his services, and you give him no return by way of encouragement. Come out, you who have hitherto hidden away like cowards! Men or women, if you love Christ, and have never confessed him, come out straight away, and be not ashamed to say, "I am a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb." May the great Captain of our salvation force you to do this right speedily!

Once more, *What say we to those who do confess Christ, and who are going to confess him to-night?* Well, we say this: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" Beloved, when you do come in, keep your garments unspotted from the world. Come in with a true heart, and a reverent spirit, with this prayer upon your lips, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." May none of you who are to-night gathered into the barn turn out to be mere weeds dried in the sun! The Lord save you, and keep you; and may you remember that the vows of the Lord are upon you; and may you never, in any way, dishonor that great name by which you are henceforth to be named!

God bless every one of this great mass of people! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God save all of us from that fearful doom, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2265A

ISAIAH 49:13-26

Verse 13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

When God blesses his Church, he blesses the world through her. Hence, heaven and earth are invited to be glad in the gladness of the Church of God. Oh, that God would visit his church; nay, he has already done so, and I feel inclined to cry out, as the text does, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people.”

But Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.

We often judge contrary to the truth; and when God is blessing us, we dream that he has forgotten us. Oh, wicked unbelief; cruel unbelief! It robs God of glory; it robs us of comfort. It snatches the song out of our mouth, and fills our soul with groaning: “Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.”

Can a woman forget the sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee.

The child is in a condition in which it reminds the mother of itself; her sucking child, her own child. Can she forget it? It is not according to nature, —

*“‘Yet,’ saith the Lord, ‘should nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,
Zion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.’”*

What is true of God’s Church as a whole, is true of every member of it. If any of you think that God has passed over you, one of his believing children, you think what is untrue. He cannot do it. It would be contrary to his nature. As long as he is God, he must remember his people.

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;

How appropriately Christ can say this when he looks on the nail-prints, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands”! As I said, this morning, Jesus can give nothing, he can take nothing, he can do nothing, he can hold nothing, without remembering his people: “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” How I love that verse of Toplady’s hymn that speaks of this blessed truth! —

*“My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress’d on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace:
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.”*

Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste;

There shall be many of them. Converts shall be added to the church in great numbers. They shall hurry up; they shall not be long in coming. Very often they delay too long. The promise is, “Thy children shall make haste.”

Thy destroyers and they that make thee waste shall go forth of thee.

I wish this were carried out. If it were, many of the churches of Christ, which are plagued with false doctrines and worldly habits, which are laying them waste, would be delivered from those curses. The enemies outside the walls, however malicious they are, will never be so mischievous as the traitors inside the fortress. Save Troy from the wooden

horse, and save Zion from the traitors in her midst, that seek to do her harm.

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.

There is a great company coming. The church is going to be increased. Have faith in God. We are not going to receive them now by ones and twos; we thank God we receive them by tens and scores. They are coming by hundreds and by thousands; let us expect them. By faith, let us see them even now coming.*

As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

What an ornament to a church her converts are! These are our jewels. We care nothing for gorgeous architecture or grand music in the worship of God. Our true building is composed of our converts; our best music is their confession of faith. May God give us more of it!

For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

Sometimes a church is brought very low; there are no additions, there is no unity, everything is breaking up, and going to pieces. When God visits that church, what a change is seen! Then people come flocking to it, and the church wonders whence the converts came. May the Lord make us wonder in that fashion! It will take a great deal to astonish us, after all these years of mercy; yet the Lord can do it. It may be he will make these latter days to be better than the former. Though we have had nearly forty years of blessing together, he may yet increase it, and give us to rejoice yet more and more.

Thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

We do not mind how they are brought if they do but come; some in the arms, and some after the Oriental method of putting the child on the shoulder. When God lifts up his hand, great wonders of mercy and grace are wrought.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers:

It will take a long time before they learn that art, for kings and queens have generally been destroyers of the Church of Christ. Those will be grand days when kings shall be the nourishers of the Church, and queens her nursing mothers.

They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet:

I have heard the first part of this verse quoted as an argument for the union of Church and State: “Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers.” I have not the slightest objection, if they will bow down to the Church “with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet.” What is proposed to us is that the Church should bow down to the State, with her face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of the feet of the state, by becoming obedient to rules and regulations made by princes and parliaments. This is not according to the mind of God, nor according to the heart of his people.

And thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

If we wait for Christ, for his coming, for the help which he brings, for the salvation that is wrought by him, we shall not be ashamed.

Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

The mighty may hold their prey with a strong hand; but there is a stronger hand that will deliver the captive. It is Jehovah, the Savior, the Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob, who says, "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." Here is a divine promise for every parent to plead: "I will save thy children." May the Lord give you grace to claim that promise, even now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 423, 1,004.

*It is remarkable that this sermon and exposition, which were selected long ago for publication this month, should be issued just as the Tabernacle church is again having a large ingathering of converts. Those who have read the sermons regularly, have been struck with the singular appropriateness of several of them, either to the condition of the Tabernacle church, or the general state of the churches of our land. A notable instance of this fact is described in the "Personal Notes" of the *Sword and the Trowel* for July. Many can see the overruling hand of the Lord even in the order in which the sermons have been published.

BLESSING FOR BLESSING

SERMON NO. 2266

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 24TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 26TH, 1890.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing 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.” — Ephesians 1:3, 4.

GOD blesses us; let us bless him. I pray that every heart here may take its own part in this service of praise.

*“O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord,
And all that in me is,
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless!”*

Sit in your seats, and keep on blessing God from the first word of the sermon to the last; and then go on blessing God till the last hour of life, and enter into heaven into the eternal glory, still blessing God. It should be our life to bless him who gave us our life. It should be our delight to bless him whom give us all our delights. So says the text, and so let us do: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our first occupation, at this time, will be that of BLESSING GOD. But how can we bless God? Without doubt the less is blessed of the Greater. Can the Greater be blessed by the less? Yes, but it must be in a modified sense. God blesses us with all spiritual blessings; but we cannot give him any blessings. He needs nothing at our hand; and if he did, we could not give it. “If I were hungry,” saith the Lord, “I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.” God has an all-sufficiency within himself, and can never be thought of as dependent upon his creatures, or as receiving anything from his creatures which he needs to receive. He is

infinitely blessed already; we cannot add to his blessedness. When he blesses us, he gives us a blessedness that we never had before; but when we bless him, we cannot by one iota increase his absolutely infinite perfectness. David said to the Lord, "My goodness extendeth not to thee." This was as if he had said, Let me be as holy, as devout, and as earnest as I may, I can do nothing for thee; thou art too high, too holy, too great for me to be really able to bless thee in the sense which thou dost bless me.

How, then, do we bless God? Well, I should say, first, that this language is *the expression of gratitude*. We say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and we say with Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We can bless God by praising him, extolling him, desiring all honor for him, ascribing all good to him, magnifying and lauding his holy name. Well, we will do that. Sit still, if you will, and let your heart be silent unto God; for no language can ever express the gratitude that, I trust, we feel to him who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Praise him also in your speech. Break the silence; speak of his glory. Invite other to cry with you, "Hallelujah!" or "Hallels unto Jah!" "Praise to Jehovah!" Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. Oh, that all flesh would magnify the Lord with us!

This language is also the *utterance of assent* to all the blessedness that is ascribed to the Lord. After hearing how great he is, how glorious he is, how happy he is, we bless him by saying, "Amen; so let it be! So would we have it! He is none too great for us, none too blessed for us. Let him be great, glorious and blessed, beyond all conception." I think that we bless God when we say concerning the whole of his character, "Amen. This God is our God for ever and ever." Let him be just what the Bible says he is; we accept him as such. Sternly just, he will not spare the guilty. Amen, blessed be his name! Infinitely gracious, ready to forgive. Amen, so let it be! Everywhere present, always omniscient. Amen, so again do we wish him to be! Everlastingly the same, unchanging in his truth, his promise, his nature. We again say that we are glad of it, and we bless him. He is just such a God as we love. He is indeed God to us, because he is really God, and we can see that he is so, and every attribute ascribed to him is a fresh proof to us that Jehovah is the Lord. Thus, we bless him by adoration.

We also bless God in *the spreading of his kingdom*. We can win hearts to him through his mighty grace blessing our service. We can fight against evil; we can set up a standard for the truth. We can be willing to suffer in repute, and every way else, for his name's sake. We can by his grace do all this, and thus we are blessing God. Surely, dear friends, if it is well-pleasing in God's sight that sinners should repent, if it makes heaven the gladder, and makes joy in the presence of the angels that men should repent, we are in the best and most practical way blessing God when we labor to bring men to repentance through faith in Christ Jesus.

There is also another way of blessing God which, I trust, we shall all endeavor to practice; and that is by *the doing good to his children*. When they are sick, visit them. When they are downcast, comfort them. When they are poor, relieve them. When they are hard pressed by outward adversaries, stand at their side, and help them. You cannot bless the Head, but you can bless the feet; and when you have refreshed the feet, you have refreshed the Head. He will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If they be naked, and you clothe them; if they be sick, and you visit them; if they be hungry, and you feed them; you do in this respect bless God. David not only said, "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;" but added, "but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." You can be good to them, and in that respect you may be blessing God. He has done so much for us, that we would fain do something for him; and when we have reached the limit of our possibilities, we long to do more. We wish that we had more money to give, more talent to use, more time that we could devote to his cause, we wish that we had more heart and more brain; sometimes we wish that we had more tongue, and we sing, —

***"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"***

This word "blessed" is an attempt to break the narrow circle of our capacity. It is an earnest endeavor of a burning heart to lay at God's feet crowns of glory which it cannot find: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But now, secondly, we shall spend a little time in VIEWING GOD in the light in which Paul sets him before us: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We bless the god of nature. What beauties he has strewn around us! We bless the God of providence. How bountifully doth he send us harvests and fruitful seasons! We bless the God of grace who hath redeemed us, and adopted us as his children. But here is a peculiar aspect of God, which should call forth our highest praises; for he is called “the God and Father or our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When we see God *in connection with Christ*, we see God through Christ, when we see God in Christ, then our hearts are all aflame, and we burst out with, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God apart from Christ — that is a great and glorious theme; but the human mind fails to grasp it. The infinite Jehovah, who can conceive him? “Our God is a consuming fire.” Who can draw near to him? But in the Mediator, in the Person of the God, the Man, in whom we find blended human sympathy and divine glory, we can draw nigh to God. There it is that we get our hands upon the golden harp-strings, and resolve that every string shall be struck to the praise of God in Christ Jesus.

But note carefully that God is described here as *the God our Lord Jesus Christ*. When Jesus knelt in prayer, he prayed to our God. When Jesus leaned in faith upon the promises, he trusted in God that he would deliver him. When our Savior sang on the passover night, the song was unto God. When he prayed in Gethsemane, with bloody sweat, the prayer was unto our God. Jesus said to Mary at the sepulcher, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” How we ought to bless God when we think that he is the God, whom our Redeemer blesses! This is the God who said of Christ, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Delightful thought! When I approach Jehovah, I approach the God or our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, when I see his blood-stained footprints there on the ground before me, though I put my shoe off from my foot, for the place is holy ground, yet I follow with confidence where my Friend, my Savior, my Husband, my Head has been before me; and I rejoice as I worship the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is also called *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is a great mystery. Think not that we shall ever understand the high relationship between the first and second Persons of the blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son. We speak of eternal filiation, which is a term that does not convey to us any great meaning; it simply covers up our ignorance. How God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as God, we do not know; and perhaps to wish to gaze into this tremendous mystery were as great a folly as to look at the sun, and blind ourselves with its brilliance. It is so; that ought to be enough for us. God the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ as to his divine nature: “Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee.” He is also his Father as to the human side of his nature. He was begotten of the Holy Ghost. That body of his, that human life, came of God; not of Joseph, not of man. Born of a woman, God sent forth his Son; but he was his Son then. It was God’s son that was born at Bethlehem. Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Now take the two natures of their wondrous blending in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you see how the great God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, sweet thought, he is my Father, too; my Father is Christ’s Father. Jesus Christ’s Father is our Father, and he teaches us all to call him, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” Often in prayer he said, “Father”; and he bids us say the same, putting the plural pronoun before it, “Our Father.” Now will you not bless the Lord, who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you not feel a glowing in your hearts, as you think of the near and dear relationship into which you are brought through Jesus Christ? The God of Jesus Christ, the Father of Jesus Christ, is my God, my Father, too. Blessed, blessed, blessed, for ever blessed be that dear name!

Our third occupation, at this time, is that of **RECOUNTING HIS GREAT MERCIES**. I will read the rest of 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.”

This recapitulation of mercies is written with *full assurance*; and you will not bless God unless you have a touch of that same experience. Paul does not say, “Who has, we hope and trust, blessed us,” but he writes, “Who hath blessed us.” Ah, beloved, if you have a full assurance that God has

blessed you in Christ, and that now his smile rests upon you, and all the benisons of the covenant are stored there for you, I think that you cannot help saying, “Blessed, blessed be the name of the Most High!” that doubt, that trembling, this it is that empties out the marrow from the bone of our blessedness. If you have suspicions about the truth of this precious Book, if you have questions about the truth of the doctrines of grace, if you have doubts about your own interest in those things. I do not wonder that you do not praise God, for a blessing which is only mine by peradventure, well, peradventure I shall be grateful for it; but peradventure I shall not. But if I know whom I have believed, if I have a firm grip of spiritual mercies, if all heavenly things are mine in Christ my Lord, I can sing, “Wake up, my glory; awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake right early.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”

With this full assurance should come *intense delight*: “Who hath blessed us.” God has blessed us. Come, brethren, he has not done some trifle for us, which we can afford to ignore. He has not merely given us some absolutely necessary boons, which we must have, for we could not live without them; but he has in grace dealt still more abundantly with us. He has gone beyond workhouse fare, and made us a feast with saints and princes. He has given us more than home-spun garments; he has put upon us robes of beauty and of glory, even his own spotless righteousness. He has blessed us; we are blessed; we feel that we are. Each believer can say:

*“I feel like singing all the time,
For my tears are wiped away;
For Jesus is a Friend of mine,
I’ll praise him every day.
I’ll praise him! Praise him! Praise him all the time!”*

We are not sitting here, and groaning, and crying, and fretting, and worrying, and questioning our own salvation. He has blessed us; and therefore we will bless him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for him; but if you have a great notion of his great mercy to you, you will be greatly grateful to you gracious God.

Let me also remark, next, that as assurance and delight lead to blessing God, so does a *right understanding* of his mercies. To help your

understanding, notice what Paul says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” An enlightened man is grateful to God for temporal blessings; but he is much more grateful to God for spiritual blessings, for temporal blessings do not last long; they are soon gone. Temporal blessings are not definite marks of divine favor, since God gives them to the unworthy, and to the wicked, as well as to the righteous. The corn, and wine, and oil, are for Dives; and Lazarus gets even less than his share. Our thanks are due to God for all temporal blessings; they are more than we deserve. But our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings. A new heart is better than a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than to have the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being the heir of the greatest nobleman. To have God for our portion is blessed, infinitely more blessed than to own broad acres of land. God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings. These are the rarest, the richest, the most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless in value. Wherefore, let me beg you to join in blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed you with spiritual blessings.

But did you notice the word “all”? I must bring that out clearly. I must turn the microscope on it. “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” Surely, Paul means that we have not a spiritual blessing which God did not give. We have never earned one; we could never create one. All spiritual blessings come from the Father; he has really given us all spiritual blessings. “I have not received them,” says one. That is your own fault. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. A new heart, a tender conscience, a submissive will, faith, hope, love, patience, we have all these in Christ. Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, perfection are all in Christ. If we do not take them out, it is the fault of our palsied hand, that has not strength enough to grasp them; but he has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. Whenever you read your Bible, and see a great promise, do not hesitate to claim it. He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. “I am afraid,” says one, “that I should be presuming if I took some of the promises.” He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. You are in your Father’s house; you cannot steal; for your Father says, “Help yourself to what you like.” He has made over his whole estate of spiritual wealth to every believing child of his; wherefore take freely,

and you will, by doing so, glorify God. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.

This he has done in the “heavenly places.” What does that mean, “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places”? Does it not mean that he is working upon us all spiritual blessings out of the heaven where he dwells? Or does it mean much more, that his is sending us all these spiritual blessings to bring us to the heaven where he dwells, and where he would have us dwell?

I want to stir up your heart by reminding you that all the spiritual blessings we receive are the richer and rarer because they are given to us “in Christ.” Here are the blessings; and Christ is the golden casket that holds them all. When the City of London makes a man a freeman of the city, the document giving him his liberty is usually presented to him enclosed in a golden casket. Christ is that golden casket, in which we find the charter of our eternal liberty. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. If they came to us any other way, we might lose them; or we might not be sure that they were genuine; but when they come to us in Christ, they come to stay, and we know that they are real. If Christ is mine, all blessings in heavenly places are mine.

I seemed, to myself, to be talking very drily of things that ought to be swimming in a sea of joy and delight. Beloved, do not let my faint words rob my Lord of any of his glory. He has done such great things for you; bless his name. We cannot stand up, and ask for instruments of music with which to sound his praise; but we can sit still, and each one say, “Blessed be his name! It is all true; he has blessed me; I know that he has. He has blessed me, with a liberal hand, with all spiritual blessings. He has blessed me, just where I wanted blessing, where I was poorest in spiritual things. I could make my way in business, but I could not make my own way in grace; so he has blessed me with all spiritual blessings; and he has made the garments all the dearer because of the wardrobe in which he has hung them. He has given me these royal things in Christ; and as I look to my dear Lord, and see what there is for me stored up in him, I prize each thing the more because it is in him. Come, Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire with blessing and praise to God for all the great things that he has done for us!”

I shall close with this fourth remark: Let us bless God, BEHOLDING THE MANNER OF HIS GIFTS. That is described in the fourth verse: “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.”

Now, brethren, we are to praise God because all spiritual blessings have come to us in the same way as our election came, “according as he hath chosen us in him.” How did that come? Well, it came of *his free, sovereign grace*. He loved us because he would love us. He chose us before he chose us. “Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you.” If there is any virtue, if there be any praise in us now, he put it there. To the bottomless abyss of his own infinite goodness we must trace the election of his grace. Well, now, every blessing comes to us in the same way. God hath not blessed thee, my brother, with usefulness because thou didst deserve it; but because of his grace. He did not redeem thee, or regenerate thee, or sanctify thee, or uphold thee, because of anything in thee. Again and again, by the prophet Ezekiel, did the Lord remind his ancient people that the blessings he bestowed upon them were all gifts of his grace. “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake.” And again, “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for you own ways, O house of Israel.” Every blessing comes to us with the hall-mark of sovereign grace upon it. As the Lord distributed the gifts of his grace, he says, “May I not do as I will with my own?” He does so, and we bless, and praise, and adore the sovereign grace of God, which having chosen us, continues to bless us according as he hath chosen us in Christ.

Next, we have to bless God that all his gifts come to us *in Christ*. Notice Paul’s words, “according as he hath chosen us in him.” God called us in Christ. He justified us in Christ. He sanctified us in Christ. He will perfect us in Christ. He will glorify us in Christ. We have everything in Christ, and we have nothing apart from Christ. Let us praise and bless the name of the Lord that this sacred channel of his grace is as glorious as the grace itself. There is as much grace in the gift of Christ to save us as there is in the salvation which Christ has wrought out for us. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Again, all our blessings come from *the divine purpose*. Listen: “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him.” No spiritual blessing comes to any man by chance. No man gets a boon from God through his “good luck:; it all comes according to the eternal purpose of God which he purposes or ever the earth was.

*“Long e’er the sun’s refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on his sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love.”*

“Before the foundation of the world”, says the text, there was a purpose in the heart of God, and in that purpose we were chosen, and by that same purpose God continues to bless us. Look, beloved, God never gives his people either a gift or a grace without his purpose. Has God given you a brain cleat, quick, capacious? Think for him. Has God given you a tongue fluent, eloquent? Speak for him. He does not give you these gifts without purpose. Has God given you influence among your fellow-men? Use it for him. Your election came according to his purpose; and so have all your gifts, and much more, all your graces. Have you a strong, bright-eyes faith? Have you burning zeal? Have you vehement love? Have you any of these gifts of the covenant? Use them for a purpose. God has given them for a purpose; find out what that purpose is, and glorify God thereby.

Lastly, the text tells us that God blesses 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.” God’s choice of us was not because we were holy, by *to make us holy*; and God’s purpose will not be fulfilled unless we are made holy. Some people, when they talk about salvation, mean escaping from hell, and getting into heaven by the skin of their teeth. We never mean any such thing. We mean deliverance from evil, deliverance from sin. Like a dog in the manger, they cannot eat the hay themselves, and they growl at those who can. If you wish to be safe from sin, ask God for that great blessing, and he will give it to you; but if you do not want it, do not complain if God says, “I shall give it to such and such a person, and you that do not even ask for it shall be left without it.” If you do not care to be holy, you shall not be holy. If you did not care for it, and wish for it, you

might have it, for God denies it to none who seek it at his hands. But if you neither wish for it, nor value it, why do you lift your puny fist against the God of heaven because he hath chosen others, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love?

The object of our election is our holiness, and the object of every spiritual blessing is our holiness. God is aiming at making us holy. Are you not glad of that? May I not say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because his aim in every gift is to make us holy"? Brothers and sisters, would we not sacrifice everything we have, and count it no sacrifice, if we might be perfectly holy? I said to a young girl, who came to join the church, "Mary, are you perfect?" She looked at me and said, "No, sir." I said, "Would you like to be?" "Oh, that I would! I long for it; I cry for it." Surely, the God who makes us long to be perfect, has already wrought a great work in us; and if we can say that, to be perfect, would be heaven to us, then we are already on the road to heaven, and God is working out in us his eternal purpose, which is, "that we should be holy."

There is one thing more: "That we should be holy and *without blame before him in love.*" Does that mean that we are to be loving, full of love, and without blame in that matter? Well, I am afraid that there are not very many Christians who are without blame on the score of love. I know a man, a noble man intellectually, and, in some respects, spiritually. I believe that he would die at the stake for the grand old Calvinistic faith; but he is as hard as iron; you cannot feel any kind of love to him, for he does not feel any kind of love to anybody else. That man is not without blame before God in love. I have known others; wonderful Christians they appear to be, they could pray for a week; but if you are poor, and ask them for a little help, your asking will all be in vain. I do not think that they are without blame before God in love. O brothers, God has chosen us to be loving, he has ordained us to be loving; and all the innumerable blessings which he has given to us, he sends to win us to a loving spirit, that we may be without blame in that matter. Our dear friend, Mr. William Olney, whom we remember here still, and never can forget, was, I think, without blame in that matter of love. I sometimes thought that he used to shed his love on some who might have been the better for a hard word; for they were deceivers; but he could not bring his mind to think that anybody could be a deceiver; and if anybody was in want of help, no matter though

their own misconduct had brought them into poverty, his hand was in his pocket, and out again, very quickly with help for them. He never failed in love; and I pray that you and I, with prudence and wisdom mixed with it, may be without blame before God in the matter of love. Love your fellow-Christians. Love poor sinners to Christ. Love those that despitely use you. Love those round about you who are strangers to the love of God. It may be that they will see in your love some little image of the love of God, as in a drop of water you may sometimes see the sun and the heavens reflected. God make us to be reflections of the love of God! His purpose is that we may be holy and without blame before him in love.

Now, I have set before you a rare treasury. Does this treasury belong to you? My dear hearers, is Christ yours? Are you trusting him? If not, there is nothing yours. Without Christ, you can do nothing, and you are nothing, and you have nothing. Come to Jesus as you are, and put your trust in him, and then all things are yours. If Christ be yours, beloved, then I charge you bless the Lord, ay, bless the Lord again and again, for you will never bless him as much as he deserves to be blessed. Let us finish this service as we closed our worship this morning, by singing the doxology, —

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

EXPOSITION

NO. 2266A

EPHESIANS 1

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a complete Body of Divinity. In the first chapter you have the doctrines of the gospel; in the next, you have the experience of the Christians; and before the Epistle is finished, you have the precepts of the Christian faith. Whosoever would see Christianity in on treatise, let him “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus; grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

All down through the ages this benediction comes to us, even to as many of us as are “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” “Grace be to you,” brethren and sisters, grace in every form of it, the free favor of God, all that active force of grace which comes of his unmerited love. May you have a fresh draught of it at this time! “and peace.” May you feel a deep peace with God, with your own conscience, and with all the world! Oh, that you might find an atmosphere of quiet calm about your mind at this very moment! The double blessing of “grace” and “peace” comes “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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,

One of the first doctrines of our holy faith is that of the union of all believing souls with Christ. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Apart from Christ we are nothing; in Christ we have “all spiritual

blessings” We are rich as Christ is rich, when we are united to him by the living bond of faith. Another great doctrine of Holy Scripture is that of election. We are blessed in Christ according as the Father “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” Why did God choose any unto eternal life? Was it because of any holiness in them then existing, or foreseen to exist? No, by no means; for we read that: “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:

We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we may be made holy. The election precedes the character, and is indeed the moving cause in producing the character. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” You see, then, beloved brethren and sisters, the end for which the Lord chose you by his grace.

Having predestinated us

Having destined us before we were born,

Unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

The chosen ones are adopted; they become the children of God. The universal Fatherhood of God, except in a very special sense, is a doctrine totally unknown to Scripture. God is the Father of those whom he adopts into his family, who are born again into his family, and no man hath any right to believe God to be his Father except through the new birth, and through adoption. And why God thus elects or adopts is declared here: “According to the good pleasure of his will.” He does as he pleases. That old word of God is still true: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Men do not like that doctrine; it galls them terribly; but it is the truth of God for all that. He is Master and King, and he will sit on the throne, and none shall drag him thence.

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

There is another precious doctrine, the acceptance of those who are adopted. We are beloved of God; he has a complacency toward us; he takes a delight in us; we are acceptable in his sight. Oh, what a blessing this is! But remember that it is all in Christ: "Accepted in the beloved." Because Christ is accepted, therefore those who are in him are accepted.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

In the working out of the economy of grace, God has been lavish with his love; but yet there have been wisdom and prudence in it. He did not suffer the full light of the gospel to break in upon our eyes at first, lest we should have been blinded by it. Jesus had many things to say unto his disciples; but they could not bear them all at once; so, by little and little he has led us on, and led us up, abounding always in his grace, and only limiting the display of it by our capacity to receive it.

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 thing in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

Everything that is in Christ shall be gathered in; all his chosen, all that the Father gave him, all that he hath redeemed by blood, all that he hath effectually brought into union with himself shall be gathered together in one. There shall be one flock under one Shepherd.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,

Not only shall we have it, but we have it now. We have heaven in the price of it, in the principles of it, in the promise of it, in the foretaste of it.

Being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

The enmity of men's hearts to this doctrine of predestination was seen in the House of Common, not a fortnight ago, when one who ought to have known better talked about "the gloomy tenets of Calvin." I know nothing

of Calvin's gloomy tenets; but I do know that I read here of predestination, and I read here that God hath his own way, and his own will, and that he reigns and rules, and so he will until the world's end; and all who are loyal subjects wish God to rule. He is a traitor who would not have God to be King; for who is infinitely good and kind as God is? Let him have his divine will. Who wishes to restrain him? Whether we wish is or not, however, the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, and let his adversaries tremble. Our predestination is "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Those who believe in Christ have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them: the Holy Spirit is a part of heaven, "the earnest of our inheritance"; and wherever he dwells, it is not possible that the heart should lose the inheritance. It is entailed upon those in whom the Spirit dwells. Judge, there, dear brethren, whether the Spirit of God dwells in you or no.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; they ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe; according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things in the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

How Paul glows as he writes on this great theme! He waxes warm, and rises to an enthusiasm of eloquence. We could not stop to explain his

words; that were to spoil their mystic poetry. Oh, to have a heart that can glorify Christ as Paul did! Truly, if we know ourselves to be one with Christ, and know the privileges which come to us through that blessed gate, we may indeed extol him with all our heart and soul.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 232;

Psalms 103 Version I.; 219; and the Doxology

LIFE FROM THE DEAD

SERMON NO. 2267

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 31ST, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 13TH, 1890.

*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”
— Ephesians 2:1.*

OUR translators, as you observe, have put in the words “hath he quickened”, because Paul had thrown the sense a little farther on, and it was possible for the reader not to catch it. They have but anticipated the statement of the fourth and fifth verses: “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”

Here is the point. God has quickened us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, spiritually dead. We were full of vigor towards everything which was contrary to the law or the holiness of God, we walked according the course of this world; but as for anything spiritual, we were not only somewhat incapable, and somewhat weakened; but we were actually and absolutely dead. We had no sense with which to comprehend spiritual things. We had neither the eye that could see, nor the ear that could hear, nor the power that could feel.

We were dead, all of us; and yet we were not all like on another. Death may be universal over a certain number of bodies, and yet those bodies may look very different. The dead that lie on the battle-field, torn of dogs or kites, rotting, corrupting in the sun, what a horrible sight! The corpse looks like life still; yet is your beloved one in the coffin as dead as the mangled bodies on the battle-field. Corruption has not yet done its work, and tender care has guarded the body as yet from what will surely come to

it; yet is there death, sure, complete death, in the one case as well as in the other.

So we have many who are lovely, amiable, morally admirably, like him whom the Savior looked upon and loved; yet they are dead for all that. We have others who are drunken, profane, unchaste; they are dead, not more dead than the others; but their death has left its terrible traces more plainly visible. Sin brings forth death, and death brings forth corruption. Whether we were corrupt or not, is not a question that I need to raise here; let everyone judge concerning himself. But dead we were, most certainly. Even though trained by godly parents, though well instructed in the gospel scheme, though saturated with the piety that surrounded us, we were dead, as dead as the harlot of the street, as dead as the thief in the jail.

Now, the text tells us that, though we were dead, yet Christ has come, and by his Spirit he has raised us out of the grave. This text brings us Easter tidings; it sings of resurrection; it sounds in our ear the trumpet of a new life, and introduces us into a world of joy and gladness. We were dead; but we are quickened by the Spirit of God. I cannot help stopping a minute to know whether it is so with you, my dear hearers, and praying that what I might have to say act as a kind of sieve, separating between the really living and those who only think that they are alive, so that, if you have not been quickened, if you are only “a child of nature, finely dressed,” but not spiritually alive, you may be made aware of it. If you have been quickened, even though your life be feeble, you may cry to the living God with the “Abba, Father,” which never comes from any lip but that which has been touched and quickened by the Holy Spirit.

First, let us talk a little about OUR QUICKENING. You who have been quickened will understand what I say. To those who have not, I daresay it will seem as an idle tale.

Well, dear friends, if we have been quickened, we have been *quickened from above*. “You hath HE quickened.” God himself has had dealings with us. He has raised us from the dead. He made us at the first; he has new-made us. He gave us life when we were born; but he has given us now a higher life, which could not be found anywhere else. He must always give it. No man ever made himself to live. No preacher, however earnest, can make one hearer to live. No parent, however prayerful, no teacher,

however tearful, can make a child live unto God. "You hath HE quickened," is true of all who are quickened. It is a divine spark, a light from the great central Sun of light, the great Father of Lights. Is it so with us? Have we had a divine touch, a superhuman energy, a something which all the learning and all the wisdom and all the godliness of man could never work in us? Have we been quickened from above? If so, I daresay that we remember something of it. We cannot describe it; no man can describe his first birth; it remains a mystery. Neither can he describe his new birth; that is still a greater mystery, for it is a secret inward work of the Holy Ghost, of which we feel the effect, but we cannot tell how it is wrought.

I think that, usually, when the divine life comes, the first consciousness that we get of a quickening is *a sense of pain*. I have heard that when a man is nearly drowned, while he lies under the power of death, he feels little or nothing, perhaps has even pleasurable dreams; but when, in the process of restoring him, they have rubbed him till the blood begins to flow, and the life begins to revive a little, he is conscious of pricking and great pain. One of the tokens that life is coming back to him is, that he wakes up out of a pleasant sleep, and feels pain. Whether it be so or not with every person restored from drowning, I do not know; but I think that it is so with every person restored from drowning in the river of sin. When the life begins to come to him, he feels as her never felt before; sin that was pleasant becomes a horror to him. That which was easy to him becomes a bed of thorns. Thank God, dear hearer, if you have living pangs. It is an awful thing to have you conscience hardened, as in the very fires of hell, till it becomes like steel. To have consciousness is a great mercy, even if it be only painful consciousness, and if every movement of life within seems to harrow up your soul. This divine life usually begins with pain.

Then, *everything surprises you*. If a person had never lived before, and had come into life a full-grown man, everything would be as strange to him as it is to a little-child; and everything is strange to a new-born man in the spiritual realm into which he is born. He is startled a hundred times. Sin appears as sin; he cannot understand it. He had looked at sin before, but had never seen it to be sin. And Christ appears now so glorious to him; he had heard of Christ before, and had some apprehensions of him; but now he is surprised to find that the One who he said had no form nor comeliness is, after all, altogether lovely. To the new-born soul everything is a

surprise. He makes no end of blunders; he makes many miscalculations because everything is new to him. He that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and the renewed man says, "My Lord, it is even so." One said to me, when joining the church, "Either I am a new creature, or else the world is altogether altered from what it was. There is a change somewhere;" and that change is from death to life, from darkness into God's marvellous light.

Now, as life comes thus with strange surprises, and mingled with pain, so, dear friends, it comes often *with many questions*. The child has a thousand things to ask; it has to learn everything. We little think of the experiments that children have to go through before they arrive even at the use of their eyes. They do not know that things are at a distance; they have to learn that fact by looking many times. So long as the object falls upon the retina. The child is not aware of whether it is distant or a near object till some time after. What you think that you and I knew from our birth, we did not so know; we had to learn it. And when a man is born into the kingdom of God, he has to learn everything; and consequently, if he is wise, he questions older and wiser believers about this and about that. I pray you that are instructed, and have become fathers, never laugh at babes in grace, if they ask you the most absurd questions. Encourage them to do so, let them tell you their difficulties. You, by God's grace are a man; this little one is but a new-born babe; hear what he has to say. You mothers, do this with your little children. You are interested, you are pleased, you are amused, with what they say. Thus ought instructed saints to deal with those who have been newly quickened. They come to us, and ask, "What is this? What is that? What is the other?" It is a time of asking, a time of enquiring. It is well, also, if it is a time of sitting at Jesus' feet, for there is no other place so safe to a new-born believer as the feet of Jesus. If he gets to the feet of anybody else, he is apt to get ill-instructed at a time when everything warps his judgment, when he is exceedingly impressionable, and not likely to forget the mistakes that he has made, if he has borrowed them from others. So you see what the divine life does when it comes into the soul. It comes to us with pain; it gives us many surprises; and it suggests a large number of questions.

We begin then to *make a great many attempts* at things which we never attempted before. The new-born child of God is just like the new-born

child of man in some things; and after a time that child begins to walk. No, it does not; it begins to crawl; it does not walk at first. It creeps along, pleased to make any kind of progress; and when it gets up on its little feet, it moves from one chair to another, trembling at every step it takes, and presently, down it goes. But it gets up again, and so it learns to walk. Do you remember when the new life came into you? I do. I remember the first week of that new life, and how, on the second Sabbath, I went to the place where I had heard the gospel to my soul's salvation, thinking that I would attend there. But, during that week, I had made a great many experiments, and tumbled down a great many times, and the preacher took for his text, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I thought, "Yes; I know all about that; that is my case." When the preacher said that Paul was not a Christian when he wrote those words, though I was only seven days old in divine things, I knew better than that, so I never went there any more. I knew that no man but a Christian ever could or would cry out against sin with that bitter wail; and that, if the grace of God was not with him, he would rest satisfied and contented; but that, if he felt that sin was a horrible thing, and he was a wretched man because of it, and must be delivered from it, then he surely must be a child of God, especially if he could add, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Beloved, we make many mistakes, and we shall continue to do so. At the same time, we learn by our experiments. You remember when you began to pray; would you like to have your first prayer printed? I believe that God liked it better than many of the collects. You might not like it so well; it would not look well in print. You remember when you first began to confess Christ to a friend. Oh, you did stutter and stammer over it! There were more tears than words; it was not a "dry" discourse; you wetted it well with tears of grief and anxiety. That was the new life putting forth powers with which it was not itself acquainted; and I believe that there are some of God's children who have powers that they will never find unless they try to use them. I should like some of you young men who do not pray at the prayer-meeting to make a start. And some of you older men, perhaps, have never preached yet; but you might if you tried; I wish you would. "I should break down," says one. I wish you would. A break-down

sermon, that breaks the preacher down, might break the people down, too. There might be many advantages about that kind of discourse.

This, then, was the way in which the new life, spiritual life, came into us. We did not know what it was when it came; we had never felt like that before; we could not think that we really had passed from death to life; and yet, in looking back, we are persuaded that the throes within, the anguish of heart, the longing, and the pleading, and the wrestling, and the crying, would never have been in a dead heart, but were the sure marks that God had quickened us, and we had passed into newness of life.

Now, secondly, let us think of OUR PRESENT LIFE. "You hath he quickened." Well, then, we have a new life. What is the effect of this life upon us? I speak to you who are quickened by grace.

Well, first, we have become now *sentient towards God*. The unconverted man lives in God's world, sees God's works, hears God's Word, goes up to God's house on God's day, and yet he does not know that there is any God. Perhaps he believes that there is, because he was brought up to believe it; but he is not cognizant of God; God has not entered into him; he has not come into contact with God. Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I think that you and I can say, that to us the surest fact in all the world is that there is a God. No God? I live in him. Tell a fish in the sea there is no water. No God? Tell a man who is breathing that there is no air. No God? I dare not come downstairs without speaking to him. No God? I would not think of closing my eyes in sleep unless I had some sense of his love shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost. "Oh!" says one, "I have lived fifty years, and I have never felt anything of God." Say that you had been dead fifty years; that is nearer to the mark. But if you had been quickened by the Holy Spirit fifty minutes, this would have been the first fact in the front rank of all fact, God is, and he is my Father, and I am his child. Now you become sentient to his frown, his smile, his threat, or his promise. You feel him; his presence is photographed upon your spirit; your very heart trembles with awe of him, and you say with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place." That is one result of spiritual life.

Now you have become also *sympathetic with similar life in others*. You have a wide range, for the life of God, his life in his new-born child, is the same life that is in every Christian. It is the same like in the new-born

believer as in yonder bright spirits that stand before the throne of God. The life of Christ, the life of God, is infused into us in that moment when we are quickened from our death in sin. What a wonderful thing it is to have become sympathetic with God! What he desires, we desire. His glory is the first object of our being. He loves his Son, and we love his Son. We desire to see his kingdom come as he does, and we pray for his will to be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. We wish that death did not remain, the old nature hampering us; but, in perfect proportion as the new life is really in us, we now run parallel with God. The holiness which he delights in we aspire after. Not with equal footsteps, but with tottering gait, we follow in that selfsame path that God has marked out for himself. "My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me."

The new life that made us sympathetic with God, and holy angels, and holy men, and with everything that is from above, has also made us *capable of great pleasure*. Life is usually capable of pleasure, but the new life is capable of the highest conceivable pleasure. I am certain that no ungodly man has any conception of the joy which often fills the believer's spirit. If worldlings could only know the bliss of living near to God, and of basking in the light of his countenance, they would throw their wealth into the sea, and ten thousand times as much, if they might but get a glimpse of this joy that can never be bought, but which God gives to all who trust his dear Son. We are not always alike. Alas! We are very changeable; but when God is with us, when the days are spiritually bright and long, and we have come into the midsummer of our heavenly bliss, we would not change places with the angels, knowing that by-and-by we shall be nearer to the throne than they are; and, while they are God's honored servants, yet they are not beloved sons as we are. Oh, the thrill of joy that has sometimes gone through our spirits! We could almost have died with delight at times when we have realized the glorious things that God has prepared for them that love him. This joy we never knew till we received the new life.

But I must add that we are also *capable of acute pain* to which we were strangers once. God has made our conscience quick as the apple of the eye; he has made our soul as sensitive as a raw wound, so that the very shadow of sin falling on the believer's heart will cause him great pain; and, if he does go into the actual sin, then, like David, he talks about his bones being broken, and it is not too strong a figure of the sorrow that comes upon the

believing heart when sin has been committed, and God has been grieved. The heart itself then, is broken, and bleeds at ten thousand wounds. Yet this is one of the results of our possessing the new life; and I will say this, the sharpest pang of spiritual life is better than the highest joy of carnal life. When the believer is at his worst, he is better than the unbeliever at his best; his reasons for happiness are always transcendently above all the reasons for joy that worldlings can never know.

Now, dear friends, if we have received spiritual life, you see what a range of being we have, how we can rise up to the seventh heaven or sink down into the abyss. This new life makes us *capable of walking with God*; that is a grand thing. We speak of Enoch walking with God, and we look at the holiness of his life; but did anybody ever think of the majesty of his life? How does God walk? It needs a Milton to conceive of the walk of God; but he that hath the divine life walks with God; and sometimes he seems to step from Alp to Alp, from sea and ocean, accomplishing what, unaided, he would never even attempt. He that has the divine life is lifted up into the infinities; he gets to hear that which cannot be heard, and see that which cannot be seen, for “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit,” when he has given us the new life.

One effect of this divine life is to *put life into everything that we do*. They tell me that “creeds are dead.” Yes, yes! It is a pleasant thing to hear an honest confession; they are dead to dead men. I hold nothing as truth that I can put away on a shelf, and leave there. My creed is part of my being. I believe it to be true; and believing it to be true, I feel its living force upon my nature every day. When a man tells you that his creed is a dead thing, do not deny it for a minute; there is no doubt of the fact. He knows about himself better than you do. Oh, dear friends, let *us* never have a dead creed! That which you believe, you must believe up to the hilt; believe it livingly, believe it really; for that is not believed at all which is only believed in the letter, but is not felt in the power of it.

If you have been quickened by the Spirit of God, your prayers are living prayers. Oh, the many dead prayers that are heard at the bedside; so many good words rushed through at a canter! He that is alive unto God asks for

what he wants, and believes that he shall have it, and he gets it. That is living prayer. Beware of dead prayers; they are a mockery to the Most High. I do not think that a living man can always pray by clockwork, at such a time and such a time. It would be something like the minister's sermon which he "got up" beforehand, and upon which he wrote in the margin "weep here," "here you must show great emotion." Of course that was all rubbish; it cannot be done to order. You cannot resolve to "groan at one o'clock, and weep at three o'clock." Life will not be bound like that, I love to have an appointed season for prayer, and woe unto the man who does not have his time for prayer! But, at the same time, our living prayer bursts out hours before the appointed time, or sometimes it will not come at the time. You have to wait till another season, and then your soul is like a hind let loose. Why, sometimes we can pray, and prevail, and come off conquerors; and at another time, we can only bow at the throne, and groan out, "Lord, help me; I cannot pray; the springs seem to be all sealed." That is the result of life. Living things change. There are some personages in St. Paul's Cathedral; I have not seen them lately, but I have seen them. When I lived in the country, I came up to look at the notabilities in St. Paul's Cathedral. I have heard that they have never had a headache in the last hundred years, and no rheumatic pains, nor have they been troubled with the gout, The reason is that they are cut in marble, and they are dead; but a living man feels the fog and the winds; he knows whether it is an east wind or a west wind that is blowing. Before he gets up in the morning, he begins to feel sometimes lively and sometimes ill; he does not understand himself. Sometimes he feels merry, and can sing hymns; at another time, he can do nothing else but sigh and cry, though he scarcely knows wherefore. Yes, life is a strange thing; and if you have the life of God in your soul, you will undergo many changes, and not always be what you want to be.

If we are alive unto God, every part of our worship should be living. What a deal of dead worship there is! If we go on with our services in regular routine, a large number of our friends find it difficult to keep awake. I fear that some people go to a place of worship because they get a better sleep there than anywhere else. That is not worship which consists in doing as Hodge did, when he said, "I like Sunday, for then I can go to church, and put my legs up, and think of nothing at all." That is all the worship a great many render to God, just getting to a place of worship, and there sitting

still, and thinking of nothing at all. But if you are a living child of God, you cannot do that. If, sometimes, through the infirmity of the flesh, you fall into that state of slumber, you loathe yourselves for it, but you rouse yourself up, and say, "I must worship my God; I must sing, I must praise God. I must draw near to him in prayer."

I must come to my third point; for our time flies. Notice what OUR PRESENT POSITION IS, if God has quickened us.

Our present position is this, first, that *we are raised from the dead*. "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." We cannot live where we used to live. We cannot wear what we used to wear. There is nobody here who would like to go and live in a grave. If you have been raised from the dead, after you had been buried in Norwood Cemetery, I would warrant you that you would not go there to-night to sleep. So the man, who has once been raised by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, quits the dead; his old company does not suit him. If you had been raised from the dead, and had come out of your tomb, you would not go about London streets with your shroud on. You are a living man. How is it that I find some who say they are people of God; but yet are rather fond of wearing their grave-clothes? I mean, that they like the amusements of the world; they like to put on their shroud sometimes just for a treat. Oh, do not so! If God has made you to live, come away from the dead; come away from their habits, and manners and customs. Life sees no charm in death. The living child of God likes to get as far as ever he can away from the death that once held him bound. "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." That is the first part of our position, that we have come to live a separate life now, and have quitted the path we trod before.

Next to that, we are one with Christ. He hath "quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." I told you just now that the life which the Holy Spirit gives us when we are born again, is the life of God. We are made partakers of the divine nature, or course, in a modified sense, but still in a true sense. The life everlasting, the life that can never die, is put into us then, even as Christ said, "The water that I shall give him shall

be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” The believer’s life is the life of Christ in the believer. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” What a mystic union there is between the believer and his Lord! Realize that; believe in it; rejoice in it; triumph in it. Christ and you are one now, and you are made to live together with him. God grant you to know the joy of this condition!

Once more, we are told, “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” That is very wonderful. We have not only left the dead, and become joined to Christ, but we are made to *sit in heaven with Christ*. A man is where his head is, is he not? And every believer is where his Head is; and if we are members of Christ’s body, we are in heaven. It is a very blessed experience to be able to walk on earth, and look up to heaven; but it is a higher experience to live in heaven, and look down on the earth; and this is what the believer may do. HE may sit in the heavenlies; Christ is there as his Representative. The believer may take possession of what his Representative is holding on his behalf. Oh, to live in heaven, to dwell there, to let the heart be caught up from this poor life into the life that is above! This is where we should be, where we may be if we are quickened by the divine life.

One thing more, and I have done. We are in this position, that God is now working in us, through this divine life, to make us *the most wonderful reflectors of his grace* that he has yet formed. He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” The ages to come will have for their wonder the quickened children of God. When God made the world, it was a wonder, and the angels came from afar to see his handiwork. But when Christ makes the new creation, they will say no more that God made the heaven and the earth, but they will say in higher strains, “He made these new-born men and women. He made for them, and in them, new heavens and a new earth.”

Ah! Beloved, “IT doth not yet appear what we shall be.” God has given us a life that is more precious than the Koh-i-noor, a life that will outlast the sun and moon. When all things that are shall be like old ocean’s foam, which dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is gone for ever; we shall

live, and we shall live in Christ, and with Christ, glorified for ever. When the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair, the life that is within us shall be as bright as when God first gave it to us. Thou hast the dew of thy youth, O child of God; and thou shalt have yet more of it, and be like thy Lord, when he shall take thee away from every trace of death, and the corrupt atmosphere of this poor world, and thou shalt dwell with the living God in the land of the living, for ever and for ever!

The practical outcome of all this, that some of you do not know anything at all about it. If you do not, let the fact impress you. If there be a divine life to which you are a stranger, how long will you be a stranger to it? If there be a spiritual death, and you are dead, be startled; for within a little while God will say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." And what will happen to you when the word of God is, "Depart, depart, depart, depart," and unto the graveyard of souls, to the fire that never shall be quenched, you and the rest of the dead are taken away? "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and, unless we are made alive unto him, he cannot be our God either here or hereafter. The Lord impress this solemn truth on all your hearts by his own spirit; for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2267A

EPHESIANS 2

Verse 1. *And you he hath quickened.*

Is it so? Could the apostle say that to you, and to me?

Who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Look back to what you used to be, to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged: “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Wherein in time past ye walked

With a terrible activity of spiritual death;

According to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

He makes them to be his forge. There he blows his coals, there he fabricates his instruments. Do you not hear the noise of the infernal bellows when “the children of disobedience: swear, and use unclean language? Ah, such were some of us; but we are cleansed! The evil spirit has been driven out, and he no more works in us.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

You that now commune with God at the mercy-seat, you that are now his favored children, and have received power to become the sons of God, you were once heirs of wrath: “By nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Holy Scripture is not complimentary to unrenewed human nature.

You may search it through and through to find a single flattering word to unregenerate man; but you will search in vain. This style of speech is left to those who scout divine inspiration. They draw their inspiration from another fount, from a desire to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. They can see flattering speeches in addressing the ungodly; but the Holy Ghost never does.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,

God loved us even when we were dead in sins. His love does not depend upon what we are; it flows from his own heart. It is not love of something good in us; it is love of us because of everything good in him. Here you see the greatness of his grace, in that “he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

Hath quickened us together with Christ,

Ah! That accounts for everything: “together with Christ.” When we get “together with Christ”, then are we made alive, then are we saved. Are *you*.

My dear hearers, “quickened together with Christ”?

(By grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

See how Paul’s language grows and swells and rises as he proceeds! Just now, we read of “God, who is rich in mercy”; now the apostle speaks of “the exceeding riches of his grace”, exceeding expression, exceeding comprehension, exceeding even sin itself, though that is all but infinite. “The exceeding riches of his grace” are infinity itself; but they all come to us “through Christ Jesus.” Paul will speak of nothing good except that which comes “through Christ Jesus.” This is the one conduit-pipe through which the streams of living water flow to the dead in sin; God’s grace comes to us “Through Christ Jesus”, and through him alone.

For by grace are ye saved through faith;

We have this expression, “by grace are ye saved,” twice over in this chapter. Paul knew that he needed to repeat himself, or people would forget what he taught. At bottom, all the wanderings from the faith at the present day amount to this, salvation by works instead of salvation by grace. The battle of the Reformation has to be fought over again. Men are justified by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. All the enmity of natural men is against that truth. They want to be saved by their own morality, and all sorts of things that they put instead of salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

“Oh!” said one to me just now, “the man who is saved by his own righteousness cannot do much in the line of praising.” “No, my dear brother,” I replied, “except he praises himself; and he can generally do that pretty well.” Your self-made man usually worships his creator very earnestly; and your self-saved man glorifies him that saved him.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus

Nothing without Christ Jesus, you see. The mark of the pierced hand is on everything: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.”

Unto Good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

God has decreed that he will have a holy people. This is his purpose, his ordinance, to which he will always stand. He will make it good. He will make sinful people holy, and disobedient people obedient to the faith.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

Remember what you were. You were not the chosen Israelites, you have not the covenant mark in your flesh.

That at that time ye were without Christ,

Which is the worst state of all, far worse than being without circumcision.

Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,

Outsiders, rank outsiders, far away from any rights, or any participation in the rights of God's children.

And strangers from the covenants of promise,

Utter strangers to the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Having no hope, and without God in the world:

It is an awful description, but a truthful description, of what we were.

But now

The apostle has turned over a new leaf in the book of our history: "but now." Oh, what a change from the past to the present! "But now" —

In Christ Jesus

See how Paul keeps harping on that one string. Note how he links us with Christ Jesus. There is nothing for us without Christ and his cross.

Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Paul can never have too much of Christ. It is Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ; like the harp of Anacreon. He wished to sing of Cadmus; but his harp resounded love alone; and so the harp of Paul resounds with Christ alone, Christ alone. He always comes back to that theme. It was said of one eminent commentator that he could not find Christ in the Scripture where he was; but it was said of Cocceius that he found Christ where he was not. I would rather find Christ where he is not, than not to find him where he is. There are plenty who err in that second direction nowadays.

For he is our peace,

Paul cannot do without Christ, you see. He will bring him in everywhere.

Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

There is no longer the division between Jews and Gentiles.

Having abolished in his flesh.

See, it is always Christ, his flesh, his blood, his life. There must always be something about him: “Having abolished in his flesh.”

The enmity, even the law of commandments containeth in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he

I cannot help reminding you, that you must not overlook the fact that Paul will not go a hair's breadth away from Christ.

Might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

There is the whole Trinity in that one verse, Christ, the Spirit, the Father. It needs the Trinity to make a Christian, and when you have got a Christian, it needs the Trinity to make a prayer. You cannot pray a single prayer aright without Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Now therefore

Another of Paul's blessed “nows.” It was “but now” a little while ago; now he has another “now.” “Now therefore” —

Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

You are not only in the kingdom, but you are in the royal household, which is better still. You are princes of the blood imperial. You are peers of the court of heaven: “and the household of God.”

And are built

You are not loose stones; you are built —

Upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom

You see, it is always that, in him, in Christ: “in whom” —

All the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

There is no church without Christ, no temple without him as its cornerstone, its priest, its glory.

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

And all this hangs upon that first sentence, “You hath he quickened.” Is it so, beloved? If you are spiritually dead, nothing here belongs to you; but if he hath quickened you, you may take every single sentence of the chapter, and say, “That is mine, and glory be the grace of God!”

HYMNS FROM “Our Own Hymn Book” — 463, 476, 461.

A QUESTION FOR COMMUNICANTS

SERMON NO. 2268

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY AUGUST 7TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 1ST, 1890.

“What mean ye by this service?” — Exodus 12:26.

In a spiritual religion, everything must be understood. That which is not spiritual, but ritualistic, contents itself with the outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation, there was a very strong tendency in that direction; but it was kept to some extent in check. Under the Christian faith, this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We must know the meaning of what we do; otherwise we are not profited. We do not believe in the faith of the man who was asked what he believed, and who replied that he believe what the church believed. “But what does the church believe?” “The church believes what I believe.” “Well, but what do you and the church believe?” “We both believe the same thing.” He could not be got to explain himself any further. We look upon such expressions as the talk of ignorance, and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes, and can give a reason for the hope that is in her meekness and fear.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, “What means ye by this service?” Children should be encouraged now to ask such gracious questions. I am afraid they are not prompted to do so as they used to be in Puritan times. After the sermon always came the catechizing of the children when they were at home; and every father was bound to be attentive, because he had to ask the boys and girls in the evening what they had heard; and they were more attentive then than now, because they had to be prepared to answer any questions of their parents in return.

Cultivate in your children a desire to understand everything connected with our holy faith.

In this chapter, from which I had culled my text, the parents are taught how to answer their children. If the parent be ignorant, a question from his child is inconvenient. He finds his ignorance exposed, and he perhaps is vexed with the child who has been the innocent means of unveiling him to himself. Be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the gospel mean. Explain baptism to them, explain the Lord's supper to them; and above all, explain the gospel; and let them know as far as words can make it plain, what is that great mystery whereby we are saved, whereby sin is forgiven, and we are made the children of God.

I thought it would be profitable, if God gave me strength for the exercise, very briefly to answer the question supposed to be put by an intelligent youth, "What mean ye by this service?" — this service that is called by some people "Holy Communion"; which is sometimes called the "Eucharist"; and among us is called "the Lord's supper", or "the breaking of bread." What does it mean?

It means many things; but chiefly five, of which I will speak now.

This supper is, first of all, A MEMORIAL.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. You may erect a bronze column, or you may engrave a record of it upon brass in the church. The column will get sold for old bronze, and somebody will steal the brasses from the church; and the memorial will disappear. You may write it upon marble if you please; but in our climate, at any rate, the inscription is very apt to be obliterated; and the old stones, though they last long, may after a time be as dumb as the treasures of Nineveh and Egypt were for centuries. These monuments did preserve the records, but they were hidden under the sand, or buried beneath the ruins of cities; and though they have a tongue now, and are speaking forcibly, yet whatever had been entrusted to them would have been forgotten while they were lying under the sand of the desert, or in the *debris* of the palaces of Koyunjik. There are other ways of preserving memorials, such as writing in books; but books can be lost. Many valuable works of the ancients have entirely ceased, and no copies

of them can be found. Some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament, which were not inspired books, but still were books which we should greatly value now, have quite passed out of existence.

It is found that, upon the whole, one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it, which shall be frequently performed, so as to keep the fact in memory. I suppose that Absalom will never be forgotten. He built himself a pillar in the king's dale; he knew his own infamous history, and he thought it might be forgotten. No one would care to remember it so he built himself a monument; and there it stands, or what is reputed to be that monument, to this day, and every Arab who passes by the spot throws a stone at it. Absalom will better be remembered by the ceremony of throwing stones at his tomb than by any record in marble.

To turn your thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a surer and better method of keeping the death of Christ in mind than of meeting together, as we shall do to-night, for the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of the juice of the vine in memory of his death. Other facts may be forgotten; this one never can be. To-night, and every first day of the week, in ten thousand places of worship, believers meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's cross and passion, his precious death and burial. Those great facts can never pass out of mind. Jesus said to his disciples, "This do in remembrance of me." In obeying his command you are doing what is most effectual in keeping your Lord in remembrance. As I preach to-night, having no sort of reliance upon my own words, I want you to practice them as I go along; then you will be like the woman who said that, when she heard a sermon about light weights and short measures, thought she forgot what the preacher said, when she got home, she recollected to burn her bushel, which was short. So, if you can just practice the sermon as you hear it, it will be well.

Recollect, then, that you come to this table to-night to *remember an absent Friend*. Jesus has gone away. He who loved us better than any other ever loved us, has left us for a while. We sometimes take little parting gifts from friends, and they say to us —

***"When this you see
Remember me."***

Probably, almost everybody here has, at some time or other, had certain tokens of remembrance by which they might be reminded of some dear one who is far away across the seas; out of sight, but not out of mind. You come to the communion-table, then, to remember your absent Friend.

You come, also, chiefly to *remember his great deed of love*. This supper is a memorial of what Jesus did for you when he was on the earth. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down his life for you; remember that to-night. "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" dwell on that fact. Let these words wake the echoes in your hearts, "Gethsemane!" "Gabbatha!" "Golgotha!" Can you forget all that Jesus suffered there on your behalf? If you have let these things slip in any degree from your heart's affections, come and write them down again. Come to the table, and there celebrate the memorial of his love, and wounds, and agonies, and death for you.

*"In memory of the Savior's love,
We keep the sacred feast,
Where every humble contrite heart
Is made a welcome guest,
"By faith we take the bread of life,
With which our souls are fed;
And cup, in token of his blood
That was for sinners shed."*

You are also called upon to *remember a dear Friend who*, although he has gone away, *has gone about your business*. It was expedient for you that he should go away. He is doing you more good where he has gone than he could have done if he stayed here. He is pressing on your suit to-night. Your business would miscarry were it not for him; but within the veil that hides him from you, he is pleading for you. His power, his dignity, his merit, are all freely being employed for you. He is pleading the causes of your soul. Can you, will you, forget him? Will you not now forget everything else, and indulge the sweet memory of your faithful Lover, your dear Husband, who is married to you in ties of everlasting wedlock? Come, I pray you, keep the memorial of this dear Friend.

And you have to *remember a Friend who will return very soon*. He only tells you to do this till he comes. He is coming back to us. His own words are, "Behold, I come quickly!" That is not quite the meaning of what he

said; it was, “Behold, *I am coming* quickly!” He is on his way, his chariot is hurrying towards us the axles of the wheels are hot with speed. He is coming as fast as he can. The long-suffering of God delays him, till sinners are brought in, till the full number of his elect shall be accomplished; but he is not delaying; he is not lingering; he is not slack, as some men count slackness; he is coming quickly. Will you not remember him? Soon will his hand be on the door; soon for you, at any rate, he may cry, “Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away;” and soon he may be here among us, and then we shall reign with him for ever and ever.

I charge my own heart to remember my dear Lord to-night; and I pray you, brothers and sisters, let not the feebleness of my reminder deprive you now of the happiness of thinking much of Christ your Lord. Sit you still, and let all other thoughts be gone, and think only of him who loved you and died for you. Let your thoughts go back to Calvary, as you sing, in mournful accents, —

*“O sacred head once wounded,
With grief and pain weighed down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thine only crown!
How pale art thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!”*

Oh, eyes full of tears! Oh, shoulders once beaten with the gory lash! Oh, hands once nailed to the cruel tree! Oh, feet once fastened to the bitter cross! Soon shall we behold the Christ who loved us, and died for us. Wherefore let us observe this sacred feast in remembrance of him.

But I must be briefer on my second point. The second meaning of the Lord's supper is that it is AN EXHIBITION. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” We are helped to remember it by the type, the emblem, the metaphor which is supplied to us by this supper. How is that? Is there any likeness to the death of Christ in this supper? I answer, there is a great likeness.

There is *his broken body*, represented by the bread which is broken, and intended for use. His dear body was broken, marred, sadly marred, given over to the hands of death, laid in the sepulcher, wrapped about with fine

linen, left there, as his enemies thought, never to rise again. In that broken bread, broken that even believing children may eat their morsel, you see Christ's body given up for his people's sake.

But there stands a cup. It is full of the red juice of the grape. What means it? He himself shall explain it: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Now, *the shedding of blood* is the great token of death. One would not long talk of killing without speaking of blood-shedding; in fact, bloodshed usually means dying by a violent death; and so did he die. They pierced his hands and his feet; the soldier thrust his lance into his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. That stream of blood was the token that he really was dead. He hath poured out from his veins his precious life to purchase his redeemed. The broken bread, the cluster pressed into the cup, and leaving nothing but its blood-red juice, these two things symbolize Christ's death.

But, most of all, this is an exhibition of *the two things separate*, the bread and the cup. We have heard of some mixing the bread with the wine; that is not the Lord's supper. We have heard of others partaking of the wafer, as they call it, and leaving the cup; this is not taking the Lord's supper. They must be both there; the bread here, the wine-cup there; because the separation of the blood from the flesh is the surest token of death. "The blood is the life thereof;" and if the blood be drained away, there is death. Therefore the blood is represented by the cup, and the flesh is represented by the bread; these two separated are the great token and emblem of Christ's death.

We show, display, exhibit, symbolize, the death of our Lord at this table in this fashion; we partake of both symbols, eating of the bread, drinking of the cup, *the whole ministering to the support of our life*. At this table we say to all of you who do not know Christ, Christ's death is our life, and the remembrance of Christ's death is the food of our life. If any of you are spectators of the ordinance, this is the meaning of our little acted sermon, Christ has died. Christ's death is the support of our faith, the food of our souls; in token whereof we take this bread and this cup, and eat and drink. So this supper is a showing forth of Christ's death. How many here can say that Christ's death is their life? How many of you can say that you feed upon him? Dear friends, you must not come to the table unless you

can say it; but if you can, come and welcome; and if you cannot, oh! may the Lord teach you the lesson that is so needful, the lesson that is so blessed, when it is once learnt, that Christ on the cross is the one hope of eternal glory.

The Lord's supper is, next, A COMMUNION.

We must have this brought out prominently, or we shall miss a great deal. *We are at the Lord's table*; we eat of his bread, we drink out of his cup. This betokens friendship. When, in the East, a man has eaten of an Arab's salt, he is henceforth under his protecting care; and he who has spiritually eaten of Christ's bread, has come under Christ's protection; Christ will take care of him. All feuds are ended; an eternal peace is established between the two. It was a tender parable in which Nathan spoke of a man who had a little ewe lamb, which did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom. This is your privilege, to lie in Christ's bosom, to drink out of his cup, and to eat of his bread. This is a very sweet fellowship; enjoy it to-night to the full.

We go further than that, for we not only eat of his bread, but symbolically *we feast upon him*. His flesh is meat indeed; and his blood is drink indeed. Can I really feed upon Christ? Really, yes. Carnally, no. There is no such thing as the carnal eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood; that were a horrible thing; that were to make a man a cannibal; but the spiritual feeding upon the Incarnate God, this is what we mean. He gives us his flesh to eat, and we thus enter into a fellowship of the most intense and mysterious kind; not merely eating with him, but eating him; not merely receiving from him, but receiving him himself to be the life of our hearts. May you get to that point to-night! I believe in the real presence of Christ; I do not believe in the carnal presence of the Romanist. I believe in the real presence of the believer; but that reality is none the less real because it is spiritual; and only spiritual men can discern it.

Now, beloved, if we really come in the right spirit to this table, when we have eaten the bread, it becomes part of us; when the wine is sipped, the juice of the grape enters into our constitution; we cannot separate it from ourselves. Such is our fellowship with Christ. *He is one with us, and we are one with him*. "*Quis separabit?*" "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" We are one with Christ; partners with him; all that he has is

ours; all that we have is his. He gives himself to us; we yield ourselves to him. It is Christ and Co., only the little “Co.” drops its name to be swallowed up in him who is all in all. There is the meaning of the bread and the cup. We take Christ into ourselves, as he has taken us up into his greater self.

But communion also means that *we are one with each other*. I wish that you would catch that thought. I am afraid there are some members of the church here, who have never realized their union with all the rest of the members. “We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. There should be an intimate feeling of fellowship, a readiness to help and love one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

I cannot shake off from myself the idea that this makes up a large part of the meaning of the Lord's supper, the communion of saints with each other as well as the communion of the saints with Christ. May we enjoy it to-night! For my part, I like to feel, when I come to the table, that I am going to have communion, not only with this church, large as it is, not merely with the members of one denomination (I wish there were no denominations), not merely with the company of one body of Christians — would to God, there were but one body of Christians throughout the world! — but freely inviting all who belong to any part of the visible church; I delight to think that at this table to-night I shall have fellowship with the brethren in the United States, of all names, and sorts, and ages, and ranks. There cannot be two churches of Christ. There is but one Church, one Head, and one body. Though there are some very naughty children in the Lord's family, they must not be kept without their supper; there is some other way of chastening them; and as long as there is true living communion between one Christian and another, where God has given the thing signified, I dare not keep back the sign. If he gives them to have fellowship with Christ, who am I that shall say, “Thou shalt have not fellowship with me”? I dare not say it.

The meaning of this supper, then, is communion.

But a fourth meaning of the Lord's supper is A COVENANTING. Our Lord said to his disciples, "This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood." We do well to sing,—

*“Thy body broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember thee.”*

When we come to the Lord's table, we must be careful that we there *take Christ to be our God in covenant*. We take the one living God for ever and ever. He gives himself to us, and we take him, and we declare, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our Guide even unto death." Do you understand that covenant relationship, every one of you? Do you know what you are doing when you take the piece of bread, and eat it, and take the cup and drink of it? If you are truly a believer in Christ, God is in covenant with you through the body and the blood of Christ, and you recognize that blessed truth, and take him to be your God.

Now, the covenant runs thus, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." When, therefore, we come to this covenanting table, we *agree that we will be the Lord's people*; henceforth, not the devil's, not the world's, not our own; but the Lord's. When the Lord's people are chastened, we expect to be chastened with them. When the Lord's people are persecuted, we expect to be persecuted with them. We must take them for better or worse, to have and to hold, and death itself must not part us from the Lord's people. That is the meaning of coming to this table, recognizing that, between you and God there is an agreement made that must not be broken, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, by which God becomes yours and you become his, so that you are for ever to be one of those that belong wholly to him.

Here, at the communion-table, God, the covenant God, *seals his love to us*. "Come hither, my child," saith the Lord, "I love thee, and I gave myself for thee, in token whereof put this bread into thy mouth, to remind thee of how I gave myself for thee. I love thee, so that thou art mine. I have called thee by my name, in token whereof I remind thee that I bought thee with my precious blood. Therefore, let that sip of the juice of the vine go into thy body, to remind thee that by my precious blood, which was shed for many, I have redeemed thee from going down into the pit." There are seals

at that table, new seals of the covenant, new tokens, new love gifts from the Lord, to remind you of what he has done for you.

And you are to come here to-night *to testify anew your love to God*. Here you say, "My Master, let me eat with thee." If any of you have lost your first love, and have grown spiritually cold, the Savior stands at the door, and knocks, and he says, "Open to me," and he also says that if we open to him, he will come in, and sup with us, and we with him. He said that to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, the church which was neither cold nor hot, which he threatened to spew out of his mouth. If thou art only fit to make Christ sick, yet if thou wilt open the door to him, he will come and feast with thee to-night, and all shall be well with thee. He testifies his love to you. Come and testify yours to him to-night. That is the meaning of this bread and this cup. Your covenant with death is broken, your agreement with hell is disannulled; and now you are in covenant with God, and he is in covenant with you, even in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken.

Lastly, and very briefly, this supper signifies A THANKSGIVING. It is often called, by friends who love hard words, the "Eucharist." We have some friends who always carry a gold pencil, on purpose to put down every word that nobody understands, that they may use it next Sunday in their sermon. Such people call the Lord's supper the "Eucharist", which signifies "the giving of thanks." This is the thanksgiving service of the Church of God. It ought to be celebrated every Lord's-day. Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and we ought to give thanks every time we celebrate his resurrection. Certainly we should do so when we celebrate his death. What are we going to do to-night by way of thanksgiving?

Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral. The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's supper takes its place with higher joys; we come to this feast to *testify our joy in Christ*. There is bread, but there is also wine upon the table. This is to show that it is a festival for joy and delight, and you cannot praise Christ better, and give thanks to him better than by rejoicing in him. Praise him by your grateful joy. I think that we should always come to the Lord's table with a feeling of deep reverence; but that reverence should never tend to bondage. We

want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no; come, ye children; come, ye beloved ones of the Lord! Come, ye table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival he has prepared, and let your joy be full of thanksgiving!

We come to the table, next, actually to *praise the Lord for giving Christ to us*. When our Lord broke the bread, he gave thanks; so shall we to-night. Come ye, beloved, thankfully to praise the Father for the gift of Christ; and as you take the bread into your mouth, say in your heart, "Bless the Lord!" and as you drink of the cup, say in your spirit, "Blessed be his holy name! Blessed be the Father, for his eternal love to us; blessed be Jesus, for his love which has saved us to know all these precious things!"

One way in which we show our thanks to Christ is that *we receive with gratitude the emblems of his death*. Each one who communes with us will receive the bread, and eat it, and take the cup, and drink it. We do not hold it up, and look at it; we do not kneel down, and pay it homage; we receive it. We have done so now these many years. How long is it since we began this holy feast? Well, with some of us, it is over forty years since our first communion, and we do not want any better food. We desire to keep in memory the same Christ, to feed upon the same doctrine of the incarnation and atoning sacrifice; and if we should be spared, beloved, another forty years, which is far from likely, we shall have a sweeter tooth for Christ even than we have now. He will be more dear to us, more precious, more delightful, even than he is to-night. So we come to the table to show our gratitude by receiving and receiving again.

Let me whisper in your ear, when this communion is over, and you shall leave this table, "Pray, beloved, that you may *go away in the same spirit as your Lord and Master did*, when after rising from supper, he went out to the garden, not there to have a sweet hour of lonely communion with God, but there to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He went there to be arrested, to be hurried off to the bar of Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, and the rest of them. He went there, in fact to die; but he went away singing." So I want you to go away from this communion singing praises to God. As my dear brother said in prayer, you must have your Gethsemanes, your Golgothas; but I want you to go

away from this table singing. Whatever comes, high or low, bright or dark, heaven or another age in this dark wilderness, brethren, let us sing. We often say, "Let us pray;" but to-night, at the table, I say, "Let us sing." Let us sing unto the Lord because of his great gift to us, which we to-night remember, and set forth, and commune with, and covenant with. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live; for we can never sufficiently praise him for all that he has done for us.

*"We'll praise our risen Lord,
While at his feet we sit,
His griefs a hallow'd theme afford
For sweetest music fit."*

Thus I have explained all about the Lord's supper; do you know anything about it? Some of you are going away. You are going away! Yes, and the day shall come when you will not have anywhere to go! When the great marriage supper is spread, and the feast of the gracious shall be held, and the whole universe shall be gathered, oh! where will you go? You will not be allowed to linger at the door, neither will you go home to wait till others shall return from the festival. You must be driven from God's presence if you come not by faith in Christ to that great feast. The fiery swords of the angel-guards shall be unsheathed, and they shall pursue you through the blackness of eternal darkness, down to infinite despair! The Lord have mercy upon you to-night, that he may have mercy upon you in that day, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2268A

MATTHEW 26: 26-3; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-34

We will read, first, Matthew's account of the institution of the Lord's supper.

Matthew 26: 26. *And as they were eating,*

In the middle of the Paschal Feast our Lord instituted the sacred festival which was ever afterwards to be known as “the Lord's supper.” The one ordinance was made to melt gradually into the other: “as they were eating.”

Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body.

“This represents my body.” He could not possibly have meant that the bread was his body; for there was his body sitting at the table, whole and entire. They would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood him literally; but they did not do so, any more than when Christ said, “I am the door,” or “I am the Good Shepherd.”

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

“Every one of you.” Was this the Lord's supper? Yes. What say the Romanists about it? Why, that the people may not drink the cup! Yet our Savior says to his disciples, “Drink ye all of it.”

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

They had had sin brought to their minds; they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin; now they were to have a perpetual pledge of

the pardon of sin, in the cup, which was the emblem of Christ's blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins."

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Jesus took the Nazarite vow to drink no more, to partake no more of the fruit of the vine, till he should meet us again in his Father's kingdom. He has pledged us once for all in that cup, and now he abstains until he meets us again. Thus he looks forward to a glorious meeting; but he bids us take the cup, and thus remember him until he come.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

To his last great battle the Champion goes singing, attended by feeble followers, who could not protect him; but who could sing with him. I think he must have led the tune; his disciples were too sorrowful to sing until his clear voice started the Hallelujah Psalms; but they joined him in the holy exercise, for "they" as well as their Lord sang the hymn. When you are about to face a trial, offer a prayer; but, if you can, also sing a hymn. It will show great faith if, before you enter into the burning fiery furnace, you can sing psalms unto the Lord who redeemeth his people.

Now let us read Paul's version of this same matter.

1 Corinthians 11:20, 21. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

These Corinthians had fallen into a very queer state. I do not think that any Baptist Church that I have ever known of has acted in this fashion; but when churches have no ministers, when there is an open ministry where everybody talketh and nobody listeneth, they fall into a queer condition, especially into divisions and heart-breaking strifes. It was so in the case of this church at Corinth. Here everybody brought his own provision, and some ate to the full, and others had not enough; and they thought that they were observing "the Lord's supper."

What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?

There is your proper place if you want a meal. Go home, and eat and drink; do not come to the sanctuary for such a purpose: "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?"

Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you,

He had received it by a special revelation, Poor Paul was brought in late, and he was like one born out of due time. He had not been present in the upper room with Christ at the first famous breaking of bread; so the Lord came and gave him a special revelation concerning this sacred feast, so that, whenever he spoke or wrote to any of the churches about the Lord's supper, he could say, "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you."

That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

The Lord's supper is a simple service of remembrance. Nothing is said about an altar, or a priest, or a sacrifice. Our Lord took bread, gave thanks for it, brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Mark that "*this do*"; it will not be right to do something else instead of this; and we must not do this for any other purpose than the one he mentions, "This do in remembrance of me." This command raises a previous question, "Do we know him?" we cannot remember Christ if we do not know him.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drinketh it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

*“By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,
We keep the memory adored,
And show the death of our dear Lord,
Until he come!*

*“And thus that dark betrayal-night,
With the last advent we unite;
By one blest chain of loving rite
Until he come!”*

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

If such a man has treated “this bread” and “this cup” with contempt, he has treated “the body and blood of the Lord” with contempt; it shall be so reckoned to him. Many have been trouble by this verse. They have said, “We are unworthy.” You are, this is quite true; but the text does not say anything about your being unworthy. Paul uses an adverb, not an adjective. His words are, “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily,” that is, in an unfit way, to gain something by it, as men used to take what they called “the sacrament” to get into certain offices, or as some come to the communion-table for the sake of the charitable gifts that are for the poor of the church; this is to eat and drink “unworthily.” To come carelessly, to come contemptuously, to say, “I do not care whether I am a Christian, or not; but I shall come to the communion,” this is to eat and drink “unworthily.” Notice the *ly*; we are all unworthy of this sacred feast, and if unworthiness could shut us out, who would dare to be here?

But let a man examine himself,

Let a man look himself up and down, as a lawyer cross-questions a witness, as a man examines money to see whether it has the true ring of gold about it; or not: “Let a man examine himself.”

And so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Let him come as a true believer, as sincere; if not perfect, yet true; if not all he ought to be, yet in Christ; if not all he wants to be, yet still on the way to it, by being in Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life.”

For he that eateth, and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

He does not see the meaning of the emblem of Christ's death.. He degrades the symbol by making it take the place of the thing signified. He sees the

bread, but not the body; and he damnifies himself, condemns himself, by such eating. He is a loser rather than a gainer by eating and drinking unworthily.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Persons coming to the Lord's table in an improper spirit are very apt to come under God's discipline; some will be taken ill; and some will die. This discipline is being carried on in every true church of God. God's providence will work in this way if many treat the table of the Lord as the Corinthians did, acting as if it were a common place for eating and drinking. Many of them were weak and sickly, and many died.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

If we are God's people, we shall be judged by him here for our wrongdoing. We shall not be like the world that is left to the day of judgment; but we shall be judged now. God will visit with temporal judgments those of his children who sin against him.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

You know that a man will see a great deal that is wrong in children in the street, and say nothing about it; but if it is his own who is up to mischief, he will give him a sweet taste of the rod. So, if you belong to God, you cannot sin deeply without having a present judgment, a present discipline; and you ought to be thankful for it, painful though it may seem to be for the time, for "when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

How gently Paul talks to these Corinthians! They deserve to be scolded; but he is very tender with them. He says, "If you must come together in this way, at least have the good manners to stop for one another; and if you do come to the communion of the Lord, treat it with that respect and reverence which it deserves.

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come,

May we to-night keep this feast in due order under the power of the Holy Spirit, and may we find a blessing in it to God's praise! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 938, 947.

IMPOTENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE

SERMON NO. 2269

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY
AUGUST 14TH, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16TH, 1890.

“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” — John 5: 5-9.

THIS man had been lying, with many others, round the pool, hoping that it would be stirred by the angel, and that he might be put into the water first, and so might be healed. There he waited long, and waited in vain. Why did he wait? Because Jesus was not there. Where Jesus is not, you must wait. If it is only an angel and a pool, you must wait; and one may get a blessing, and many may get no blessing. But when Jesus came, there was no waiting. He walked in among the crowd of sick folk, spied out this man, bade him to take up his mattress and walk home, and he was healed at once.

Now, I commend this man for waiting; I admire him for his patience and his perseverance; but I beg you not to make his case your own. He waited, for Jesus was not there. You may not wait, you must not wait. As I have told you; for Jesus is here. There was necessity for him to wait. As I have told you, there was an angel and a pool, and nothing more; but where Christ is, there should be no waiting. Any soul that looks to Christ to-night shall be saved, even though he looks from the ends of the earth. Thou

mayest look now; nay, thou art commanded so to do. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” There, in that pew, or in yonder aisles, if you turn your eye by faith to Jesus, the Living One on the throne of the Highest, you shall obtain immediate cure. Waiting is all very well at the pool of Bethesda; but waiting at the pool of ordinances, as I have heard some say, is not according to the Scriptures. I read nothing about waiting there; but I do read this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

However, for the help of some who have waited till they are weary, who have persevered in the use of the means till they are becoming desponding and disappointed, let us look at the case of the impotent man at Bethesda.

I. We notice about it, first, that THE SAVIOR KNEW THE CASE.

I only mention that, in order to say that the Savior knows your case. *Jesus saw him lie there.* There were a great many objects for the Savior’s eye to rest upon; but he fixed his gaze upon this man, long bed-ridden, thirty-eight year impotent. Even so, Jesus knows all about your case. He sees you lie just where you are to-night, impotent, without hope, without light, without faith. He sees you; I want you to feel this to be true. He singles you out amidst this throng, wherever you sit, and his eye is scanning you from head to foot; nay, he looks within as well as without, and reads all that is in your heart.

Concerning the man at the pool, *Jesus knew that he had been a long time in that case.* He knows the years that you have been waiting. You remember being carried to the house of God by your mother. You recollect, as a boy, listening to sermons that seemed to startle you; and you went home to your little bedroom, and cried to God for mercy; but you forgot your impressions. They were like the morning mist, that vanishes in the rising sun. You came to London; you grew up to be a man; but you became careless about divine things; you shook off all your early impressions. Still, you went to hear the Word preached, and oftentimes you half hoped that you might get a blessing. You heard the Word; but faith was not mixed with what you heard, so you missed the blessing. Yet still, you always had a wish that it should come to you. You never could despise godly people, or the things of Christ. You could not get them for yourself; at

least, you thought you could not; but you always had some lingering wish that you were numbered with the people of God. Now, the Lord Jesus knows all about that, and the many years in which you have been waiting as a hearer only, and not a doer of the Word; impressed at times, but doing violence to your better feelings, and going back to a careless life. My Lord knows all about you. I cannot pick you out in this congregation; but remember, while I am preaching to-night, miracles will be wrought; processes which will change the very nature of men are going on within this house; for Christ is being preached, and his gospel is being set forth, and this is not done, with prayerful earnestness, in vain. God will bless it; he is going to bless somebody to-night. Who that somebody may be, or how many hundred somebodies there will be, I cannot guess; but he will bless his own Word, and why should he not bless you? He sees just who you are, and where you are, and what you are.

In addition to this, *our Lord knew all this poor man's disappointments.* Many times, when he had striven to get first to the water's edge, and did think that he should be able to take the happy plunge, in went someone else before him, and his hopes were gone. Another came up out of the water healed; and then, with a very heavy sigh, he fell back upon his couch, and felt that it might be a long time before the angel stirred the water again, and even then he might be disappointed again. he recollected the many times when he had lost all hope; and there he lay almost in despair. Now I think I hear some one here to-night saying, "My brother found the Lord. My friend who came with me here, found the Lord. I have lived to see my mother die in sure and certain hope of glory. I have friends who have come to Christ, but I am still living without him. When there are special services, I hopes that I might have been specially blessed. I have been to prayer-meetings, I have read my Bible in secret, and I have sometimes hoped — it was but a little hope, but still I hopes — 'May be, one of these days, I may be healed.'" Yes, dear friend, and my Lord knows all about that, and he sympathizes in all the grief you feel to-night, and he hears those unspoken wishes of yours, and he knows your longing that you may be healed.

II. Now, secondly, THE SAVIOR AROUSED THE MAN'S DESIRES. he said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" There he lay. I am not going to

explain that lying at the pool, but just to apply it to you who are here in similar condition.

Beware of forgetting why you are here. Beware of coming to the house of God, and not knowing why you come. I have said that, years ago, you went to places of worship in the hope of finding salvation. Well, you have kept coming, and you have not found it; but do you now look for it? Have you not fallen into the habit of sitting and listening to sermons, and prayers, and so on, without feeling that you came for anything special for yourself? You come and go, merely that you may attend a place of worship; that is all. The Savior would not let the impotent man lie there satisfied because he was by the pool. No, no. He said to him, "Why are you here? Have you not some desire? Do you want to be made whole?" My dear hearer, I wish that you were able to say "Yes" to this question. Have you come here to-night that your sin may be forgiven, that your soul may be renewed by divine grace, that you may meet Christ? If so, I want to keep you to that point, and not let you come, and take a sitting here, and come, and come, and come, and come, and be just like a door on its hinges out there, which turns in and turns out again, and is not a bit better for it. Oh, do not get into mere religious habits! Ritualistic habits they will be to you, simple as the ritual will be. You come, and go, and you are satisfied. this will never do. Christ arouses your desire as he says, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Also, avoid a despairing indifference. I remember two brothers and a sister, who heard me preach for a considerable time, and they were in great distress of soul; but, at the same time, they had a notion that they could not believe in Christ, and that they must wait, I hardly know what for; and they did wait till they grew quite old. I did not know better people morally, or better hearers so far as interest in what they heard was concerned; but they never seemed to get any farther. At last they got into this state; they seemed to feel as though, if it was to be, it would be; and if it was not to be, it would not be; and that all they could do was just to sit still, and be quiet and patient. Patient under the apprehension of being lost forever? Why, I do not expect the man in the condemned cell to be happy and patient when he hears them putting up his gallows! He must be concerned; he must be uneasy. I did my best to make these friends uneasy; but I fear that my efforts were attended with very small results. The

Savior said to this man, “Wilt thou be made whole? You seem to be in such a state of indifference that you do not care whether you are made whole or not.” No worse condition than that can be found; it is so hard to deal with. God save you from sullen indifference, in which you leave yourself to drift to destruction at the will of some unknown fate!

I pray you to *remember that it is your to will*, Christ said to this man, “Wilt thou be made whole? Thou canst not make thyself whole, but thou canst will and wish to be made whole.” God’s Holy Spirit has given to many of you to will and to do according to his good pleasure. You will never be saved against your will; God drags nobody to heaven by the ears. There must be in you a willing mind consenting to the work of his sovereign grace; and if it be there, I want you to exercise it to-night, as Christ wished this man to exercise it: “Wilt thou be made whole? Hast thou any wish that way, any desire or longing for healing?” I want to stir this fire, and make it burn; and if there be only a spark of desire, I would breathe upon it, and pray the Holy Spirit to breathe upon it to make it into a great flame. Paul said, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.” I believe that there are some here who have the will to be saved; God be thanked for that!

“Wilt thou be made whole?” I think that the Savior put this question for another reason, which I will turn into an exhortation. *Forego all prescribing as to how you are to be saved.* The question is not, “Wilt thou be put into that pool?” but, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Have you come to this, that you are willing to be saved in God’s way, in Christ’s way? One says, “I want to have a dream.” Dear soul, do not want any dreams; they are only dreams. Another says, “I want to see a vision.” My dear friend, there is nothing in the plan of salvation about seeing visions. “I want to hear a voice,” says one. Will, hear my voice, then, and may God the Holy Ghost make you hear the voice of his Word through me! “But I want” — oh! yes, you want, you know not what you want, like many a silly child that has its fads, and fancies, and whims, and wishes. Oh, that all were willing to be saved by the simple plan of believe and live! If this is God’s way, who art thou that he should make a new way for thee? When I had put the way of salvation before a friend, some time ago, she turned to me and said, “Oh, sir, do pray for me!” “No,” I said, “I will not pray for you.” “Oh! but,” said she, “how can you say that?” I replied, “I set before

you the Christ crucified, and I beg you to believe in him. If you will not believe in him, you will be lost; and I shall not pray God make any different way of salvation for you. You deserve to be lost if you will not believe in Christ." I put it to her, and when she afterwards said, "Oh, I see it now! I do look to Christ, and trust him," I said, "Now I will pray for you; now we can pray together, and sing together, if need be." But, dear friends, do not set up your own notion about how you ought to be converted. Can you find any two people who were converted in the same way? God does not make converts as men make steel pens, a gross in a box all alike. Nay, nay; but in each case there is a living man created, and every living man, every living animal, every living plant, is somewhat different from every other of its kind; and you must not look for uniformity in the work of regeneration. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Come, dost thou desire the pardon of sin? Dost thou long for a new heart and a right spirit? If so, leave off disputing as to how thou art to get them, and do what Christ tells you to do.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" It is as if the Savior said, "*Be more than ever in earnest now.* I know that you will to be made whole; well, now, will it more to-night than you have ever willed it before." Let the will which you have be exercised; put it forth. You are in earnest to be saved; be in more earnest to-night. You do desire to find Christ; well, desire to find Christ more to-night than ever you did in your life. You have come to an important crisis of your life; you may be at the point of death; who knows? How many have been suddenly struck down of late! If you would be made whole, I would that you might be made whole to-night. I pray that you may feel something pressing you, something that makes you end your long delay, something that makes you feel, "I have no more time to waste; I cannot afford to loiter; I must be saved to-night; I must hear the distant ticking of God's great clock, that stands in the hall of grace, and always says, '*Now; now; now; now; now;*' and never utters any other sound." Oh, may the Lord make it to be so, by his own free grace!

Thus, you see, the Savior aroused the desires of the man at the pool. First, he knew his case; and next, he aroused his desires.

Now, thirdly, THE SAVIOR HEARD THE MAN'S PLAINT. This is what he said, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Some of these people had kind friends, who took turns at watching day and night, and the moment that the water was stirred, they took up their patient, and plunged him in. This man had lost all his friends; thirty-eight years of illness had worn them all out; and he said, "I have no man to put me into the pool; how can I get into the water?" So there are many in this case; they want help. While I have been at Menton, I have had the joy of leading a number of friends to Christ. When I had to leave them, and come back to London, one and another of them said to me, "What can we do without you, sir? We shall have nobody to lead us in the right way now; no one to instruct us, no one to meet our objections, nobody to solve our doubts, nobody to whom we can tell the anxieties of our hearts."

No doubt some of you would talk in the same fashion, and I must admit that *the lack of a helper is serious*. It is a great deprivation to have no man to help you in these things. Sometimes, if a friend will come up after the sermon, and just say a kindly word, it will do more good than the sermon itself. Many a poor troubled one, who has been a long time in prison, might have been sooner released, if only some kind friend had reminded the brother of a divine promise which, like a key, would have opened the prison door. I agree with you that there is a great help in having an earnest Christian friend to lift you over a difficulty; to bear you down to the water's edge to which you cannot go by yourself, and to put you into the pool. It is a great loss, certainly, if you have no such friend; and I am very sorry for you. You live in a village where there is nobody to speak to you about spiritual matters, or you attend a ministry that does not feed you. You have nobody to comfort you. There are not many, after all, who can really help sinners in coming to Christ. Some who try to do so are a great deal too wise, and others are too hard-hearted. It wants a special training in the school of grace if anyone is to learn to sympathize with others so as to be able really to help them. I can suppose that one here is saying, "I have no mother to speak to; I have no Christian friend in the family; I have no one to whom I can go for help; and that is why I stick fast where I am."

Well, a helper is very valuable; but I want to say that *a helper may not be so valuable as you think*. I have known some who have had plenty of Christian helpers while they were seeking the Lord; but none of them were really able to help them. If you trust the earthly helpers, and think them essential, God will not bless their efforts, and they will be of no use to you. I am afraid that many a seeker has had to say, even to good and earnest Christians, what Job said to his friends, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” After all, how can a man help you much in your soul’s affairs? No man can give you faith, or give you pardon; no man can give you spiritual life, or even spiritual light. Though you have no man to help you, remember that you can make too much of men, and you can trust too much in Christian helpers. I beg you to recollect that. I am afraid that there are some professors who have been helped a little too much. They heard a sermon, and were really impressed by it, and somebody was foolish enough to say to them, “That is conversion.” It was never conversion at all. The friend further said, “Now, come forward, and make a profession.” So they came forward, and made a profession of what they never had. Then a friend said, “Now, come to such a meeting; come and join the church. Some on;” and they were led, and led, and led, never having any real internal life, or spiritual energy given them from on high. They are just like children in go-carts, who are unable to walk alone. God save you from a religion that depends upon other people! There are some who have a kind of lean-to religion, resting on somebody else; when the support is taken away, what becomes to the lean-to? The good old lady who helped you for so many years dies; where is your religion then? The minister used to keep you going; you were like a whipping-top, and he like the whip that kept you spinning; when he is gone, where are you? Do not have a religion of that kind, I entreat you. Though a helper is very useful, remember that, under certain conditions, even a Christian helper may be a hinderer.

Now, my dear hearer, this is the point I have come to; you have to deal with Jesus to-night, and *dealing with Jesus, you need “no man.”* you have not to deal with pools and angels; you have to deal with the Lord Jesus himself. Suppose that there is no man to help you, do you want any man when Jesus is here? The man was wanted to put you into the pool; he is not wanted to introduce you to Christ; you may speak to him yourself;

you may confess you sin yourself. You want no priest; you want a Mediator between your soul and God; but you do not want any mediator between your soul and Jesus. You may come to him where you are, and as you are. Come to him now; tell him your case; plead with him for mercy. he does not want my help; he does not want the help of the Archbishop of Canterbury; he does not want the help of anybody. He alone can meet your case. Just put your case into his hand; and then, if you have no man to be your helper, you need not lie down and fret about it; for he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

Now this is all very plain talk; but we want plain talk nowadays. I feel as if I had not preached on Sunday, unless I had tried to bring men to Christ. There are many high and sublime doctrines that I would like to speak of, and many deep and rapturous experiences that I would like to describe; yet I feel that I must often leave these things, and keep to the much more commonplace, but much more useful matter of persuading men, in Christ's stead, that they look away from man, and away from ordinances, and away from self, and deal with Jesus himself distinctly and directly; for there will be no need of man, and certainly there will be no need of delay.

This is my closing point. THE SAVIOR MET THE MAN'S CASE ENTIRELY.

This impotent man has no man to help him; Christ can help him without any man. This man cannot move except with great pain. he has to crawl to the water's edge; but he has no need to crawl there, he need not move an inch. *The power to heal that man was in Christ who stood there,* commissioned of God to save sinners, and to help the helpless. Please to recollect that the power that saves, and all of it, is not in the saved man, but in the Christ who saves. I take leave to contradict those who say that salvation is an evolution. All that ever can be evolved out of the sinful heart of man is sin, and nothing else. Salvation is the free gift of God, by Jesus Christ, and the work of it is supernatural. It is done by the Lord himself, and he has power to do it, however weak, nay, however dead in sin, the sinner may be. As a living child of God, I can say to-night, that, —

*“On a life I did not live,
On a death I did not die,
I stake my whole eternity.”*

You who would be saved must do the same; you must look right out of self to him whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to the sons of men. The Christ met that man's case, for he was able to do anything for him that he required. He meets your case, my dear hearer, for he can do anything for you that is wanted. Between here and heaven's gate, there shall never be anything required which he cannot give, or any help needed which he is not prepared to render, for he has all power in heaven and in earth.

Next, *the Lord can do more for you than you ask of him.* this poor man never asked anything of Christ, except by his looks, and by his lying there at the pool. If you feel to-night as if you could not pray, if you have needs that you cannot describe, if there is something wanted, and you do not know what it is, Christ can give it to you. You shall know what it is that you want when you get it; but perhaps now, in his mercy, he does not let you know all your needs. But here is the point, he "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." May he do it in you to-night! Take comfort from the cure of the impotent man, cherish hope, and say, "Why should he not heal me?"

Now the way in which Christ worked was very singular. *He worked by a command.* It is not a way that you and I would have selected; nor a way of which some nominal Christians approve. he said to this man, "Rise." He could not rise. "Take up thy bed." he could not take up his bed; he had been thirty-eight years unable to get off his bed. "Take up thy bed, and walk." Walk? he could not walk. I have heard some objectors say, "That preacher says to people, 'Believe.' They cannot believe. he bids them 'Repent.' They cannot repent." Ah! well, our Lord is our example; and he said to this man, who could not rise, and could not take up his bed, and could not walk, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." This was his way of exercising his divine power; and that is the way in which Christ saves men to-day. He gives us faith enough to say, "Ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!" They cannot hear. "Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones live!" They cannot live; but they do hear, and they do live; and while we are acting by faith, delivering a command which looks, upon the surface of it, to be absurd and unreasonable, the work of Christ is done by that command. Did he not say of old in the darkness, "Let there be light"? To what spake the Lord that word of power? To darkness, and to

nothingness. "And there was light." Now, he speaks to the sinner, and he says, "Believe and live." He believes, and he lives. God wants those of his messengers, who have faith to give his command, to let the sinner know that he has not the strength to obey, that he is morally lost and ruined, and yet to say, in the name of the eternal God, "Thus saith the Lord, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Believe, repent, be converted, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the way in which Christ's power goes forth to the sons of men. he said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand," and he did so; and he says to the dead, "Come forth," and they do come forth. his commandings are attended with enablings; and where his commands are faithfully preached, his power goes with them, and men are saved.

I close with observation. *In obedience, power was given.* The man that did not stop and wrangle with Christ, and say, "Rise? What dost thou mean? Thou lookest like a friend; but dost thou come here to make a sport of me? Rise? Thirty and eight years have I been lying here, and thou sayest, 'Rise.' Dost thou think that there has ever been a minute in those eight and thirty years in which I would not have gladly risen if I could have done so, and yet thou sayest, 'Rise,' and thou sayest 'Take up thy bed. Shoulder the rug on which thou liest.' How can I do so? It is thirty and eight years since I could lift a pound weight, and thou bidst me shoulder this mat on which I lie. Dost thou make me a theme of jest? And walk? Thou sayest, 'Walk.' Walk? Hear me, sick ones around me, he tells me to walk! I can scarcely lift even a finger, yet he bids me walk!" Thus he might have argued the matter out, and it would have been a very logical piece of argument, and the Savior would have stood convicted of having spoken empty words.

Instead of speaking thus, no sooner did Christ say to him, "Rise," than he willed to rise; and as he willed to rise, he moved to rise and rise he did, to his own astonishment. He rose, and stooping down, rolled up his mattress, all the while filled with wonder, every part of his body singing as he rolled it up and put it on his shoulder with alacrity. To his surprise, he found that the joints of his feet and legs could move, and he walked right away with his mattress on his shoulder; and the miracle was complete. Stop, man, stop! Come here! Now, had you the strength to do this of yourself? "No, not I. I lay here eight and thirty years; I had no strength till that

word ‘Rise,’ came to me.” “But did you do it?” “Oh! yes, you see that I did it. I rose; I folded up the mattress; and I walked away.” “But you were under some kind of compulsion, that made you move your legs and your hands, were you not?” “Oh! no; I did it freely, cheerfully, gladly. Compel me to do it? My dear sir, I clap my hands for joy to think that I could do it. I do not want to go back to that old mat, and lie there again; not I.” “Then what did you do?” “Well, I scarcely know what I did. I believed him, and I did what he told me; and a strange, mysterious power came over me; that is the whole story.” “Now explain it; tell these people all about it.” “Oh! no,” says the man, “I know that it is so; but I cannot explain it. one thing I know, whereas I was a cripple, now I can walk; whereas I was impotent, now I can carry my bed; whereas I was lying there, now I can stand upright.”

I cannot explain salvation to you to-night, or how it takes place; but I remember when I sat in the pew as despairing a sinner as ever lived. I heard the preacher say, “Look unto Christ, and live.” He seemed to say to me, “Look! Look! Look! Look!” and I did look, and I lived. That moment the burden of my sin was gone; I was crippled with unbelief no longer; I went home a sinner saved by grace, to live to praise the Lord; and —

*“E’er since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”*

I am impressed that I am going to have ever so many to-night who will just obey the gospel command, “Believe and live. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Oh, do it! Do it now; and unto God be glory, and to thyself be peace and happiness for ever! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION

NO. 2269A

JOHN 5:1-23

Verse 1. *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

For he had respect to the Law. As long as the Law lasted, Christ observed it. Oh, that we were as careful to obey the rules of the Gospel as our Lord was to observe the ritual of the Law! Moreover, he went to Jerusalem because he had an opportunity of addressing great numbers of people there. While I have been resting at Menton, I have been very glad to be of service to a few friends who were either seeking the Savior, or needing some guidance in their spiritual life; but I cannot tell you how happy I am to be once more in the Tabernacle, preaching to the great congregation. Fisherman like to cast their nets where there are plenty of fish; and fishers of men delight to be where there are many men who may be enclosed in the gospel net. “After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

This pool of Bethesda was rightly called “the house of mercy”; but it might have just as truly named “the house of misery”: for its “five porches” were the abode of many who were in misery, and who needed mercy.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk,

Invalid persons, diseased, and scarcely able to move.

Of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

What a sight for the Great Physician to look upon! The whole world must have been to him like one huge hospital, full of “impotent folk, blind, halt withered.” Wherever he went, he was surrounded by the sick, and sad, and suffering, those who were afflicted physically, mentally, and spiritually. But there was a special reason for the gathering together of so many sufferers at the pool of Bethesda.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

It was the last remnant of miracle. Such things were common enough in Judea in her better days; but now the times of the prophets had ceased, and the day of miracles was almost over. here, at Bethesda, were just a few relics and remnants of the good old days. Only one was cured, he that stepped into the pool first after the angel had troubled the water. It was but a scanty power that was left to the troubled water; but it was quite enough, if only one in a thousand was healed, to bring a crowd of people to wait around the pool. If only one person in a year were saved, I should not wonder if you thronged the place to hear the gospel that saved him; but your privilege is much greater. here all who come, if they will hear and believe, shall find healing. It is not the first only, but even unto the last who shall step into the pool, that shall be healed.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

That was a great portion of the man’s life. If he was a full-grown man when he was attacked with the infirmity, he had now become old and grey. What a long time to be afflicted, thirty and eight years! Have we not with us at this time some who have been afflicted with the soul-sickness of sin more than thirty and eight years?

When Jesus saw him lie.

The Great Physician fixed his eye on him, for his was an extraordinary case. Probably he was known and talked of as the man who had been paralyzed eight and thirty years. Note that it does not say, “When the man saw Jesus,” but “when Jesus saw him.” He did not know Jesus; possibly he had not even heard of his healing power and compassionate

love. He was not seeking Jesus; but Jesus was seeking him. It was so with many of us; and therefore we sing —

*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood.”*
*When Jesus saw the impotent man, —
And knew that he had been now a long time in that case,
And a long time in that place, too, —
He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*

That must have seemed a strange question. What was he there for, if not to be made whole? But I will show you, by-and-by, that there was wisdom in the question of Jesus. It was no idle curiosity that moved him to enquire of the man whether he was willing to be made whole.

The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming,

Shuffling along, as best I may, to the water’s edge, —

Another steppeth down before me.

Then, of course, the curative miracle is wrought, and the curative power of the water is gone until another season, when the angel troubles it again.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

This is our Sabbath. Oh, that we might have the same miracle wrought here to-night, upon many spiritually impotent folk!

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured. It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. he answered them,

And he *did* answer them, too. it was a crushing answer.

He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

That was his warrant. None but God could have made him whole. Gad can set aside any of his laws if he pleases; at any rate, whatever he commands, must be right.

Then asked they him, What man is that which saith unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

They asked, “What *man*” had given this command. Why, if it had been a mere man who had said it, the impotent man could not either have taken up his bed, or have walked!

And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

He never sought notoriety; but avoided popular demonstrations in his favor. The man who had been healed had exercised faith in Jesus, but he knew very little about him. A certain something in the air and mien of Christ had won his faith; but he did not know his name, or who he was. How small may be your knowledge, and yet you may be saved by true faith!

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

Probably, this man’s illness had been caused by sin. Christ bids him henceforth keep clear of sin, lest a worse calamity should come upon him.

The man departed, and told the Jews, which had made him whole.

Full of joy, full of delight, he must tell out the name of him who had cured him, as grateful patients like to sound the praises of their physician when he has been the means of healing them.

And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

This was a mere pretense, an idle excuse for their enmity. They not only hated Christ; but they must besmear him with their calumnies, and make him out to be an evil-doer although he was goodness itself.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

The whole work of nature is continued on Sabbath-days as well as other days. Stars shine through the Sabbath-night, and the sun rises and sets on the Lord’s-day as on all the days of the week. God’s work continues.

“My Father worketh,” saith Christ, “and I work.” “My work is my Father’s work, and that goes on whatever the day may be.”

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

They did not understand him to preach Unitarianism; they understood him to proclaim his own true and proper Godhead, and he never contradicted them, for he was God.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Christ’s work runs parallel with that of the Father. The Father and the Son ever work in perfect harmony with one another.

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

The Son as well as the Father, is the Quickener of the dead. The Son is also the Judge of all men.

That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

As the universal Judge, the Lord Jesus is to be honored by all men, “even as they honor the Father.” Whatever others may do, or not do, we will honor the Father, we will honor the Son, and we will honor the Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three, the one God of Israel, for ever and ever.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 552, 556, 557.

TWO “I WILLS” IN ISAIAH 41

SERMON NO. 2270

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY
AUGUST 21ST, 1892,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 16TH, 1890.

“I will open rivers in high places, and a fountain in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”
— *Isaiah 41:18.*

YOU notice that, in this verse, the Lord twice says, “I will”; and in that respect this verse is in harmony with the rest of the chapter. Will the children, when they are at home, find out how many times in this chapter God says, “I will,” or “Thou shalt,” which is to much the same effect?

How greatly I prize a portion of Scripture which is filled with God’s shalls and wills! Everything he says is precious; but his “I wills” are peculiarly precious. There are the “I wills” of the Psalms, a long list of them; and the “I wills” of Christ, a good company. When we come to the “I wills” of God, then we get among the precious things, the deep things, the things which minister comfort and strength to the people of God.

We sometimes say “I will”; but it is in a feeble fashion compared with the way in which God says it. People say, “‘Must’ is for the king.” so, “I will,” is for the King of kings. It is his prerogative to will. It is his sovereign right to say, “I will.” When we get a chapter like the one that we have been reading, which is full of the “I wills” of God, it is worth while to pause for a few moments, and just think of what Jehovah’s “I will,” must mean.

It is an “I will,” *uttered with deliberation*. James said, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” We say, “I will,” in a hurry; and then we take time to repent of it. We are under excitement,

persuasion, or compulsion, and we say, "I will," and we are very sorry afterwards, and perhaps we are so unfaithful as not to keep our word; but God never speaks under compulsion; he is almighty. God never speaks in a hurry; he is infinite leisure. God never speaks under excitement or persuasion; that were not like a God. His purpose is of old, and his decree is from everlasting; and the "I will," which is the mouth of the decree, is a word that is spoken with wisdom and prudence. Now, when a man speaks a thing prudently and wisely, you believe that he will carry it out, if he can. You may have much more confidence with regard to what the Lord says, for he has not spoken without due deliberation; therefore, whenever God says, "I will," you may be sure that he will perform it.

Next, when God says, "I will," his resolution is *supported by omnipotence*. you say, "I will," but you cannot do what you have promised. You will is good enough; but you fail because of lack of the means. you say, "I will, yes, I will;" but afterwards you have meekly to say, "I pray thee, take this will for the deed; for I find that I have overshot the mark. I have promised what I am unable to perform." Now, that can never happen with God. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Is anything too hard for the Lord, especially anything he promised to perform? Come, then, dear friends, if God be omnipotent, and we know that he is, when he says, "I will," we dare not doubt it; for eternal power goes forth with the word of his wisdom; and it must, yea, it shall be done. Whatever doubts we might have had, if it were not God's "I will," vanish when we come to remember that all things are possible with him.

Furthermore, when God says, "I will," we should remember that it is *sealed with immutability*. We change, we are always changing. Made of dust and ashes, we are made of material that continues to change. Hence, we say to-day, "I will," and we must mean it; but to-morrow we wish that we had never said, "I will," and the next day we say, "I will not." Ah! me, the suicides that have come through resting on the word of a man who was false, and proved a traitor to his friend. But God never changes; he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. The thing that has gone out of his mouth shall never be reversed. When he once says, "I will," depend on this, he still says, "I will"; and till heaven and earth shall pass away, it will still be, "I will." He is too perfect to change; for being perfect, he cannot change. A changeable being either changes from a worse to a better, in

which case he was not perfect before; or else he changes from a better to a worse, in which case he will not be perfect afterwards; but God being always perfect, is always the same, never withdrawing his word, or altering his purpose. Will you not, therefore, believe the unfailing word of an unchanging God? Can you not hang upon it; and when he says, "I will," depend on it that it shall be even so?

Once more, when God says, "I will," it will be *carried out in faithfulness*. He has fulfilled his threatenings. He never idly vapors, and utters words of terror without intending to carry them out; and when it comes to promises, rest you sure that God never flatters the ear, and then deceives the man. If he did not mean to do it, he would not say, "I will." Eternal faithfulness performs what eternal wisdom declares. Shall God lie? Is he a man as thou art? Will he deceive? Will he falsely promise, and then run from his word? That be far from him, and let it be far from us thus to blaspheme his name by such a thought. Come, then, child of God, thou who knowest him, if he has said, "I will help thee," he will help thee. If he says, "I will strengthen thee," he will strengthen thee. Believe God, without the trace of doubt; and "be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

Now, all this is meant to introduce my text, with its two glorious "I wills." Let us try and get something out of them. The Lord says, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

I propose to apply the text as a sort of general promise to many things; and, first, to apply it to THE TRIALS OF SAINTS.

Consider, first, *their temporal trials*. God's people may be hungry and thirsty; and their anxiety may be great. Your cupboard may be bare; the flocks may be cut off from the fold, and there may be not herd in the stall; but God can feed you. Though you seek water, and there is none, he can open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. Do not distrust the God of providence. Many of his children have been brought to their last loaf, and yet they have not been starved. Remember her who had nothing left but a little meal and a little oil, when the prophet came to her, and yet the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail. Remember him who sat by the brook Cherith, and the ravens

brought him bread, and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. Perhaps no miracle will be wrought for you; possibly God will feed you without a miracle; and so long as it is done, you will equally praise him whether the supply be providential or miraculous. Plead these promises: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." What though there is nothing at present, perhaps by to-morrow morning the Lord may have opened rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

Certainly my text is true in *the spiritual experience of believers*. Do you know what it is, sometimes, when spiritual things are at a very low ebb, when you cannot find any joy, and scarcely any hope, when you look into your own heart, and all seems as dry as the earth is after a long autumn drought? You have now power, no strength, scarcely any desire. You sit down, and say, "I am afraid that I am no child of God; I am given up; I am spiritually dead." Yet have you never known, within an hour, the great water-floods to be let loose, and your soul to be full of feeling, full of faith, hope, joy, love? The chariot-wheels were taken off, and the chariot dragged very heavily; but now, or ever you were aware, your soul has made you like the chariots of Amminadib. You are leaping, you are laughing, for very joy. The Lord has turned your captivity; and filled your mouth with laughter, and your tongue with singing; and done it all of a sudden, too. God can do things for his people, even wonderful things which they looked not for.

I was noticing that there are in our text four words relating to water. Everything had been dry before, and there was no water for the thirsty to drink. Now, here you have rivers, fountains, a pool, and springs of water. There is a difference in the four words. The first is "rivers." "I will open rivers in high places." There shall come directly from God a rush of mighty grace, like the streams of flowing rivers, Your poor, dead, dry heart shall suddenly feel that the waters of life have come directly from the throne of God to you. There shall be "waters to swim in." You shall have an abundance where before you had nothing.

The next word is "fountains", which may be rendered "wells." Now, wells are places to which people regularly go for water. They represent the

means of grace. "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Well, now, perhaps you have been to the means of grace, and yet obtained no comfort. You have not blamed the preacher; but you have blamed yourself very much. But, on a sudden, God appears, and opens wells in the midst of the valley. Now the service is all full of refreshment. Now are you glad, and you no more go home saying, "I thirsted, but I went to the house of the Lord in vain; for I received no comfort." See what God can do; he can make rivers of grace flow directly from his throne, and he can open wells in the customary use of the means of grace.

But there is a third word, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water." Here you have the idea of overflowing abundance. God can give you so much joy that you will not know how to hold it all; and you will have to let it be like a pool that overflows its banks. God can give you so much earnestness that you can hardly employ it all in the work that you have to do. He can give you so much nearness to himself, that your heart shall scarcely be able to contain your delight. God promises to make the wilderness "a pool of water." he does not give you just a drop of grace now and then; but he fills up the dry places till they become standing pools.

The fourth word is "springs." It seems to indicate a perpetual freshness; always something new — new thoughts of Christ, new delights in holy service, new prospects of the world to come, new communion with God. He can make the dry land "springs of water." He has promised to do so; trust his gracious word, and it shall be fulfilled in your experience even now.

I want God's people to use the text in this way, as God's promise for your temporals and for your spirituals. Oh! you that are in the wilderness, and find the sand dry and waterless, go you to God, and plead his promise. He has said, "I will," and he has said it twice over. Lay hold of an "I will," with each one of your hands; and come not away from the throne of grace till you have received an answer of peace to your petition, "Lord, do as thou hast said!"

Now, secondly, I am going to use the text in another way, not for God's people who are passing through trials, but as it may be applied to THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERTS. God will for you, my dear hearers, who have

been lately converted, open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. He will make your wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

Who were these people to whom the Lord spoke? Well, they were *people who were poor and needy*. “When the poor and needy seek water.” God will not do much for spiritually rich people; I mean you who say you are rich in yourselves, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; you who have all the grace that you want of your own making; you who trust in your own arm, and sacrifice to your own goodness. There is nothing for you in God. His grace is for the poor and needy. I think that I have some of them here to-night. They feel as if they had no right to be here; they almost wish that they could get under the seat, and hide away, they feel so very low, so broken down. It is for you, dear friends, that God will make rivers and open fountains.

When will he do it? When *they begin to ask him*. “When the poor and needy seek water.” Can you expect God to bless you if you do not seek him? Your desires must be wide awake; you must be longing after God; you must cry in your heart, “I will return unto my God; I will seek mercy at his hands; I will plead with him that I may be his child.” Then will the Lord begin to open fountains and rivers for you.

But the time is noted further still. It is not only when they begin to seek, but when *they begin silently to plead*. Notice the words, “When their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them.” But they could not speak; their tongue failed them because of their suffering from thirst. Yet says the lord, “I will hear them.” A glib tongue is bad at praying. When a man prays in his heart, he is often like Moses, slow of speech. A sinner under a sense of sin is scarcely able to speak a word. Frost of the mouth, but thaw of the soul, this is what we want. Their tongue failed them; but their heart was speaking. We know that it was; for God says, “I the Lord will hear them.” “I cannot pray,” says one. I am glad that you cannot. God will hear you now that your tongue fails you. You used to go upstairs, and pray for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, such prayer as it was; but now, when you kneel at your bedside, there is nothing but a broken groan or two, and a tear. God will hear you now. When your tongue fails, your

heart begins to pray, and God hears you. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

But the time mentioned is more sorrowful still; *these people were in abject distress*. It is added, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none.” “My day of grace is past,” says one. I wonder whoever told you that lie. As long as you live, your day of grace is not past; do not believe any such thing, for —

***“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

“Ah, well!” says one, “I have gone to look for mercy, and there is none.” So you think. Now is *the time for divine interposition*. When you seek water, and find none, God will open rivers for you. You remember how Elijah’s servant went up to the top of Carmel, and look toward the sea, and he came back to the prophet, and said, “There is nothing.” But Elijah said, “Go again seven times.” And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” When man says, “There is nothing,” God comes in, and soon there is everything. he made the world out of nothing, and he makes new creatures out of nothing. When you get back to nothing, God has come to everything. The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. I may seem to be speaking these words very calmly to you to-night; but I have within myself the deep persuasion that I am picturing some here who have reached the lowest point in their experience. They are despairing; they feel the sentence of death in their members. Now is the time for God to interpose; for notice how my text breaks in: “When they seek water, there is none,” then God says, “I will. They cannot do anything; but I will open rivers in high places; I will make the wilderness a pool of water.” What you want is a divine interposition. You want God to rend the heavens, and come down, and save you; and he has come down in the person of his Son. Jesus Christ is that great interposition of God, and he has come to open the rivers of grace, and to dig the wells of salvation.

The promise in the text also relates to *those who are in various positions*. There are some who are in very high places. You run up to the very tops of the mountains, and you fancy that God cannot reach you there; but he says, “I will open rivers in high places,” A river on the top of a mountain

is a wonderful thing; but God can make it so. However high you have gone, he can reach you. Others of you are ordinary sinners down in the valleys. "Well," says the Lord, "I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys." You shall find water when you are on the hill-top; you shall not have to come down to the valley for it; and if you are in the valley, you shall not have to go up to the mountain for it, it will come just where you are. I do like that thought. There are some people who seem to think that we have to go a long way to find Christ; but, indeed, Christ has come to us just where we are. To use an old illustration of mine, our railways companies generally make the station from a half a mile to two or three miles from the town, so that you must have a cab or an omnibus in order to get to it; but our Lord Jesus Christ has made a station just where the sinner is. Step into the train now; the first-class carriage is right before you. You need not run for half an hour to try to get a ticket, for on this line there is "nothing to pay." "Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely," for it flows at his feet, whether his is on the mountains or in the valleys.

Yes, and to vary the promise still more, the Lord says, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water." Have you seen a wilderness, a large extent of flat country covered with sand and stones? I have crossed such a wilderness on a small scale, where there was no herbage, nothing green, just a wild waste, without anything growing upon it. As for a stream of water, there is nothing of the kind, not a drop anywhere. God pictures you as being like that barren, dried-up land, and he says that he will turn you into a pool of water. Whatever you are, however barren, however worthless, God can transform you by his grace into the very opposite; and "the dry land", long dry, and always likely to be dry, shall be "springs of water." God can make springs of grace in you, which shall begin to rise and bubble up at once, and shall never cease to flow till you reach the throne of glory.

In a word, no condition can be so bad but God can change it. No sin can be so great but God can forgive it. No garment of our life can be so stained but Christ can make it white. How I love to tell you these things! How much more happy should I be if every sinner here believed them, and came to Jesus just as he is, and trusted Christ to be everything to him! I cannot

stay longer to-night on that point, precious as it is, because I want to stir up the people of God by one other observation.

Beloved friends, this text is true with reference to THE LABORS OR WORKERS FOR GOD. God can change the condition of the plot of ground on which you are at work.

I may be speaking to one here who says, "Mine is a very bad place to work in, for I cannot get the people to come and hear the gospel; there seems to be no *spirit of hearing*." That is largely true at the present time. Somehow, the people come here, and always have come here; but look at many of our churches and chapels. Why, in many of them there are more pews than people, more spiders than immortal souls! It is a wretched business. One says to me, "You know, sir, we have had addresses to working-men." Another says, "We have had Pleasant Sunday Afternoons." Another has had a batch of fiddlers at play; but the people do not come for all that. Some who like cheap music and Sunday concerts may be attracted by such means; but people will not be drawn thus to worship God. Of course not; can they not do their own fiddling if they want that kind of music? There is nothing in that style of thing to get people to come to a place of worship. There is just now a kind of hardening come over our population; the people do not care to go to a place of worship. But do not give up preaching, my friend; do not give up working, you who long for souls to be saved, for God can suddenly give a love for his house, and an eagerness to hear the gospel. He can make the dry land springs of water, and open rivers in high places. Only let all ministers preach the old gospel, preach it earnestly, and preach it simply, and the people will come back again. God will bring them to hear; he has always done so, and why should he not do so again?

Another says, "I get the people to hear, but *there is no feeling*." Well, I too know what it is to have preached in places that have been like ice-wells. When I have talked to the people, they have looked like so many images; there has been no stirring them, no moving them. Regular hearers are all to apt to turn into stone, and to be unmoved; but oh! you who are trying to do good, never cease from it because people seem to be turned to stone; go on with your work all the same. If the gospel hammer does not break the rock to-day, hammer away until it does. When the old St. Paul's Cathedral

had to be taken down for the present one to be built, Sir Christopher Wren had to remove some massive walls that had stood for hundreds of years; so he had a battering-ram, with a great mass of people, working away to break down the walls. I think that for four-and-twenty hours they kept right on, and there seemed to be no sign of giving way, the walls were so well built, very different from our modern walls. The structure was like a rock, it could not be stirred; but the battering-ram kept on and on and on, blow after blow, stroke after stroke, and at last the whole mass began to quiver, like a jelly, and by-and-by over went the massive walls. You have only to keep on long enough, and the same thing will happen in your work. The first blows upon the wall were not wasted; they were preparing for the others; and getting the whole structure into a condition of disintegration; and when that was done, down it came, and great was the fall thereof. Work away, brothers, work away, feeling sure that God will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. He will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.

“Well,” says one, “what we want in our place is for *the ministry itself to be supplied.*” Yes, that is what we want everywhere. If the minister himself is dry, what is to be done? Find fault with him, and leave him? No, dear friend, if he is a man of God, pray for him, and never rest till the Lord makes the dry land springs of water. We poor mortals, whom God has called to be preachers, are desperately dependent upon our congregations. I do not say that we rest on you first, our chief dependence must be upon God; but a praying; loving, earnest, wakeful people will keep the minister awake; and when the people decline, and there is no life in them, it sometimes happens that the minister gets dry, too. I remember that, when Mr. Matthew Wilks was comparing preachers to pens, he said that some of them spluttered, and others did not make any mark at all. “What is to be done with them?” said he, and then he answered his own question, ‘Pray the Lord to dip them in the ink.’ I think that we must pray for all the pens that God would dip them in the ink again. Oh, for another baptism of the Holy Spirit, to put more divine power upon them! Then, when we begin to speak, God will open rivers in high places, and make the wilderness a pool of water.

But what is wanted, too, is *the same blessing upon the helpers*. What is the preacher to do, what is the church to do, if the workers are half asleep? Sunday-school teachers going through their duty with great regularity and no spirituality; people going about with their tracts when they might almost as well go about with Sunday newspapers, for they have no love to the souls of the people! What is the result is we have deacons and church-officers going about without any life or spiritual power? Well do I remember preaching in a certain place, where I was told that there was a great spiritual dearth. I preached my best; and when I went down from the pulpit afterwards, there were two deacons standing against the door of the vestry, with their arms folded, and leaning back in a most comfortable attitude. I asked them if they were deacons, and they said, "Yes." Then I said, "There is no good doing here, I suppose?" They said, "No, none." I said, "I think I know the cause of it." "Do you know the cause of it?" they asked. "Yes," I replied, "I look to the right, and I look to the left, and I see it." I do not think that the brethren liked my remark; but, at the same time, I know that it was an arrow that went home to their hearts, for they became very different men afterwards, and woke up, and God blessed the place. One sleepy Christian in a church may do much mischief. In some businesses, the whole thing is so arranged that, if one person goes to sleep, all the machinery goes wrong; and I believe that it is very much so in the church of God. You have seen a number of men, standing in a long line, pitching bricks to one another. Suppose that one of them goes to sleep. There will be a great accumulation of bricks around him; but none of them will get to the other end of the line. Sometimes we get a member of the church asleep. I would like to hurl half a brick at him; but I suppose that I must not do that, although he makes the whole work stop. No good is done because he is asleep. One says, "I know that brother." Who is he? Would you mind just giving him a jog? Put your arm this way, and nudge him so [describing man striking himself], and you will hit the right man, I should not wonder. If you awake, perhaps it might be the waking up of one of the most sleepy people in the church. At any rate, it is always better to take these things to ourselves than to pass them on to anybody else. It is never well to listen for other people; the Scriptural injunction is, "Take heed unto thyself."

I pray that all the members of the this church, if they have any of them been like dry land, may become springs of water. Then we may look for *a change throughout the whole congregation*. Men and women will cry out, “What must we do to be saved?” There will be plenty of people to be talked to about their souls. We shall have do difficulty in increasing the church, month by month, with such as shall be saved; and then *all the neighborhood will be transformed*. A living church, in which God has made living springs of grace to rise, will soon turn the desert in which it is situated into quite a different region. There is need for gracious work in all the neighbourhoods in which any of us live; and great need of it round this region, where it was once very much the reverse! And what part of London is there that might not make a Christian weep tears of blood? Can you pass through this great city without being distressed and alarmed by reason of its ever-increasing sin, and its decreasing fear of God? O friends, these things cannot go on as they are! Something bad will come of it if something good and great is not soon done by the great God of mercy. Let us cry to him in private and in public. Let us entreat the stretching out of his arm of grace, and with our prayers let us put forth earnest efforts, each one trying to bring another to Christ, and never resting —

*“Till all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the conduct of his grace
And make his glories known.”
God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.*

EXPOSITION

NO. 2270A

ISAIAH 41:1-20

Verse 1. *Keeps silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*

God invites people to argue with him. He bids them first “listen” to him, and then speak to him. They had been worshipping idols, so the Lord shows them that the idols are nothing, and that all worship paid to them is a lie. He begins by asking a question:—

Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his feet, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

These words are supposed to allude to Cyrus, who came “from the east”, and conquered “the nations”, and then did good to the house of Israel. It was God who spoke to Cyrus long before he was born. What idol god has been able to utter any prophecy? Only the Most High who lives in heaven can foretell things to come. One of the best proofs of our holy religion is to be found in the prophecies which have been fulfilled to the letter in various countries, and at different periods. Now, when they dig up old stones, that have been hidden for hundreds of years from the eyes of men, they see the proofs of how God saw into the future, and bade his prophets foretell the things that should be hereafter.

Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbor; and ever one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

A very graphic picture of the making of an idol. The people were afraid of Cyrus, so they began to appeal to their gods. A pretty god it must have been that had to be made by a carpenter! Then the wood had to be covered with gold plates by the goldsmith, and the god would not be complete without the help of a man smoothing with a hammer and a smith smiting upon an anvil. When it was made, they had to solder it to keep it together; and they had to get nails to fasten it in its place lest, like Dagon, it should fall down and be broken. This is nothing but literal truth; yet what sarcasm it is upon idolatry! What good can come of idols that are made by men, idols that cannot move, and must be fixed in their places with soldering irons?

But thou, Israel, art my servant,

You do not worship idols; you worship Jehovah, the living and true God.

Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

What a title for God to give to a man, "Abraham my friend"! Could not we also endeavor to get into God's friendship, where Abraham was; to trust and love God much; to talk with him much, and enjoy high and holy fellowship with him?

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

To many here this verse will come home very sweetly. God is your God. and you are God's servants. he has chosen you; he will never repent of his choice; his election is never changed. "I have Chosen thee, and not cast thee away;" and you have chosen him, and you will not cast him away. By

his grace, you will never leave your God, nor forsake the ways of Christ. May his mercy keep you faithful, even to the end!

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God:

Where God is, there is no cause for fear: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee.” That is a grand argument. “Be not dismayed; for I am thy God.” Everything we need lies within the compass of those words.

I will strengthen thee; yes, I will help thee; yes, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Beloved believer, are you weak to-night? Claim this precious promise, “I will strengthen thee.” Have you something to do that is quite beyond your strength? Take hold of this comforting word, “I will help thee.” Are you ready to slip? Do you feel as if you must fall? Lean on this gracious message, “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Do not let these precious pearls lie at your feet to be trodden on; pick them up, and wear them, and beautify the neck of your faith with them.

Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be alarmed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

Your sins, your temptations, everything that would keep you out of heaven, and drive you away from God, the Lord will overcome all these enemies of yours, and deliver you.

Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

That is the second time that we have had that precious promise to forbid our fear; first in verse 10, and now in verse 13, “I will help thee.”

Fear not, thou worm Jacob,

You are earthly, grovelling, weak, like a worm; yet even you need not fear: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

And ye men of Israel; I will help thee,

That is the third time that we have had that promise, “I will help thee.” “Ring that silver bell again,” says the Holy Spirit to Isaiah, “let it comfort my tired ones.” “I will help thee.”

Saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.

I was wonderstruck, as I looked at this verse, to find it put “Thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Goel,” that is the Hebrew word which is translated “Redeemer”, “Thy next of kin.” Is the next of kin to a worm the Almighty God? Does he undertake to be our Brother, to pay the redemption price for us, because he is our Kinsman? So the text says. Let us drink in the comfort of it: “Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” In order to become our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel himself became “a worm, and no man.”

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small. and thou shalt make the hills as chaff.

The Easterns drag a wooden machine over the corn to fetch out the grain from the ear. This is called a corn-drag, and they put teeth in it, similar to the teeth of a harrow. God said that he would turn his Church, his people, into a new corn-drag, with teeth sharp and tearing, and that they should go against their difficulties, which were like mountains, and against their trials, which were like hills, and they should thresh them small, and make them to be like chaff.

Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

All difficulty is gone, torn to pieces small as chaff, and then winnowed away, as the chaff is blown from among the heap on the threshing floor. What a promise this is! You who fear God, believe it, go and practice it, and see if God does not make your greatest difficulties utterly to disappear.

Now come two sweet verses:—

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

See what God can do. Men are thirsty, they have no water; and lo! on a sudden, behold rivers, fountains, springs, pools, floods; for God does nothing in halves. He is an all-sufficient, overflowing God. When he gives, he gives like a king. He does not measure his gifts of water by the pint and by the gallon; but here you have pools, and springs, and rivers. When he has given waters, he will give trees to grow by the waters. When God gives blessing, he makes other blessings to spring out of it.

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.

Making a paradise of streams of water and lovely trees, evergreen trees of the most comely aspect, and of great variety. See what God can do. Where there is a wilderness, where there were hills and valleys, and all was dry and parched, he makes woods and forests, rivers and fountains. He can do all things. Oh, that we had faith in him! But we forget him: we turn not to him; we look everywhere but to God; we try every method except that of trusting in the living God. Have we a God? If so, why do we act as we sometimes do? Martin Luther was a very cheerful man, as a rule; but he had terrible fits of depression. he was at one time so depressed that his friends recommended him to go away for a change of air, to see if he could get relief. he went away; but he came home as miserable as ever; and when he went into the sitting-room, his wise wife Kate, Catherine von Bora, was sitting there, dressed in black, and her children round about her, all in black. "Oh, oh!" said Luther, "who is dead?" "Why," said she, "doctor, have not you heard that God is dead? My husband, Martin Luther, would never be in such a state of mind if he had a living God to trust to." Then he burst into a hearty laugh, and said, "Kate, thou art a wise woman. I have been acting as if God were dead, and I will do so no more. Go and take off thy black." If God be alive, why are we discouraged? If we have a God to

look to, why are we cast down? Let us rejoice and be glad together; for God will do all that he has promised, for this reason:—

That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

God wants you to know that he is at work on your behalf. he wants you so to trust him as to see how his promises can be applied to your case, and what his right hand can accomplish even for you. Let us trust him tonight with all our hearts.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 30, 992, 488

MICHAH'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY

SERMON NO. 2328

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
OCTOBER 1ST, 1893,**

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON ON
THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22ND, 1889.**

“Walk humbly with thy God.” — Micah 6:8.

THIS is the essence of the law, the spiritual side of it; its ten commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The law is spiritual, and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions; but specially God demands the heart. Now it is our great joy that what the law requires the gospel gives. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” In him we meet the requirements of the law, first, by what he has done for us; and next, by what he works in us. He conforms us to the law of God. He makes us, by his Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for his glory, to render to the law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfill these three divine requirements. These we fulfill perfectly in our desire; we would be holy as God is holy, if we could live as our heart aspires to live, we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy; and we would always walk humbly with God. This the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure; and the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we

shall serve him day and night in his temple, and shall render to him an absolutely perfect obedience, for “they are without fault before the throne of God.”

To-night I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, “Walk humbly with thy God,” asking first, What is the nature of this humility? and secondly, Wherein does this humility show itself?

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

And, first, this humility belongs to the highest form of character. Observe what precedes our text, “to do justly, and to love mercy.” Suppose a man has done that, suppose that in both these things he has come up to the divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, still we shall need to walk before God very humbly, ever looking to the blood, for even then the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth and continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants, and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly, and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ’s gracious help; but if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us, and every act was right towards man, and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbor as strong as our love to ourselves, even then there would come in this precept, “Walk humbly with thy God.”

Dear friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian grace, — I almost hope that you never will think so, — but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments; but walk humbly with your God. I do believe that the more grace a man has the more he feels his deficiency of grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort; they have always disclaimed anything like perfection, they have always lain low before God, and if one has been constrained to admire them, they

have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were at all the objects of reverence among their fellow-Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them; and therein I do admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest. Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still a fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but the fountain is opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character, nay, it is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, “Be clothed with humility,” as if, after we had put on the whole armor of God, we put this over all to cover it all up. We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the greaves of brass upon the knees to shine before men; but clothing ourselves like officers in mufti, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.

The second remark is this, the humility here prescribed involves constant communion with God. Observe that we are told to walk humbly with THY God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God. They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said; they were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God; and, beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God, and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;” “dust” — that set forth the frailty of his nature, “ashes” — as if he was like the refuse of the altar, which could not be burnt up, which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatsoever; and that was not because he was

away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God; but coming near to the Lord you rightly sing, —

*“The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”*

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather-gauge as to your communion, whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. “He must increase,” said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus; “but I must decrease.” The two things go together; if this scale rises, that scale must go down. “Walk humbly with thy God.” Dare to keep with God, dare to have him as your daily Friend, be bold enough to come to him who is within the veil, talk with him, walk with him, as a man walks; with his familiar friend; but walk humbly with him. You will do so if you walk truly; I cannot conceive such a thing, — it is impossible, — as a man walking proudly with God. He takes his fellow by the arm, and feels that he is as good as his neighbor, perhaps superior to him; but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that. The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility; but the sinful with the Thrice-holy! This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, this humility implies constant activity. “Walk humbly with thy God.” Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” But the answer is not, “Bow humbly before God,” but “Walk humbly with God.” Now, beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern, — large, of course, only to us, — if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm; we should not think so if we did think steadily for a moment, for we should know our right position; but in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving, and we are too apt to get off our proper level. We have, perhaps, to rule others; and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk; but it must not be so. You must learn, not only to be humble in the closet of communion, and to be humble with your

Bible before you, but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do, when you have as much as ever you can do. When from morning to night you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know; not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was Mrs. Martha, and the housewife is a queen; but Mary sat in the servant's place at Jesus' feet. If Martha's heart could have been where Mary's body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Maries, or Mary-Marthas, when ever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that this humility denotes progress. The man is to walk, and that is progress, advancing. "Walk humbly:" I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better; they call that humility. It begins with an S in English, and the full word is SLOTH. "I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is." Thou art not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God. Go forward, advance, not with a proud desire to excel your fellow-Christians, not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more grace; but still walk, go on, advance, grow. Be enriched with all the precious things of God; be filled with all the fullness of God; walk on, walk ever. Lie not down in despair; roll not in the dust with desperation because thou thinkest high things impossible to thee; walk, but walk humbly. Thou wilt soon find out, if thou dost make any progress, that thou hast need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud, and I am persuaded that when a man advances he gets humbler, and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us, for this he visits us in the night, and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more grace, and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." If thou wilt climb the mountain-side, thou shalt be thirsty among the barren crags; but if thou wilt descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander, and the brooks flow among the meadows, thou shalt drink to thy full. Doth not the hart pant for the water-brooks? Do thou pant for them; they flow in the valley of humiliation. The Lord bring us all there!

Next, the humility here prescribed implies constancy: “Walk humbly with thy God.” Not sometimes be humble; but ever walk humbly with thy God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we should be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same myself, “I felt very broken down, and lay ‘very low at my Master’s feet.” Were you so the next day? And the day after did you continue so? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because of our great debt to our Master, begging that he would not be hard with us, and is it not possible tomorrow to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God’s people would do that; but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it, one day acknowledging your Father’s authority, and doing his will, and another day standing outside the door, and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. “Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; I have been a consistent believer, yet I never have any high joys; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved, and he is in an ecstasy of delight. How can this be right?” O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with thy Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers, and then to come out, and to be “My lord,” and some very great one in the midst of the church and in the world. This will never do. It is not said, “Bow humbly before God now and then; “but as a regular, constant thing, “Walk humbly with thy God.” It is not, “Bow thy head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which thou canst not deny,” but, in the brightness of thy purity, and the clearness of thy holiness, still keep thy heart in lowly reverence bowing before the throne.

Once more only, and then we will quit this part of the subject, the humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence. Do let me read the text to you, “Walk humbly with God.” No, no, we must not maul the passage that way, “Walk humbly with thy God.” Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ; that is unbelief. Do not think that it is humility to think that he is another man’s God, and not yours; “Walk humbly with thy God.” Know that he is your God, be sure of it, come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved’s, and that he

is yours. Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives himself to you; take him to be yours by a covenant of salt that never shall be broken; and give yourself to him, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." "Walk humbly with thy God." Let not anything draw you away from that confidence; but then, in comes the humility. This is all of grace; this is all the result of divine election; therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen you. This is all the effect of redeeming love; therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price; so you can have no room to glory.

*This is all the work of the Spirit.
"Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To him all the glory belongs."*

"Walk humbly with thy God." I lie at his feet as one unworthy, and cry, "Whence is this to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that thou hast made to pass before me." I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I have to answer the question, WHEREIN DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW ITSELF? I have what might be a long task; a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hour-glass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, "Let us have another glass," and they turned it over again, and went on for another hour. But I am not going to do that, I do not wish to weary you, and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Wherein, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to try to be humble, but to be humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility, when he is very humble to everybody, he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, specially, walk humbly with God when your graces are strong and vigorous, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have

been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word, and especially when the Lord gives you success in his service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among his people, and has laid his hand upon you, and said, "Go in this thy might." Then, "Walk humbly with thy God." The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon; perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar; but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the evil one tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Next, when you have a great deal of work to do, and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with God. Do you ask, How? By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself; and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any. When you are weak, by owning your weakness you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God, cry to him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth thy praise." Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God, yield yourself up to be worked upon by him, that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my brother, your people will soon find it out.

***"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at his feet!"***

Then it is, when walking humbly with God in service, that he will fill us, and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God in all your aims. When you are seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it be the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman either, tries to work in the Sunday-school, or if anyone preaches in the open air, or in the house of God, with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous brother or sister, then let this word come into

your ear, "Walk humbly with thy God." There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." You young men of the College, do not be always hunting up big places; be willing to go to small places to preach the gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum; but go, and let your aim always be this, "I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God." "Walk humbly with thy God." You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs; sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising; think only of your Lord's glory. "Walk humbly with thy God."

Walk humbly with God, also, in studying his Word, and in believing his truth. We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible; the Bible stands bound at their bar, nay, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected, and they have no feeling of decency towards it; they will cut out its very heart, they will rend asunder its tenderest parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the beloved apostle's Gospel, or the Book of the Apocalypse, is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing, their scalpel, their knife, cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be, and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire ever to sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever. I am prepared to believe what ever it says, and to take it believing it to be the Word of God; for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false; but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a guide here that is infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so after all; I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide perpetually, but I am not qualified to do that, and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all. Sit thou down, Reason, and let Faith rise up. If the Lord hath said it, let God be true, and every man a liar. If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science; the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of

men may be. “Ah ! “you say, “you are an old-fashioned foggy.” Yes, I am; I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me; and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book. This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation; it smote the Papacy, and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand thou still, my brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and “walk humbly with thy God” as to his truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, as to mercies received. You were ill a little while ago; and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business; you wear a much better coat than you used to come here in; but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman. Now you get into very good society, you say; but do not be ashamed to come to the prayer-meeting along with the Lord’s poor, and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. “Walk humbly with thy God,” or else it may be that he will take thee down a notch or two, and bring thee back to thy old poverty; and then what wilt thou say to thyself for thy folly?

Next, walk humbly with God under great trials. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride; murmur not, but bow low. Say, “Lord, if thou smite me, I deserve more than thou dost lay upon me. Thou hast not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement.” Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no; say, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.”

And next, walk humbly with God in thy devotions, as between thyself and God in thy chamber. Dost thou read? Read humbly. Dost thou pray? Pray humbly. Dost thou sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Do take care, when thy God and thyself are together, and none besides, that there thou showest to him thy humble heart, with deep humility that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly as between thyself and thy brethren. Ask not to be head choir-master; desire not to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on, the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard

brethren say, “Well, but you must stand up for your dignity.” I lost mine a long time ago, and I never thought it was worth while to look for it. As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest room; and if we will do so, our brethren will take care that before long they will say to us, “Go up higher.” In thy dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that, if thou art strong now, thou mayest very soon be as weak as thy brethren are.

And in dealing with sinners, “walk humbly with thy God.” Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view. Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there was a pair of tongs handy; but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, beloved, we must come down from all lofty places, and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject as to your circumstances. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after a higher place; walk humbly with your God, take what he gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all his mercy; and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbles. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. “Walk humbly with thy God.” In all thy thoughts of holy things, be humble; thoughts of God should lay thee low, thoughts of Christ should bring thee to his feet, thoughts of the Holy Ghost should make thee grieve for having vexed him. Thoughts of every covenant blessing should make thee wonder that such privileges ever came to thee. Thoughts of heaven should make thee marvel that thou shouldst ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of hell should make thee humble, —

*“For were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been thine.”*

Oh, brethren, the Lord help us to walk humbly with God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of thyself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are

nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble here will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master by-and-by. The Lord bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST

SERMON NO. 2358

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 29TH, 1894,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON ON
THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1888.

*“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
— Hebrews 13:8.*

LET me read to you the verse that comes before our text. It is a good habit always to look at texts in their connection. It is wrong, I think, to lay hold of small portions of God's Word, and take them out of their connection as you might pluck feathers from a bird; it is an injury to the Word; and, sometimes, a passage of Scripture loses much of its beauty, its true teaching, and its real meaning, by being taken from the context. Nobody would think of mutilating Milton's poems so, taking a few lines out of Paradise Lost, and then imagining that he could really get at the heart of the poet's power. So, always look at texts in the connection in which they stand. The verse before our text is this, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Observe, then, that God's people are a thoughtful people. If they are what they ought to be, they do a great deal of remembering and considering; that is the gist of this verse. If they are to remember and to consider their earthly leaders, much more are they to recollect that great Leader, the Lord Jesus, and all those matchless truths which fell from his blessed lips. I wish, in these days, that professing Christians did remember and did consider a great deal more; but we live in such a flurry, and hurry, and worry, that we do not get time for thought. Our noble forefathers of the Puritanic sort were men with backbone, men of solid tread, independent and self-contained men, who could hold their own in the day of conflict;

and the reason was because they took time to meditate, time to keep a diary of their daily experiences, time to commune with God in secret. Take the hint, and try and do a little more thinking; in this busy London, and in these trying days, remember and consider.

My next remark is, that God's people are an imitative people, for we are told here that they are to remember them who are their leaders, those who have spoken to them the Word of God, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." There is an itching, nowadays, after originality, striking out a path for yourself. When sheep do that, they are bad sheep. Sheep follow the shepherd; and, in a measure, they follow one another when they are all together following the shepherd. Our Great Master never aimed at originality; he said that he did not even speak his own words, but the words that he had heard of his Father. He was docile and teachable; as the Son of God, and the servant of God, his ear was open to hear the instructions of the Father, and he could say, "I do always those things that please him." Now, that is the true path for a Christian to take, to follow Jesus, and, in consequence, to follow all such true saints as may be worthy of being followed, imitating the godly so far as they imitate Christ. The apostle puts it, "whose faith follow." Many young Christians, if they were to pretend to strike out a path for themselves, must infallibly fall into many sorrows, whereas by taking some note of the way in which more experienced and more instructed Christians have gone, they will keep by the way of the footsteps of the flock, and they will also follow the footprints of the Shepherd. God's people are a thoughtful people, and they are an imitative and humble people, willing to be instructed, and willing to follow holy and godly examples.

One good reason, however, for imitating saints is given in our text; it is because our Lord and his faith are always the same: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." You see, if the old foundation shifted, if our faith was always changing, then we could not follow any of the saints who have gone before us. If we have a religion specially for the nineteenth century, it is ridiculous for us to imitate the men of the first century, and Paul and the apostles are just old fogies who are left behind in the far-distant ages. If we are to go on improving from century to century, I cannot point you to any of the reformers, or the confessors, or the saints in the brave days of old, and say to you, "Learn from their example,"

because, if religion has altogether changed and improved, it is a curious thing to say, but we ought to set an example to our ancestors. Of course, they cannot follow it because they have gone from the earth; but as we know so much better than our fathers, we cannot think of learning anything from them. As we have left the apostles all behind, and gone in for something quite new, it is a pity that we should not forget what they did, and what they suffered, and think that they were just a set of simpletons who acted up to their own light, but then they had not the light we have in this wonderful nineteenth century! O beloved, it almost makes my lips blister to talk after the present evil fashion, for grosser falsehood never could be uttered than the insinuation that we have shifted the everlasting foundations of our faith. Verily, if these foundations were removed, we might ask in many sense, "What shall the righteous do? Whom shall they copy? Whom shall they follow? The landmarks having gone, what remains to us of the holy treasury of example with which the Lord enriches those who follow Christ?"

I. Coming to our text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," my first observation is, that JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS ALWAYS THE SAME. He is, was, and will be always the same.

Changes of position and of circumstances there have been in our Lord, but he is always the same in his great love to his people, whom he loved or ever the earth was. Before the first star was kindled, before the first living creature began to sing the praise of its Creator, he loved his Church with an everlasting love. He spied her in the glass of predestination, pictured her by his divine foreknowledge, and loved her with all his heart; and it was for this cause that he left his Father, and became one with her, that he might redeem her. It was for this cause that he went with her through all this vale of tears, discharged her debts, and bore her sins in his own body on the tree. For her sake he slept in the tomb, and with the same love that brought him down he has gone up again, and with the same heart beating true to the same blessed betrothment he has gone into the glory, waiting for the marriage-day when he shall come again, to receive his perfected spouse, who shall have made herself ready by his grace. Never for a moment, whether as God over all, blessed for ever, or as God and man in one divine person, or as dead and buried, or as risen and ascended, never

has he changed in the love he bears to his chosen. He is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Therefore, beloved brethren, he has never changed in his divine purpose towards his beloved Church. He resolved in eternity to become one with her, that she might become one with him; and, having determined upon this, when the fullness of time had come, he was born of a woman, made under the law, he took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, “and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Yet he never abandoned his purpose, he set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem; even when the bitter cup was put to his lips, and he seemed to stagger for a moment, he returned to it with a strong resolve, saying to his Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” That purpose is strong upon him now; for Zion’s sake he will not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake he will not rest, until her righteousness goeth forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. Jesus is still pressing on with his great work, and he will not fail nor be discouraged in it. He will never be content till all whom he has bought with blood shall become also glorified by his power. He will gather all his sheep in the heavenly fold, and they shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them, every one of them being brought there by the great Shepherd who laid down his life for them. Beloved, he cannot turn from his purpose; it is not according to his nature that he should, for he is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

He is also “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” in the holding of his offices for the carrying out of his purpose, and giving effect to his love. He is a Prophet still. Men try to set him on one side. Science, falsely so-called, comes forward, and bids him hold his tongue; but “the sheep follow him, for they know his voice; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” The teachings of the New Testament are as sound and true to-day as they were eighteen hundred years ago; they have lost none of their value, none of their absolute certainty; they stand fast like the everlasting hills. Jesus Christ was a Prophet, and he is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

He is the same, too, as a Priest. Some now sneer at his precious blood; alas, that it should be so! But, to his elect, his blood is still their purchase-price, by this they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb they win the victory; and they know that they shall praise it in heaven, when they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They never turn away from this great Priest of theirs, and his wondrous sacrifice, once offered for the sins of men, and perpetually efficacious for all the blood-bought race; they glory in his everlasting priesthood before the Father's throne. In this we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, that Jesus Christ is our Priest, "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

And as King he is ever the same. He is supreme in the Church. Before thee, O Jesus, all thy loyal subjects bow! All the sheaves make obeisance to thy sheaf; the sun and moon and all the stars obey and serve thee, thou King of kings, and Lord of lords. Thou art Head over all things to thy Church, which is thy body. Beloved, if there be any other office which our Lord has assumed for the accomplishment of his divine purposes, we may say of him, concerning every position, that he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

So also, once more, he is the same in his relationship to all his people. I like to think that, as Jesus was the Husband of his Church ages ago, he is her Husband still, for he hateth putting away. As he was the Brother born for adversity to his first disciples, he is our faithful Brother still. As he was a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother to those who were sorely tried in the medieval times, he is equally a Friend to us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. There is no difference whatever in the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ to his people at any time. He is just as ready to comfort us to-night as he was to comfort those with whom he dwelt when here below. Sister Mary, he is as willing to come down to your Bethany, and help you in your sorrow about Lazarus, as he was when he came to Martha and Mary whom he loved. Jesus Christ is just as ready to wash your feet, my brother, after another day's weary travel through the foul ways of this world; he is as willing to take the basin, and the pitcher, and the towel, and to give us a loving cleansing, as he was when he washed his disciples' feet. Just what he was to them he is to us. Happy is it if you and I can truly say, "What he was to Peter, what he

was to John, what he was to the Magdalen, that is Jesus Christ to me, ‘the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.’”

Beloved, I have seen men change; oh, how they change! A little frost turns the green forest to bronze, and every leaf forsakes its hold, and yields to the winter’s blast. So fade our friends, and the most attached adherents drop away from us in the time of trial; but Jesus is to us what he always was. When we get old and grey-headed, and others shut the door on men who have lost their former strength, and can serve their turn no longer, then will he say, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you,” for he is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Thus much, beloved, with regard to Jesus himself; he is ever the same.

II. Now let us go a step farther. JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE SAME IN HIS DOCTRINE.

This text must refer to the doctrine of Christ, since it is connected with imitating the saints’ faith: “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” From the connection it is evident that our text refers to the teaching of Christ, who is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” This is not according to the “development” folly. Theology, like every other science, is to grow, watered by the splendid wisdom of this enlightened age, fostered by the superlative ability of the gentlemen of light and leading of the present time, so much superior to all who came before them!

We think not so, brethren; for the Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect revelation of God. He was the express image of the Father’s person, and the brightness of his glory. In previous ages, God had spoken to us by his prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. Now as to that which was a complete revelation, it is blasphemous to suppose that there can be any more revealed than has been made known in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is God’s ultimatum; last of all, he sends his Son. If you can conceive a brighter display of God than is to be seen in the Only-begotten, I thank God that I am unable to follow you in any such imagination. To me, he is the last, the highest, the

grandest revelation of God; and as he shuts up the Book that contains the written revelation, he bids you never dare to take from it, lest he should take your name out of the Book of life, and never dare to add to it, lest he should add unto you the plagues that are written in this Book.

At this time, the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is the same as it was in all ages. Jesus Christ still saves sinners from the guilt, the power, the punishment, and the defilement of sin. Still, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ still makes all things new; he creates new hearts and right spirits in the sons of men, and engraves his law upon the tablets which once were stone, but which he has turned into flesh. There is no new salvation; some may talk as if there were, but there is not. Salvation means to you to-day just what it meant to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus; if you think it has another meaning, you have missed it altogether.

And, again, salvation by Jesus Christ comes to men in the same way as ever it did. They have to receive it now by faith; in Paul's day, men were saved by faith, and they are not now saved by works. They began in the Spirit in the apostolic age, and we are not now to begin in the flesh. There is no indication in the Book, and there is no indication in the experiences of God's children, that there is ever to be any alteration as to the way in which we receive Christ, and live by him. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," the gift of God to-day as much as ever it was, for Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Once more, this salvation is just the same as to the persons to whom it is sent. It is to be preached now, as ever, to every creature under heaven; but it appeals with a peculiar power to those who are guilty, and who confess their guilt, to hearts that are broken, to men who are weary and heavy laden. It is to these that the gospel comes with great sweetness. I have quoted to you before those strange words of Joseph Hart, —

*"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."*

He is; the Savior is only for sinners. He did not come to save the righteous, he came to seek and to save the lost, and still "to you is the word of this salvation sent;" and this declaration still stands true, "This man receiveth

sinners, and eateth with them.” There is no change in this statement, “the poor have the gospel preached to them,” and it comes to those who are farthest off from God and hope, and inspires them with divine power and energy.

Beloved, I can bear witness that the gospel is the same in its effects upon the hearts of men. Still it breaks, and still it makes whole; still it wounds, and still it heals; still it kills, and still it quickens; still it seems to hurl men down to hell in their terrible experience of the evil of sin, but still it lifts them up into an ecstatic joy, till they are exalted almost to heaven when they lay hold upon it, and feel its power in their souls. The gospel that was a gospel of births and deaths, of killing and making alive, in the days of John Bunyan, has just the same effect upon our hearts to this day, when it comes with the power that God has put into it by his Spirit. It produces the same results, and has the same sanctifying influence as it ever had.

Looking beyond the narrow stream of death, we can say that the eternal results produced by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are the same as they ever were. The promise is this day fulfilled to those who receive him as much as to any who went before; life eternal is their inheritance, they shall sit with him upon his throne; and, on the other hand, the threatening is equally sure of fulfillment: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Christ has made no change in his words of promise or of threatening, nor will his followers dare to do so, for his doctrine is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

If you were to try to think over this matter, and imagine for a minute that the gospel really did shift and change with the times, it would be very extraordinary. See, here is the gospel for the first century; make a mark, and note how far it goes. Then there is a gospel for the second century; make another mark, but then remember that you must change the color to another shade. Either these people must have altered, or else a very different effect must have been produced in the same kind of minds. In eternity, when they all get to heaven by these nineteen gospels, in the nineteen centuries, there will be nineteen sets of people, and they will sing nineteen different songs, depend upon it, and their music will not blend.

Some will sing of “free grace and dying love”, while others will sing of “evolution.” What a discord it would be, and what a heaven it would be, too! I should decline to be a candidate for such a place. No, let me go where they praise Jesus Christ and him alone, singing, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” That is what the first-century saints sing; ay, and it is what the saints of every century will sing, without any exception; and there will be no change in this song for ever. The same results will flow from the same gospel till heaven and earth shall pass away, for Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

III. We may sound the same note again, for a moment, because JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME AS TO HIS MODES OF WORKING: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

How did Jesus Christ save souls in the olden time? “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;” and if you will look down through church history, you will find that, wherever there has been a great revival of religion, it has been linked with the preaching of the gospel. When the Methodists began to do so much good, what did they call the men who made such a stir? “Methodist preachers”, did they not say? That was always the name, “Here comes a Methodist preacher.” Ah, my dear friends, the world will never be saved by Methodist doctors, or by Baptist doctors, or anything of the sort; but multitudes will be saved, by God’s grace, through preachers. It is the preacher to whom God has entrusted this great work. Jesus said, “Preach the gospel to every creature.” But men are getting tired of the divine plan; they are going to be saved by the priest, going to be saved by the music, going to be saved by theatricals, and nobody knows what! Well, they may try these things as long as ever they like; but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion, God dishonored, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by thousands, and the church dragged down to the level of the world. Stand to your guns, brethren, and go on preaching and teaching nothing but the Word of God, for it pleases God still, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; and this text still stands true, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

But remember that there must always be the prayers of the saints with the preaching of the gospel. You must have often noticed that passage in the Acts concerning the new converts on the Day of Pentecost, “They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”: they thought a great deal about doctrine in those days. “And fellowship”: they thought a good deal of being in church-fellowship in those days. “And in breaking of bread”: they did not neglect the blessed ordinance of the Lord’s supper in those days: “In breaking of bread.” And then what follows? “And in prayers.” Some say nowadays, that prayer-meetings are religious expedients pretty well worn out. Ah, dear me! What a religious expedient that was that brought about Pentecost, when they were assembled with one accord in one place, and when the whole church prayed, and suddenly the place was shaken, and they heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, that betokened the presence of the Holy Ghost! Well, you may try to do without prayer-meetings if you like; but my solemn conviction is that, as these decline, the Spirit of God will depart from you, and the preaching of the gospel will be of small account. The Lord will have the prayers of His people to go with the proclamation of his gospel if it is to be the power of God unto salvation, and there is no change in this matter since Paul’s day, Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” God is still to be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and he still grants blessings in answer to believing prayer.

Remember, too, that the Lord Jesus Christ has always been inclined to work by the spiritual power of his servants. Nothing comes out of a man that is not first in him. You will not find God’s servants doing great things for him, unless God works mightily in them, as well as by them. You must first yourself be endued with power from on high, or else the power will not manifest itself in what you do. Beloved, we want our church members to be better men and better women; we want baby-Christians to become men-Christians; and we want the men-Christians among us to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” God will work by his servants when they are adapted to his service; and he will make his instruments fit for his work. It is not in themselves that they have any strength; their weakness becomes the reason why his strength is seen in them. Still, there is an adaptation, there is a fitness for his service, there is a cleanness that God puts upon his instruments before he works mighty things by them;

and Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” in this matter, too.

All the good that is ever done in the world is wrought by the Holy Ghost; and as the Holy Spirit honors Jesus Christ, so he puts great honor upon the Holy Spirit. If you and I try, either as a church or as individuals, to do without the Holy Spirit, God will soon do without us. Unless we reverently worship him, and believingly trust in him, we shall find that we shall be like Samson when his locks were shorn. He shook himself as he had done aforetime; but when the Philistines were upon him, he could do nothing against them. Our prayer must ever be, “Holy Spirit, dwell with me! Holy Spirit, dwell with thy servants!” We know that we are utterly dependent upon him. Such is the teaching of our Master, and Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

IV. I do not want to weary you, my dear brethren; but may I be helped, just for a few moments, to speak on a fourth point! JESUS CHRIST HAS EVER THE SAME RESOURCES, for he is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

I will repeat what I said, Jesus Christ has ever the same resources. We sit down, sometimes, very sorrowful, and we say, “The times are very dark.” I do not think that we can very well exaggerate their darkness; and they are full of threatening omens, and I do not think that any of us can really exaggerate those omens, they are so terrible. But still is it true, “The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock.”

Does the Church feel her need of faithful men? The Lord can send us as many as ever. When the Pope ruled everywhere, nobody thought, I should imagine, that the first man to speak out for the old faith would be a monk; they thought they had taken stock of all the men that God had at his command, and they certainly did not think that he had one of the leaders of the Reformation in a monastery; but there was Martin Luther, “the monk that shook the world,” and though men dreamed not what he would do, God knew all about him. There was Calvin, also, writing that famous book of his Institutes. He was a man full of disease, I think he had sixty diseases at once in his body, and he suffered greatly. Look at his portrait, pale and wan; and as a young man he was very timid. He went to Geneva, and he thought he was called to write books; but Farel said to him, “You

are called to lead us in preaching the gospel here in Geneva.” “No,” said Calvin, for he shrank from the task; but Farel said, “The blast of the Almighty God will rest upon you unless you come out, and take your proper place.” Beneath the threat of that brave old man, John Calvin took his place, prompt and sincere in the work of God, in life and in death never faltering. Then there was Zwingli over there at Zurich, he had come out, too, and Oecolampadius, and Melancthon, and their fellows, — who ever expected them to do what they did? Nobody. “The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it.” And so, to-day, he has only to give the word, and you shall see starting up all over the world earnest preachers of the everlasting gospel, for he has the same resources as ever. He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

He has also the same resources of grace. The Holy Spirit is quite as able to convert men, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and instruct. There is nothing which he has done which he cannot do again; the treasures of God are as full and as running over now as they were in the beginning of the Christian age. If we do not see such great things, where lies the restraining force? It is in our unbelief. “If thou believest, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Ere this year has gone, God can make a wave of revival break over England, Scotland, and Ireland, from one end to the other, ay, and he can deluge the whole world with the gospel if we will but cry to him for it, and he wills to do it, for he is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” in the resources of his grace.

V. So I close my sermon with this fifth head, on which I will be very short indeed, **JESUS CHRIST IS EVER THE SAME TO ME:** “yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” I will not talk about myself except to help you to think about yourselves. How long have you known the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, only a short time; possibly, many years. Do you remember when you first knew him? Can you point out the spot of ground where Jesus met you? Now, what was he to you at first? I will tell you what he was to me.

Jesus was to me at first my only trust. I leaned on him very hard then, for I had such a load to carry. I laid myself and my load down at his feet; he was all in all to me. I had not a shred of hope outside of him, nor any trust beyond himself, crucified and risen for me. Now, dear brothers and sisters,

have you got any further than that? I hope not; I know that I have not. I have not a shadow of a shade of confidence anywhere but in Christ's blood and righteousness. I leaned on him very hard at the first; but I lean harder now. Sometimes, I faint away into his arms; I have died into his life; I am lost in his fullness, he is all my salvation and all my desire. I am speaking for myself; but I think that I am speaking for many of you, too, when I say that Jesus Christ is to me "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." His cross, before my failing eyes, shall be my dying comfort as it is my living strength.

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? He was the object of my warmest love; was it not so with you also? Was he not chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? What charms, what beauties, were there in that dear face of his! And what a freshness, what a novelty, what a delight, which set all our passions on a flame! It was so in those early days when we went after him into the wilderness. Though all the world around was barren, he was all in all to us. Very well, what is he to-day? He is fairer to us now than ever he was. He is the one gem that we possess; our other jewels have all turned out to be but glass, and we have flung them from the casket, but he is the Koh-i-noor that our souls delights in; all perfections joined together to make one absolute perfection; all the graces adorning him, and overflowing to us. Is not that what we say of him? "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? Well, he was my highest joy. In my young days, how my heart did dance at the sound of his name! Was it not so with many of you? We may be huskier in voice, and heavier in body, and slower in moving our limbs, but his name has as much charm for us as ever it had. There was a trumpet that nobody could blow but one who was the true heir, and there is nobody who can ever fetch the true music out of us but our Lord to whom we belong. When he sets me to his lips, you would think that I was one of the trumpets of the seven angels; but there is no one else who can make me sound like that. I cannot produce such music as that by myself; and there is no theme that can ravish my heart, there is no subject that can stir my soul, until I get to him. I think it is with me as it was with Rutherford, when the Duke of Argyle called out, as he began to preach about Christ, "Now, man, you are on the right string, keep to that." The Lord Jesus Christ knows every key in our souls,

and he can wake up our whole being to harmonies of music which shall set the world ringing with his praises. Yes, he is our joy, our everything, “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Let us go forward, then, to the unchanging Savior, through the changing things of time and sense; and we shall meet him soon in the glory, and he will be unchanged even there, as compassionate and loving to us when we shall get home to him, and see him in his splendor, as he was to his poor disciples when he himself had not where to lay his head, and was a sufferer amongst them.

Oh, do you know him? Do you know him? Do you know him? If not, may he this night reveal himself to you, for his sweet mercy's sake!
Amen.

FOUND BY JESUS, AND FINDING JESUS

SERMON 2375

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
AUGUST 26TH, 1894,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24TH, 1888.

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” — John 1:43-45.

FOR a soul to come to Jesus, is the grandest event in its history. It is spiritually dead till that day; but it then begins to live, and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree, because it affects all the man's past career; it sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ, that very day his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away. Is not that a grand day in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that henceforth it can be said of them, “They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord”? I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history, because all the past is changed by it; and as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the light instead of being dead in the darkness; he begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery; he is started on the way to heaven, instead

of continuing on the road to hell. He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind; either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ; it is a real, total, radical change. With many, it is a most joyous alteration; they feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up, so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, and leaping, and praising God; do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right again; and thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Savior. Oh! happy, happy day, when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul, and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about; the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults; there may be infirmities and shortcomings; but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through his servant Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, he so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life, and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The cross of Christ has broken its back, and broken its neck, too, and die it must. Henceforth the man is bound for holiness, and bound for heaven. Now, dear friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you; but if there are any of you who have never come to the Savior, I wish that this might be the night when you should find him. I am but a poor lame preacher; you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching; yet I think that if I had lost my legs, and had always to lie on my back, I would like even then to preach Christ crucified, and to —

***"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found."***

I do pray that some of you to-night, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Savior, and then it shall be a happy day indeed for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion, and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, *the convert's description of it*: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." That is Philip's description of it: "We have found Jesus." It was a true description, but it was not all the truth; so, in the second place, we will notice *the Holy Spirit's description of it*: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ; but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however; although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, "We have found...Jesus," and what he says is perfectly true.

If any one of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ, by your personally making a discovery of him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search after Christ; but if there be a search after him, we may be certain of this one thing, that there will first be a consciousness of needing him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found him; but, before that, *Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah*. When he looked round about on the world, and on the church, he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of him. The people need him, the church needs him, the world needs him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I want him; I have urgent need of him." Dear hearer, do you feel that you need a Savior? You never will seek him until you do feel your need of him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother, to

sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you. You do need a Savior; that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for him.

Wanting a Messiah, *Philip read the Scriptures concerning him*. He speaks about Moses and the prophets, and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear hearers, if you want to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures more, with the definite object of finding the Savior! Probably, the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all; or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored; but they do not take down the Holy Book, and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness here! Oh, that I might find Christ here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing, —

*“Laden with guilt, and full of fears,
I fly to thee, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in thy written Word.
The volume of my Father’s grace
Does all my griefs assuage;
Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost in every page.”*

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ, will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up, to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire, and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great sacrifice on Calvary, and speaking to his heart of divine love and mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be, — in the pages of Scripture, — and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus.

But then *Philip also gave himself to prayer*. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers; what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God; it is

asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What wagon-loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers; but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the throne of grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing, —

*“Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry;
Give me Christ, or else I die.*

*“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.*

*“Thou dost freely save the lost!
Only in Thy grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply;
Give me Christ, or else I die.*

*“Thou hast promised to forgive
All who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”*

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down, and say, “O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by thy Holy Spirit; bring me to know him, bring me this day to find him as my own Savior!”

It is certain, also, that *Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself*. One of the things that every man, who would find the Savior, must do, is to make sure of his right to come and take the Savior. The question that puzzles many is, “May I have the Savior?” My dear friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Savior, if he wills to do so. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “But,” asks some troubled soul, “will Christ have me?” That is not the question; the question is, “Will you have Christ?” He says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” It is you who cast out the Savior, not the Savior who casts you out. The bolt to the door is on the inside; it is you who have bolted it, and it is you who must undo the bolt, and invite the Savior to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in; wherever there is a soul that wants him, he comes at once; therefore, do not raise

any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come. Is he not bidden to come? We are told to preach the gospel to every creature, and he who gave us our great commission also added, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, “What am I to do that I may find the Savior?” Well, what you have to do is practically this, accept him. If you were sick, and the doctor stood before you, with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, “What am I to do with this medicine, sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?” You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken, and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it. “But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration.” Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ; take him, accept him, receive him. Remember the twelfth verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken:

“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

That is it, you see, receive him, believe on his name. “But surely I am to do some good works.” Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ; but for your soul’s salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. “Oh, but I must lead a holy life!” Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ; but in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart, and to get a new heart, you have to receive Christ. He will change you, he will renew you, he will make you a new creature in himself. What you have to do is to receive him, and to believe on his name. O my dear hearers, I do trust that I am speaking to some this evening who will understand what I am saying. I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the truth as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man’s eyes, and yet he will not see even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are

not to bring anything to Christ; you are to come to him just as you are, and he will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, “We have found Jesus.” That is the convert’s description, and a very good one, too: “We have found Jesus.”

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY GHOST’S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again; here they are: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip.” Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus; Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip.

Now, notice, that *this is the previous work*; it came before Philip’s own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear friends, I recollect very well that, after I had found the Lord, I did not at first fully understand the doctrines of grace. I had heard them preached; but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I should have been very much puzzled with the doctrine of election, if anybody had spoken to me about it; but I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus, and I knew that I was renewed in heart, and in one moment the revelation came to me, “All this is the work of God.” The instant I saw that truth, I said to myself, “Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been wrought in me?” I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, “This is the effect of sovereign distinguishing grace.” Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us, and that it is God’s will and God’s eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose; and God’s will and God’s eternal purpose must have the glory. What a revelation it was to me! I saw the doctrines of grace immediately; and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Savior, and who prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same truth that the Lord revealed to me. Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Savior if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of divine things? What influence was it which wrought upon you, and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and heaven, and hell?

Surely it was God the Holy Ghost going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy.

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense; then, who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ, came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good seed in your soul; it was he who made you feel your need of him.

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Savior of sinners, you saw his fitness to meet your case, and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend; but no one ever does understand spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have spoken of that matter already. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer; you had often had great mouthfuls of words, that was all; but now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit, and the anguish of your heart, as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces, and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who wrought mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus, and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God, and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table; and I should have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table, and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with his mighty magnet of grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God, and their faith in Christ, are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own; but there is a

divine force that is at work upon them, producing these results. It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip. This was the previous work.

And, dear friends, *this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ.* Notice how it is put: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip.” O my blessed Lord, how he will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for him, and he never wastes a day. “The day following Jesus would go forth, and findeth Philip.” Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth, and find some of you! You are to-night in a place where he has found a good many; I pray that he may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out to-night; but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here; to its own self it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to him it was a diamond of the first water. O my Master, find some more of thy jewels to-night! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found thee!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, *it is very effectual work.* He said to Philip, “Follow me.” I will gladly end my sermon just here if my Master will preach to some of you his two-worded sermon, “Follow me,” “*Follow me,*” “FOLLOW ME.” “Come, poor soul, you do not know the way! ‘Follow me.’ You want some one to go before you, to be your leader. ‘Follow me.’ You want some one to be your shelter, your companion, your all. ‘Follow me.’” “That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers; Christ says to you, “Follow me.” That is what you have to do, young man. You have been reading those rubbishing modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them. Jesus says, “Follow me.” I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk; let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, “Follow me.” The crucified Savior says, “Follow me.” Take him for your atonement. The risen Savior says, “Follow me.” Take him for your life. The Savior on the throne says, “Follow me.” Take him for your joy. The Savior coming in glory hereafter says, “Follow me.” Take him to be your hope. “Follow me,” “Follow me,” that is the text for to-night, and

that is the sermon, too. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me," and Philip followed him directly; and he not only followed Christ himself, but he began immediately to try to get others to follow him.

Please to notice also that *Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples*. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist; but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother; Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Savior just said to him, "Follow me," and he followed him. Dear friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and says to you, "Follow me," and you follow him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all. If you have come to him, if you have trusted in him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for in fact there are none. "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ, and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God." I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things, and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality, there does not exist any in practical life. I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's supper at the close of this service; but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh!" say you, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case, there is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true. You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste

on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Savior, it will be because the Savior first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning,* — to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, were all of Bethsaida: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear hearers, because there are numbers of you, who are here to-night, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh!" say you, "we never were there in all our lives." Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of his mighty works; and you remember that, when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the gospel for many years, and have seen the power of the grace of God in your families, and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Savior. But, as there were these three men, Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, who were of Bethsaida, — and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place, — why

should not you come to Christ? Why should not you become members of his Church, and, if it be the Lord's will, preachers of his Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you, who have come here to-night, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master. To-night, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, ere yet the harvest shall be past, and the summer shall be ended, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 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." Receive Christ, trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

KEPT FROM INIQUITY

SERMON NO. 2432

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1895,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1887.

“I kept myself from mine iniquity” — Psalm 18:23.

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards his servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul; he deserved so well of the king that it was doubly hard for him to be treated so ill. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to fly for his life, like a partridge upon the mountains, and all the while, no doubt, Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did not attribute to David; but he was upright before God, and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so; for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he disdained to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and in great grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver his servant. If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again; if he does not do so in this life, remember that at the resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. “They say. What do they say? Let them say.” Let them say till they have done saying; it little matters what they say; yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of

David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument, it cutteth like a razor, and pierceth even to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms, and crush the arches of heaven, than fail to deliver his servant. He will do so still, depend upon it. "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

David attributes his providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct: "I kept myself from mine iniquity." Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through; but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your own fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking falsehood, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience, will find that he has made a great mistake. Do thou so trust in God as to hold to thine integrity. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Ponder the path of thy feet, and God will bring thee through as surely as he is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as thou art alive; for, as the Lord liveth, before whom we stand, he will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve him faithfully.

This is the passage we have to consider, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." Here is, first, a personal danger: "mine iniquity." And, secondly, here is a special guard: "I kept myself." And then, thirdly, here is a happy result. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." There was no boasting in this declaration; but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man he defended himself, for he was able truthfully to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER: "mine iniquity."

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house; a man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have each of us to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every house. I do not know whether that is true; but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal; and it takes a special shape in each good

man. There is some particular sin which he may call “mine iniquity.” Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too; each man has his own way of sinning, so that he can speak of “mine iniquity.”

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its speciality, perhaps, from our natural constitution. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine; they are expecting great things, and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament, who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion; they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief, and even into despair, which will be very grievous to the God who is ever gracious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favored by God with a godly ancestry who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity, and proud of their own uprightness; and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear friend, thou hast some tendency peculiar to thyself, and there is a special point where thou liest open to the attacks of temptation. Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin, and it behoves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity.

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the looking-glass than look out at the window. Looking out of the window, thou seest one for whom thou art not responsible; but looking in the glass, thou seest one of whom thou must give account to God, and thou wilt do well to ask God to keep that one. Thou wilt, likely enough, within a day’s march, not see a much worse man than he is, if thou dost know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge’s quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the

portraits of many ministers; and he would say to his friend, “Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and- so;” and then, leading his visitor to a looking-glass, he would say, “Here is the devil.” Yes, he is somewhere about there where thou art looking. If thou lookest long enough, thou mayest detect some of his handiwork at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all. Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that “mine iniquity” may be engendered by education. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother’s fingers when we are fifty years of age, and it is not gone from us even when we are old and grey-headed. Things that were done at our father’s home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard, when we were very young, may abide with us, and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it, and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us recollect that, as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint therefrom, and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery! I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by sovereign grace out of very dens of iniquity. There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord; and when they go home to-night, it will be a great pain to them, as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the house of God where they have worshipped. Well, my dear brother or sister, we sympathize with you in your trial, and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow out of our particular condition. The young man has his iniquity; it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people, pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of the life-passage through which you are going. He who quits the shores of England for

Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view. Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal; but let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that, within a few days, he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along we need keeping.

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches; but with God all things are possible. Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through. His straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition; and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations; so that, whether thou hast much or little, pray God that thou mayest keep thyself from thine iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one; but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very fast, you are very like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night prayer-meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition. Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Savior go, which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God, and to put forth your hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, thou who art losing everything, that he will keep thee from thine iniquity. Thou needest not pray, like Pharaoh, "Take away the frogs;" but pray like David, "Take away mine iniquity." That is the prayer of the true child of God.

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity," for great talent is a very dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great grace. And, if thou hast but one talent, thine iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five. Therefore, pray the Lord to keep thee from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which thou art found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to "cut the thing fine," as they say, and to cut the truth much finer than anything else, and say a great deal that is not true, under the notion that somehow or other it will help his business. If there be customs in your trade which all others follow, and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them; but say, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity." You need not begin to say, "Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans, all have their iniquities." Think about your own; quite enough iniquities may crowd into your shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I do know; I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working-men and Christian working-women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this house of prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, "We cannot live there, and we do not know where to live to keep our children out of the temptations which now surround them." I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of to-day should make Christians walk very near to God; and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as ever we can, and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist,

not conforming to the world, to be out and out Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation.

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be that iniquity which thou hast oftenest fallen into in thy previous life. What has been thy sternest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is thine iniquity. Doubt and mistrust? That is thine iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which hitherto has stained thy life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless thou dost watch, and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for thy protection. That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, ay, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts not to do it, that is your iniquity. That which you have returned to after having smarted for it, that which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again, and which yet has in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried thee away with a rush, — that is thine iniquity. Oh, how canst thou keep thyself from it unless God shall keep thee? Cry unto the Most High to enable thee to keep thyself from thine iniquity. That is thine iniquity which has overtaken thee even after thou hast prayed against it, and laboured against it, that thou hast concluded that surely thou wilt never do it again, and yet thou hast done it.

Let me tell you one thing more; that which you do not like to hear condemned, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you to wriggle in your seat, and feel, “I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home,” that is your iniquity. And if thou canst not bear that thy wife should speak to thee about it, or that thy brother or thy sister should give thee a friendly word of advice concerning it, that which thou art most loth to hear, probably has to do with thine iniquity. We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which thou art most loth to hear that thou hast most need to hear; instead of being angry with him who points it out to thee thou shouldst be willing to pay him for doing it. When you go to your doctor, and ask him to examine you, if he says, “There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs,” do you knock him down? Do you get into a passion with him for

telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea, and thank him even for imparting evil news. And should we not thank those who rebuke us, and tell us of our faults? When God sendeth thee not a faithful friend, I pray him to send thee an honest enemy, who will deal straightly with thee, and let thee know where thy weakness is, that thou mayest then cry to God, “Lord, keep me from mine iniquity.”

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD: “I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

Someone may perhaps say, “I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it.” Let me ask you first who you are; are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, “No,” I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ, and ask for cleansing in his precious blood, and renewal by the Holy Spirit; but I am now talking to the child of God, the man who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear brother, because you can, by God’s grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must find out what it is. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you, and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavour to get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God. Ask the Lord to make thee hate most that sin to which thou art most inclined.

Remember that thou art a child of God; it ill becomes thee to be friendly with any of the King’s enemies. Remember that Christ has bought thee; thou belongest to him, thou shouldst not be the slave of any sin, thou must not be such if the life of God be in thee. The life of God in the soul hates sin; thou canst not take pleasure in any sin if thou art indeed a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to thee, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of thy particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as thou hast an extraordinary horror of it, thou mayest set that over against thy tendency to it.

Then, be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately; but, if thou hast one sin that is more to thee than another, drag it out from the crowd, and say,

“Thou must die if no other does. I will hang thee up in the face of the sun.” Strive against thine anger; strive against thy covetousness; strive against thine envy; strive against thine evil temper, thy malice, if that be thy fault; for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till thou gettest thy foot upon its neck. “I cannot do it,” says one. Why, the Lord has said that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely, if you are to have the devil under your foot, you can get all sin under your feet by God’s help; and you must do it. It is a part of that work that must be wrought in us to bring every thought into captivity to divine grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ; but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master thee. I tell thee that, if thou let any sin master thee, thou wilt be lost. If any sin should remain unconquered, thou art ruined; for this is the way of salvation, the absolute conquest of every sin through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It must be so with thee ere thou canst enter heaven, and thou art able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ. If thou hast an iniquity that more than another haunts thee, then keep away from all that tempts thee to it. Is there a house where thy company is much liked, but where thou art never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house. It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once sported. You may go into some company to do good; but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire; they may be themselves pulled into it. No, come ye out from among them, be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing. You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin; that necessity should warn you not to go there.

The true path of safety is to pray and believe against all sin. We conquer sin by faith in Christ. This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree, and there is no other that will do so. Believe thou in Jesus Christ the Savior, who died for thee; and then believe in him as living again, and willing to help thee in every conflict against sin. Go thou, having Christ crucified with thee, and ask him to crucify thy sin, and nail it up to his cross. So thou shalt be helped to overcome; but there must be care, and prayer, and

watchfulness, and trust, and continual looking up to the Lord for grace. Only so can you say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." He does not say that he could not sin, but that he would not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, "I do not sin like those young people." No, because you cannot; it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do. That is not what we want; it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you; it is a change of heart that is wanted. "I kept myself from mine iniquity;" that is, "though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the grace of God I would not yield."

I do pray, my brothers and sisters, that, if we live ten, twenty, thirty, or fifty more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, "By his great grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from mine iniquity," because, if we do so, see what a blessing it will be to us, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble. If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men, who were great losers at first by being godly; but they kept themselves right, and they had to thank God for it ever afterwards. I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker's clerk. On a certain day, he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest; and he told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month's notice. It was a country bank, and he was not sent about his business at once; and he had to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children; and when he went home, it was not easy to tell the wife that the excellent situation that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity, he said that he was sure God would bring him safely through, and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do. It was within twelve months that he obtained the situation of manager for that very bank, and it belongs to him at this moment; he very speedily became a man in a much better position than he could have

expected to have obtained, simply from the fact that it had been proved that he could be trusted. It is not always so; some people have to be a long time under a cloud; but, in the long run, if thou as a child of God wilt but stand fast, God will not let thee be a loser. If he does, it shall be thy glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish thy character. Thou shalt find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong. If you are able to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity," then you shall also be able to say with David, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

Next, if you act thus, it will be a triumph of divine grace. Brethren, we want to show the world what grace can do, and every member of the church ought to feel that he is put upon his behaviour to prove what the grace of God has done in him. What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that, if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go at last where worldlings go. If grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ's honor is in danger by our ill behaviour, and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, this will be our best testimony to others. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips; but you can all preach with your feet, and by your lives, and that is the most effective preaching. The preaching of holy lives is living preaching. The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew. God help you to do this!

And, lastly, what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience! Though we know we are saved by grace, hear this, ye ungodly. There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort upon our

dying bed, and bid farewell to all our dear ones and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory, and thank and praise his holy name. Begin at the cross; there is the source of your salvation. Then go, and live like the living Savior. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

SPIRITUAL GLEANING

SERMON NO. 2585

*“Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not.”
— Ruth 2:15.*

COUNTRY friends need no explanation of what is meant by gleaning. I hope the custom will never be banished from the land, but that the poor will always be allowed their little share of the harvest. I am afraid that many who see gleaning every year in the fields of their own parish are not yet wise enough to understand the heavenly art of spiritual gleaning. That is the subject which I have chosen on this occasion, and my text is taken from the charming story of Ruth, which is known to every one of you. I shall use the story as setting forth our own case, in a homely but instructive way. In the first place, we shall observe that there is a great Husbandman: it was Boaz in Ruth’s case, it is our heavenly Father who is the Husbandman in our case. Secondly, we shall notice a humble gleaner: the gleaner was Ruth in this instance, but she may be looked upon as the representative of every believer. And, in the third place, there is a gracious permission given to Ruth: “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not,” and the same permission is spiritually given to us.

I. In the first place, the God of the whole earth is A GREAT HUSBANDMAN. This is true in natural things. As a matter of fact all farm operations are carried on by his power and prudence. Man may plough the soil, and sow the seed; but as Jesus said, “My Father is the husbandman.” He appoints the clouds and allots the sunshine; he directs the winds and distributes the dew and the rain; he also gives the frost and the heat, and so by various processes of nature he brings forth food for man and beast. All the farming, however, which God does, is for the benefit of others, and never for himself. He has no need of any of our works of husbandry. If he were hungry, he would not tell us. “The cattle on a thousand hills,” says he, “are mine.” The purest kindness and benevolence are those which dwell in the heart of God. Though all things are God’s, his works in

creation and in providence are not for himself, but for his creatures. This should greatly encourage us in trusting to him.

In spiritual matters God is a great husbandman; and there, too, all his works are done for his children, that they may be fed upon the finest of the wheat. Permit me to speak of the wide gospel fields which our heavenly Father farms for the good of his children. There is a great variety of these fields, and they are all fruitful; for “the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.” Deuteronomy. 33:28. Every field which our heavenly Father tills yields a plentiful harvest, for there are no failures or famines with him.

1. One part of his farm is called Doctrine field. What full sheaves of finest wheat are to be found there! He who is permitted to glean in it will gather bread enough and to spare, for the land brings forth by handfuls. Look at that goodly sheaf of election; full, indeed, of heavy ears of corn, such as Pharaoh saw in his first dream — ears full and strong. There is the great sheaf of final perseverance, where each ear is a promise that the work which God has begun he will assuredly complete. If we have not faith enough to partake of either of these sheaves, we may glean around the choice sheaves of redemption by the blood of Christ. Many a poor soul who could not feed on electing love, nor realize his perseverance in Christ, can yet feed on the atonement and rejoice in the sublime doctrine of substitution. Many and rich are the sheaves which stand thick together in Doctrine-field; these, when threshed by meditation and ground in the mill of thought, furnish royal food for the Lord’s family.

I wonder why it is that some of our Master’s stewards are so prone to lock the gate of this field, as if they thought it dangerous ground. For my part, I wish my people not only to glean here, but to carry home the sheaves by the wagon-load, for they cannot be too well fed when truth is the food. Are my fellow-laborers afraid that Jeshurun will wax fat and kick, if he has too much food? I fear there is more likelihood of his dying of starvation if the bread of sound doctrine is withheld. If we have a love to the precepts and warnings of the word, we need not be afraid of the doctrines; on the contrary, we should search them out and feed upon them with joy. The doctrines of distinguishing grace are to be set forth in due proportions to the rest of the word, and those are poor pulpits from

which these grand truths are excluded. We must not keep the Lord's people out of this field. I say, swing the gate open, and come in, all of you who are children of God! I am sure that in my Master's field nothing grows which will harm you. Gospel doctrine is always safe doctrine. You may feast upon it till you are full, and no harm will come of it. Be afraid of no revealed truth. Be afraid of spiritual ignorance, but not of holy knowledge. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Everything taught in the word of God is meant to be the subject of a Christian's study, therefore neglect nothing. Visit the doctrine-field daily, and glean in it with the utmost diligence.

2. The great Husbandman has another field called Promise field; of that I shall not need to speak, for I hope you often enter it and glean from it. Just let us take an ear or two out of one of the sheaves, and show them to you that you may be induced to stay there the live-long day, and carry home a rich load at night. Here is an ear: "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." Here is another: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Here is another; it has a short stalk, but a heavy ear; "My strength is sufficient for thee." Another is long in the straw, but very rich in corn: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." What a word is that! — "I will come again." Yes, beloved, we can say of the Promise field what cannot be said of a single acre in all England; namely, that it is so rich a field that it could not be richer, and that it has so many ears of corn in it that you could not insert another. As the poet sings:

*"What more can he say, than to you he hath said, —
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"*

Glean in that field, O ye poor and needy ones, and never think that you are intruding. The whole field is your own, every ear of it; you may draw

out from the sheaves themselves, and the more you take the more you may.

3. Then there is Ordinance field; a great deal of good wheat grows in this field. The field of Baptism has been exceedingly fruitful to some of us, for it has set forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, and thus we have been cheered and instructed. It has been good for us to declare ourselves on the Lord's side, and we have found that in keeping our Lord's commandments there is great reward. But I will not detain you long in this field, for some of our friends think it has a damp soil: I wish them more light and more grace. However, we will pass on to the field of the Supper, where grows the very best of our Lord's corn. What rich things have we fed upon in this choice spot! Have we not there tasted the sweetest and most sustaining of all spiritual food? In all the estate no field is to be found to rival this center and crown of all the domain: this is the King's Acre. Gospel gleaner, abide in that field; glean in it on the first day of every week, and expect to see your Lord there; for it is written, "He was known of them in the breaking of bread."

4. The heavenly Husbandman has one field upon a hill, which equals the best of the others, even if it does not excel them. You cannot really and truly go into any of the other fields unless you pass into this; for the road to the other fields lies through this hill farm; it is called Fellowship and Communion with Christ. This is the field for the Lord's choicest ones to glean in. Some of you have only run through it, you have not stopped long enough in it; but he who knows how to stay here, yea, to live here, shall spend his hours most profitably and pleasantly. It is only in proportion as we hold fellowship with Christ, and communion with him, that either ordinances, or doctrines, or promises can profit us. All other things are dry and barren unless we are enjoying the love of Christ, unless we bear his likeness, unless we dwell continually with him, and rejoice in his love. I am sorry to say that few Christians think much of this field; it is enough for them to be sound in doctrine, and tolerably correct in practice; they care far less than they should about intimate intercourse with Christ Jesus, their Lord, by the Holy Ghost. I am sure that if we gleaned in this field we should not have half so many naughty tempers, nor a tenth as much pride, nor a hundredth part so much sloth. This is a field hedged and sheltered, and in it you will find better food than that which angels feed upon: yea,

you will find Jesus himself as the bread which came down from heaven. Blessed, blessed field, may we visit it every day. The Master leaves the gate wide open for every believer; let us enter in and gather the golden ears till we can carry no more. Thus we have seen the great Husbandman in his fields; let us rejoice that we have such a great Husbandman near, and such fields to glean in.

II. And now, in the second place, we have a HUMBLE GLEANER. Ruth was a gleaner, and may serve as an illustration of what every believer should be in the fields of God.

1. The believer is a favored gleaner, for he may take home a whole sheaf, if he likes: he may bear away all that he can possibly carry, for all things are freely given him of the Lord. I use the figure of a gleaner, because I believe that few Christians ever go much beyond it, and yet they are free to do so if they are able. Some may say, Why does not the believer reap all the field, and take all the corn home with him? I answer that he is welcome to do so if he can: for no good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly. If your faith is like a great wagon, and you can carry the whole field of corn, you have full permission to take it. Alas, our faith is so little that we rather glean than reap; we are straitened in ourselves, not in our God. May you all outgrow the metaphor, and come home, bringing your sheaves with you.

2. Again, we may remark, that the gleaner, in her business has to endure much toil and fatigue. She rises early in the morning, and she trudges off to a field; if that be closed, she hastens to another; and if that be shut up, or gleaned already, she hurries further still; and all day long, while the sun is shining upon her, she seldom sits down to refresh herself, but still she goes on, stoop, stoop, stoop, gathering the ears one by one. She returns not to her home till nightfall; for she desires, if the field is good, to do much business that day, and she will not go home until she is loaded down. Beloved, so let each one of us do when we seek spiritual food. Let us not be afraid of a little fatigue in the Master's fields: if the gleaning is good, we must not soon weary in gathering the precious spoil, for the gains will richly reward our pains. I know a friend who walks five miles every Sunday to hear the gospel, and has the same distance to return. Another thinks little of a ten miles' journey; and these are wise, for to hear the pure

word of God no labor is extravagant. To stand in the aisle till ready to drop, listening all the while with strained attention, is a toil which meets a full reward if the gospel be heard and the Spirit of God bless it to the soul. A gleaner does not expect that the ears will come to her of themselves; she knows that gleaning is hard work. We must not expect to find the best field next to our own house, we may have to journey to the far end of the parish, but what of that? Gleaners must not be choosers, and where the Lord sends the gospel, there he calls us to be present.

3. We remark, next, that every ear the gleaner gets she has to stoop for. Why is it that proud people seldom profit under the word? Why is it that certain “intellectual” folk cannot get any good out of our soundest ministers? Why, because they must needs have the corn lifted up for them; and if the wheat is held so high over their heads that they can hardly see it, they are pleased, and cry, “Here is something wonderful.” They admire the extraordinary ability of the man who can hold up the truth so high that nobody can reach it; but truly that is a sorry feat. The preacher’s business is to place truth within the reach of all, children as well as adults; he is to let fall handfuls on purpose for poor gleaners, and these will never mind stooping to collect the ears. If we preach to the educated people only, the wise ones can understand, but the illiterate cannot; but when we preach in all simplicity to the poor, other classes can understand it if they like, and if they do not like, they had better go somewhere else. Those who cannot stoop to pick up plain truth had better give up gleaning. For my part, I would be taught by a child if I could thereby know and understand the gospel better: the gleaning in our Lord’s field is so rich that it is worth the hardest labor to be able to carry home a portion of it. Hungry souls know this, and are not to be hindered in seeking their heavenly food. We will go down on our knees in prayer, and stoop by self-humiliation, and confession of ignorance, and so gather with the hand of faith the daily bread of our hungering souls.

4. Note, in the next place, that what a gleaner gets she wins ear by ear; occasionally she picks up a handful at once, but as a rule it is straw by straw. In the case of Ruth, handfuls were let fall on purpose for her; but she was highly favored. The gleaner stoops, and gets one ear, and then she stoops again for another. Now, beloved, where there are handfuls to be got at once, there is the place to go and glean; but if you cannot meet with

such abundance, be glad to gather ear by ear. I have heard of certain persons who have been in the habit of hearing a favorite minister, and when they go to another place, they say, "I cannot hear anybody after my own minister; I shall stay at home and read a sermon." Please remember the passage, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Let me also entreat you not to be so foolishly partial as to deprive your soul of its food. If you cannot get a handful at one stoop, do not refuse to gather an ear at a time. If you are not content to learn here a little and there a little, you will soon be half starved, and then you will be glad to get back again to the despised minister and pick up what his field will yield you. That is a sorry ministry which yields nothing. Go and glean where the Lord has opened the gate for you. Why the text alone is worth the journey; do not miss it.

5. Note, next, that what the gleaner picks up she keeps in her hand; she does not drop the corn as fast as she gathers it. There is a good thought at the beginning of the sermon, but the hearers are so eager to hear another, that the first one slips away. Towards the end of the sermon a large handful falls in their way, and they forget all that went before in their eagerness to retain this last and richest portion. The sermon is over, and, alas, it is nearly all gone from the memory, for many are about as wise as a gleaner would be if she should pick up one ear, and drop it; pick up another, and drop it, and so on all day. The net result of such a day's work in a stubble is a bad backache; and I fear that all our hearers will get by their hearing will be a headache. Be attentive, but be retentive too. Gather the grain and tie it up in bundles for carrying away with you, and mind you do not lose it on the road home. Many a person when he has got a fair hold of the sermon, loses it on the way to his house by idle talk with vain companions. I have heard of a Christian man who was seen hurrying home one Sunday with all his might. A friend asked him why he was in such haste. "Oh!" said he, "two or three Sundays ago, our minister gave us a most blessed discourse, and I greatly enjoyed it; but when I got outside, there were two deacons discussing, and one pulled the sermon one way, and the other the other, till they pulled it all to pieces, and I lost all the savor of it." Those must have been very bad deacons; let us not imitate them; and if we know of any who are of their school, let us walk home alone in dogged silence sooner than lose all our gleanings by their

controversies. After a good sermon go home with your ears and your mouth shut. Act like the miser, who not only gets all he can, but keeps all he can. Do not lose by trifling talk that which may make you rich to all eternity.

6. Then, again, the gleaner takes the wheat home and threshes it. It is a wise thing to thresh a sermon whoever may have been the preacher, for it is certain that there is a portion of straw and chaff about it. Many thresh the preacher by finding needless fault; but that is not half so good as threshing the sermon to get out of it the pure truth. Take a sermon, beloved, when you get one which is worth having, and lay it down on the floor of meditation, and beat it out with the flail of prayer, and you will get bread-corn from it. This threshing by prayer and meditation must never be neglected. If a gleaner should stow away her corn in her room, and leave it there, the mice would get at it; but she would have no food from it if she did not thresh out the grain. Some get a sermon, and carry it home, and allow Satan and sin, and the world, to eat it all up, and it becomes unfruitful and worthless to them. But he who knows how to flail a sermon well, so as to clear out all the wheat from the straw, he is it that makes a good hearer and feeds his soul on what he hears.

7. And then, in the last place, the good woman, after threshing the corn, no doubt winnowed it. Ruth did all this in the field; but you can scarcely do so. You must do some of the work at home. And observe, she did not take the chaff home; she left that behind her in the field. It is a prudent thing to winnow all the discourses you hear so as to separate the precious from the vile; but pray do not fall into the silly habit of taking home all the chaff, and leaving the corn behind. I think I hear you say, "I shall recollect that queer expression; I shall make an anecdote out of that odd remark." Listen, then, for I have a word for you, — if you hear a man retail nothing about a minister except his oddities, just stop him, and say, "We have all our faults, and perhaps those who are most ready to speak of those of others are not quite perfect themselves: cannot you tell us what the preacher said that was worth hearing?" In many cases the virtual answer will be, "Oh, I don't recollect that." They have sifted the corn, thrown away the good grain, and brought home the chaff. Ought they not to be put in an asylum? Follow the opposite rule; drop the straw, and retain the good corn. Separate between the precious and the vile, and let the worthless material

go where it may; you have no use for it, and the sooner you are rid of it the better. Judge with care; reject false teaching with decision, and retain true doctrine with earnestness, so shall you practice the enriching art of heavenly gleaning. May the Lord teach us wisdom, so that we may become “rich to all the intents of bliss;” so shall our mouth be satisfied with good things, and our youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s.

III. And now, in the last place, here is A GRACIOUS PERMISSION GIVEN: “Let her glean among the sheaves, and reproach her not.” Ruth had no right to go among the sheaves till Boaz gave her permission by saying, “Let her do it.” For her to be allowed to go amongst the sheaves, in that part of the field where the wheat was newly cut, and none of it carted, was a great favor: but Boaz whispered that handfuls were to be dropped on purpose for her, and that was a greater favor still. Boaz had a secret love for the maiden and even so, beloved, it is because of our Lord’s eternal love to us that he allows us to enter his best fields and glean among the sheaves. His grace permits us to lay hold upon doctrinal blessings, promise blessings, and experience blessings: the Lord has a favor towards us, and hence these singular kindnesses. We have no right to any heavenly blessings of ourselves; our portion is due to free and sovereign grace.

I tell you the reasons that moved Boaz’s heart to let Ruth go among the sheaves. The master motive was because he loved her. He would have her go there, because he had conceived an affection for her, which he afterwards displayed in grander ways. So the Lord lets his people come and glean among the sheaves, because he loves them. Didst thou have a soul-enriching season amongst the sheaves the other Sabbath? Didst thou carry home thy sack, filled like those of Joseph’s brothers, when they returned from Egypt? Didst thou have an abundance? Wast thou satisfied? Mark; that was thy Master’s goodness. It was because he loved thee. Look, I beseech thee, on all thy spiritual enjoyments as proof of his eternal love. Look on all heavenly blessings as being tokens of heavenly grace. It will make thy corn grind all the better, and eat all the sweeter, if thou wilt reflect that eternal love gave it thee. Thy sweet seasons, thy high enjoyments, thy unspeakable ravishments of spirit are all proofs of divine affection, therefore be doubly glad of them.

There was another reason why Boaz allows Ruth to glean among the sheaves; it was because he was her relative. This is why our Lord gives us choice favors at times, and takes us into his banqueting-house in so gracious a manner. He is our next of kin, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Our Redeemer, our kinsman, is the Lord Jesus, and he will never be strange to his own flesh. It is a high and charming mystery that our Lord Jesus is the Husband of his church; and sure he may well let his spouse glean among the sheaves; for all that he possesses is hers already. Her interests and his interests are one, and so he may well say, "Beloved, take all thou pleasest; I am none the poorer because thou dost partake of my fullness, for thou art mine. Thou art my partner, and my choice, and all that I have is thine." What, then, shall I say to you who are my Lord's beloved? How shall I speak with a tenderness and generosity equal to his desires, for he would have me speak right lovingly in his name. Enrich yourselves out of that which is your Lord's. Go a spiritual gleaning as often as ever you can. Never lose an opportunity of picking up a golden blessing. Glean at the mercy-seat; glean in private meditation; glean in reading pious books; glean in associating with godly men; glean everywhere; and if you can get only a little handful it will be better than none. You who are so much in business, and so much penned up by cares; if you can only spend five minutes in the Lord's field gleaning a little, be sure to do so. If you cannot bear away a sheaf, carry an ear; and if you cannot find an ear, pick up even a grain of wheat. Take care to get a little, if you cannot get much: but gather as much as ever you can.

Just one other remark. O child of God, never be afraid to glean. Have faith in God, and take the promises home to yourself. Jesus will rejoice to see you making free with his good things. His voice is "Eat abundantly; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Therefore, if you find a rich promise, live upon it. Draw the honey out of the comb of Scripture, and live on its sweetness. If you meet with a most extraordinary sheaf, carry it away rejoicing. You cannot believe too much concerning your Lord; let not Satan cheat you into contentment with a meagre portion of grace when all the granaries of heaven are open to you. Glean on with humble industry and hopeful confidence, and know that he who owns both fields and sheaves is looking upon you with eyes of love, and will one day espouse you to

himself in glory everlasting. Happy gleaner who finds eternal love and eternal life in the fields in which he gleans!

MEDITATION ON GOD

SERMON NO. 2690

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1900,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK. ON A
THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1858.

“My meditation of him shall be sweet.” — Psalm 104:34.

DAVID, certainly, was not a melancholy man. Eminent as he was for his piety and for his religion, he was equally eminent for his joyfulness and gladness of heart. Read the verses that precede my text, “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.” It has often been insinuated, if it has not been openly said, that the contemplation of divine things has a tendency to depress the spirits. Religion, many thoughtful persons have supposed, doth not become the young; it checks the ardor of their youthful blood. It may be very well for men with gray heads, who need something to comfort and solace them as they descend the hill of life into the grave; it may be well enough for those who are in poverty and deep trial; but that it is at all congruous with the condition of a healthy, able-bodied, successful and happy man, this is generally said to be out of the question.

Now, there is no greater falsehood. No man is so happy, but he would be happier still if he had religion. The man with a fullness of earthly pleasure, whose barns are full of store, and whose presses burst with new wine, would not lose any part of his happiness, had he the grace of God in his heart; rather, that joy would add sweetness to all his prosperity; it would strain off many of the bitter dregs from his cup; it would purify his heart, and freshen his taste for delights, and show him how to extract more honey from the honeycomb. Religion is a thing that can make the most melancholy joyful at the same time that it can make the joyous ones more

joyful still. It can make the gloomy bright, as it gives the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Moreover, it can light up the face that is joyous with a heavenly gladness; it can make the eye sparkle with tenfold more brilliance; and happy as the man may be, he shall find that there is sweeter nectar than he has ever drunk before, if he comes to the fountain of atoning mercy; if he knows that his name is registered in the book of everlasting life. Temporal mercies will then have the charm of redemption to enhance them. They will be no longer to him as shadowy phantoms which dance for a transient hour in the sunbeam. He will account them more precious because they are given to him, as it were, in some codicils of the divine testament, which hath promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life, he will stretch forth his grateful anticipations to the future, when he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He will be able to say, as our Psalmist does, "I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Taking these few words as the motto of our sermon to-night, we shall speak, first, concerning a profitable exercise — "meditation". Secondly, concerning a very precious subject: "my meditation of him"; and, thirdly, concerning a very blessed result: — "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

I. First, here is A VERY PROFITABLE EXERCISE — meditation.

Meditation is a word that more than half of you, I fear, do not know how to spell. You know how to repeat the letters of the word; but I mean to say, you can not spell it in the reality of life. You do not occupy yourselves with any meditation. What do many of you that are merchants know concerning this matter? You rise up in the morning, just in time to take your accustomed seat in the omnibus; you hasten to your counting-house for your letters, and there you continue all day long, for business when you are busy, or for gossip when business is dull, and at night you go home too tired and jaded for the wholesome recreation of your minds, Week by week, month by month, and year by year, it is still with you one everlasting grind, grind, grind. You have no time for meditation; and you reckon, perhaps, that if you were to set apart half an hour in the day, to

ponder the weighty matters of eternity, it would be to you a clear loss of time. It is very wise of you to economize your minutes, but I suppose if half an hour in a day could earn you a hundred pounds, you would not say you could not afford it, because you know how to estimate pecuniary profit. Now, if you really knew equally how to count the great profit, of meditation, you would deem it a positive gain to yourselves to spend some time therein, for meditation is most profitable to the spirit; it is an extremely healthful and excellent occupation. Far from being idle time, it is judicious employment of time.

Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy; contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them; he shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what he does hear; nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes one after the other, as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he learns, and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation — receiving the word first into his understanding, and afterwards receiving the spirit of the thing into his own soul. When he reads the letters with his eye it is merely mechanical, but that he may read them to his own heart he retires to meditate. Meditation is thus a very excellent employment; it is not the offspring of listlessness or lethargy but it is a satisfactory mode of employing time, and very remunerative to the spirit. Let us for a moment or two tell you some of its uses.

First, I think meditation furnishes the mind somewhat with rest. It is the couch of the soul. The time that a man spends in necessary rest, he never reckons to be wasted, because he is refreshing and renovating himself for further exertion. Meditation, then, is the rest of the spirit. “Oh,” says one, “I must have rest. Here have I been, fagging and toiling incessantly for months; I must have a day’s excursion; I must do this thing, and the other.” Yes, and such recreation, in its proper place, is desirable; we ought to have seasons of innocent recreation; but, at the same time, if many of us knew how to spend a little time daily in the calm repose of contemplative retirement, we should find ourselves less exhausted by the wear and tear of our worldly duties, — to meditate, would be to us a salutary recreation, and instead of running ourselves out of breath, and laboring till a respite is

compulsory, we should spread our intervals of ease and refreshing over the whole year, and secure a small portion every day, by turning aside from the bustling crowd to meditate upon whatever subject we wish to occupy the most honorable place in our mind.

Just as a change of posture relieves the weariness of the body, a change of thoughts will prevent your spirits becoming languid. Sit down in a silent chamber at eventide, throw the window up, and look at God's bright stars, and count those eyes of heaven; or, if you like it better, pause in the noon-tide heat, and look down upon the busy crowd in the streets, and count the men like so many ants, upon the ant-hill of this world; or, if you care not to look about you, sit down and look within yourself; count the pulses of your own heart, and examine the motions of your own breast. At times, 'tis well to muse upon heaven; or if thou art a man who lovest to revel in the prophetic future, turn over the mystic page, and study the sacred visions recorded in the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation. As thou dost enter into these hallowed intricacies, and dost meditate upon these impressive symbols, thou wilt rise up from thy study mightily refreshed. You will find it like a couch to your mind.

You will return to your business in a better spirit; you may expect (other things being equal) to earn more that day, than you ever earned before, by the painful system of uninterrupted drudgery; for the diversion of thought will rest, string up, and brace your nerves, and enable you to do more work, and do it better too. Meditation is the couch of the mind.

Again, meditation is the machine in which the raw material of knowledge is converted to the best uses. Let me compare it to a wine-press. By reading, and research, and study we gather the grapes; but it is by meditation we press out the juice of those grapes, and obtain the wine. How is it that many men who read very much know very little? What a host of pedantic scholars we have, who can recount book after book, from old Hesiod to the last volume in Ward's catalogue, but they know little or nothing after all. The reason is, they read tome upon tome, and stow away knowledge with lumbering confusion inside their heads, till they have laid so much weight on their brain that it can not work. Instead of putting facts into the press of meditation, and fermenting them till they can draw out inferences, they leave them to rot and perish. They extract none of the sweet juice of

wisdom from the precious fruits of the vine-tree. A man who reads only a tenth part as much, but who takes the grapes of Eschol that he gathers, and squeezes them by meditation, will learn more in a week than your pedant will in a year, because he muses on what he reads. I like, when I have read a book for about half an hour, to walk awhile, and think it over. I shut up the volume, and say, "Now, Mr. Author, you have made your speech, let me think over what you have said. A little meditation will enable me to distinguish between what I knew before and the fresh subject you communicate to me — between your facts and your opinions — between your arguments and those I should make from the same premises. Animals, after they have eaten, lie down and ruminate; they first crop the grass, and afterwards digest it. So meditation is the rumination of the soul; thereby we get that nutriment which feeds and supports the mind.

When thou hast gathered flowers in the field or garden, arrange them and bind them together with the string of memory; but take heed that thou dost put them into the water of meditation, else they will soon fade, and be fit only for the dunghill. When thou hast gathered pearls from the sea, recollect that thou wilt have gathered with them many worthless shells, and much mud; count them over, therefore, and sort them in thy memory; keep what are worth preserving, and even then thou must open the oyster to extract the pearl, and polish it to make it appear more beautiful. Thou mayest not string it in the necklace of thy minds until it has been rubbed and garnished by meditation. Thus, we need meditation to make use of what we have discovered. As it is the rest of the soul, so it is, at the same time, the means of making the best use of what the soul has acquired.

Again, meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers. When those old athletes went out to wrestle, they always took care before they went to oil themselves well — to make their joints supple and fit for labor. Now, meditation makes the soul supple — makes it so that it can use things when they come into the mind. Who are the men that can go into a controversy and get the mastery? Why, the men who meditate when they are alone. Who are the men that can preach? Not those who gad about and never commune with their own hearts alone; but those who think earnestly, as well when no one is near them as when there is a crowd around them. Who are the authors who write your books, and keep up the constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their

bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service!

I have thus pointed out to you that meditation is in itself useful to every man. But you did not come here to listen to a merely moral essay; you came to hear something about the Gospel of God; and what I have said already is but an introduction to what I have to say concerning the great necessity of meditation in religion. As meditation is good for the mind, even upon worldly topics and natural science, much more is it useful when we come to spiritual learning. The best and most saintly of men have been men of meditation. Isaac went out into the fields at eventide to meditate. David says, "As for me, I will meditate on thy statutes." Paul, who meditated continually, says to Timothy, "Give thyself to meditation." To the Christian meditation is most essential. I should almost question the being of a Christian, and I should positively deny his well-being who lived without habitual meditation. Meditation and prayer are twin sisters, and both of them appear to me equally necessary to a Christian life. I think meditation must exist where there is prayer, and prayer would be sure to exist where there is meditation.

My brethren, there is nothing more wanting to make Christians grow in grace now-a-days than meditation. Most of you are painfully negligent in this matter. You remind me of a sermon that one of my quaint old friends in the country once preached from that text — "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." He told us that many people who would hunt for a sermon, were too lazy to roast it by meditation. They knew not how to put the jack of memory through it, and then to twist it round by meditation before the fire of piety, and so to cook it and make it fit for your soul's food. So it is with many of you after you have caught the sermon: you allow it to run away. How often do you, through lack of meditation, miss the entire purpose for which the sermon was designed. Unless ye meditate upon the truths we declare unto you, ye will gather little sweetness, ye will acquire little profit, and, certainly, ye will be in no wise established therein to your edification. Can you get the honey from the comb until you squeeze it! You may be refreshed by a few words while you listen to the sermon, but it is the meditation afterwards which

extracts the honey, and gets the best and most luscious savor therefrom. Meditation, my friends, is a part of the life-blood of every true Christian, and we ought to abound therein.

Let me tell you that there ought to be special times for meditation. I think every man should set apart a portion of time every day for this gracious exercise. But, then, again I am met with an apology; you assure me that you have so much to do you cannot afford it. I generally treat with lightness the excuses of those who cannot afford time for obvious duties. If you have got no time you should make it. Let us see now, What time do you get up in the morning? Could you not manage to get up a quarter of an hour earlier? Well, yes! How long do you take for your dinner? So long. Then you read some trashy publication, possibly. Well, why could you not spend that time in tranquil communion with your own soul? The Christian will ever be in a lean state if he has no time for sacred musings before his God. Those men who know most of God are such as meditate most upon him. Those who realize most experimentally the doctrines of grace, are those who meditate and soar beyond the reach of all sublunary things. I think we shall never have much advancement in our churches until the members thereof begin to accept habitually the counsel, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers;" or that other, "Commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be still." Till the din and noise of business somewhat abate, and we give ourselves to calmer thought, and in the solemn silence of the mind find at once our heaven and our God, we must still expect to have regiments of dwarfs, and only here and there a giant. Giant minds can not be nourished by casual hearing; gigantic souls must have meditation to support them. Would ye be strong? Would ye be mighty? Would ye be valiant for the Lord, and useful in his cause? Take care that ye follow the occupation of the Psalmist, David, and meditate. This is a happy occupation.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider A VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT: "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

Christian! thou needest no greater inducement to excite thee than the subject here proposed: "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Whom does that word "him" mean? I suppose it may refer to all the three persons of the glorious Trinity? My meditation upon Jehovah shall be

sweet! And, verily, if you set down to meditate upon God the Father, and reflect on his sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love towards his elect people — if you think of God the Father as the great author and originator of the plan of salvation — if you think of him as the mighty being who has said that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus — if you look to him as the giver of his only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, his best gift, will, with him also, freely give us all things — if you consider him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged himself ultimately to complete all its stipulations, in the ingathering of every chosen ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manner of the Father's love.

Or, if you choose to do so, you may meditate upon God the Holy Spirit. Consider his marvellous operations on your own heart — how he quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins — how he brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold — how he called you with such a mighty efficacy that you could not resist his voice — how he drew you with the cords of love. If you think how often he has helped you in the hour of peril — how frequently he has comforted you with the promise in times of distress and trouble; and, if you think that, like holy oil, he will always supply your lamp, and until life's last hour he will always replenish you with his influences, proving himself still your teacher and your guide till you get up yonder, where you shall see your Savior face to face, in the blessed presence of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost — in such revelation you might find a vast and infinite subject for your meditation.

But to-night, I prefer rather to confine this word "him" to the person of our adorable Savior. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon one person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ.

*“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 forgives my sins.”*

Thou precious Jesus! what can be a sweeter theme for me, than to think of thine exalted being — to conceive of thee as the Son of God, who with the golden compasses struck out a circle from space, and fashioned this round world? To think of thee as the God who holds this mighty orb upon thy shoulders, and art the King of Glory, before whom angels bow with modest homage; and yet to consider thee as likewise “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” —

“In ties of blood with sinners one;”

to conceive of thee as the Son of Mary, born of a Virgin, wearing flesh like men, clothed in garments of humanity like mortals of our feeble race; to picture thee in all thy suffering life, in all the anguish of thy death; to trace thee in all thy passion; to view thee in the agony of Gethsemane, enduring the bloody sweat, the sore amazement; and then to follow thee to the pavement, and thence up the steep side of Calvary, bearing the cross, braving the shame, when thy soul was made an offering for my sins, when thou didst die the reconciling death ‘midst horrors still to all but God unknown. Verily, here is a meditation for my soul, which must be “sweet” for ever. I might begin, like the Psalmist David, and say, “My heart is inditing of a good matter; it bubbleth up, while I speak of things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.”

Christ! “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” Consider Christ in any way you please, and your meditation of him will be sweet. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses you have seen, which you may take up and hold one way, and you see one light, and another way, and you see another light, and whichever way you turn them you will always see some precious sparkling of light, and some new colors starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for your theme; sit down and consider him; think of his relation to your own soul, and you will never get to the end of that one subject.

Think of his eternal relationship with you; recollect that the saints of Jesus were from condemnation free, in union with the Lamb, before the world was made. Think of your everlasting union with the person of Jehovah Jesus before this planet was sent rolling through space, and how your guilty soul was accounted spotless and clean, even before you fell; and after that dire lapse, before you were restored, justification was imputed to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Think of your known and manifest relationship to him since you have been called by his grace. Think how he has become your brother; how his heart has beaten in sympathy with yours; how he has kissed you with the kisses of his love, and his love has been to you sweeter than wine. Look back upon some happy, sunny spots in your history, where Jesus has whispered, "I am yours," and you have said, "My beloved is mine." Think of some choice moments, when an angel has stooped from heaven, and taken you up on his wings, and carried you aloft, to sit in heavenly places where Jesus sits, that you might commune with him. Or think, if it please you, of some pensive moments, when you have had what Paul sets so much store by — fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Think of seasons when the sweat has rolled from your brow, almost as it did from that of Jesus — yet not the sweat of blood — when you have knelt down, and felt that you could die with Christ, even as you had risen with him. And then, when you have exhausted that portion of the subject, think of your relationship in Christ, which is to be developed in heaven. Imagine the hour to have come when ye shall —

*“Greet the blood-besprinkled band,
on the eternal shore,”
and for ever range the —
“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Array’d in living green.”*

Picture to your mind that moment when Jesus Christ shall salute you as “more than a conqueror,” and put a pearly crown upon your head, more glittering than stars. And think of that transporting hour, when you will take that crown from off your own brow, and climbing the steps of Jesus’ throne, you shall put it on his head, and crown him once more Lord of your soul, as well as “Lord of all.” Ah! if you come and tell me you have no subject for meditation, I will answer, Surely, you have not tried to meditate; for “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

Suppose you have done thinking of him as he is related to you; consider him next as he is related to the wide world. Recollect that Jesus Christ says he came into the world to save the world, and undoubtedly he will one day save the world, for he who redeemed it by price and by power will restore it and renew it from the effects of the fall. Oh! think of Jesus in this relationship as the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. He will come again to our earth one day; and when he comes he will find this world defaced still with the old curse upon it — the primeval curse of Eden. He will find plague, and pestilence, and war here still; but when he comes, he shall bid men “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;” war shall be obliterated from among the sciences; he shall speak the word, and there shall be a company that will publish it. “The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” Jesus Christ shall come! Christians! be ye waiting for the second coming of your Lord Jesus Christ! and whilst ye wait, meditate upon that coming. Think, O my soul, of that august day, when thou shalt see him with all his pompous train, coming to call the world to judgment, and to avenge himself upon his enemies. Think of all his triumphs when Satan shall be bound, and death shall be crushed, and hell shall be conquered, and when he shall be saluted as the universal Monarch, “Lord over all, blessed for ever. Amen.” “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

Ah! Christian! you are not afraid to be alone a little while now, for want of subjects of meditation! Some persons say they cannot bear to be an hour in solitude; they have got nothing to do, nothing to think about. No Christian will ever talk so, surely; for if I can but give him one word to think of — Christ — let him spell that over for ever; let me give him the word Jesus, and only let him try to think it over, and he shall find that an hour is nought, and that eternity is not half enough to utter our glorious Savior’s praise. Yea, beloved, I believe when we get to heaven we shall want no subject for meditation there, except Jesus Christ. I know there are some divines and learned philosophers who have been telling us that when we go to heaven we shall occupy our time in flying from star to star, and from one planet to another; that we shall go and see Jupiter, and Mercury, and Venus, and all the host of celestial bodies. We shall behold all the wonders of creation; we shall explore the depths of science, as they tell us, and there are no limits to the mysteries we shall understand. My reply to

people who imagine thus of heaven, is, that I have no objection it should be so, if it will afford them any pleasure; I hope you will have, and I know my Father will let you have, whatsoever will make you happy. But, while you are viewing stars, I will sit down and look at Jesus; and if you told me you had seen the inhabitants of Saturn and Venus, and the man in the moon, I would say, Ah! yes —

*“But in His looks a wonder stands,
The noblest glory of God’s hands;
God in the person of His Son
Hath all His mightiest works outdone.”*

But you will say, You will become tired, surely, of looking at him. No, I should reply; I have been looking at but one of his hands, and I have not yet thoroughly examined the hole where one of the nails went in; and when I have lived ten thousand years more I will take his other hand, and sit down and look at each gaping wound, and then I may descend to his side and his feet: —

*“Millions of years my wond’ring eyes
Shall o’er his beauties rove,
And endless ages I’ll adore
The wonders of His love.”*

You may go flitting about as far as you like; I will sit there, and look at the God in human flesh, for I believe that I shall learn more of God and more of his works in the person of Jesus than you could with all the advantage of traveling on wings of light, though you should have the most elevated imaginations and the most gigantic intellects to help you in your search. Brethren, our meditation of Christ will be sweet. There will be little else we shall want of heaven besides Jesus Christ. He will be our bread, our food, our beauty, and our glorious dress. The atmosphere of heaven will be Christ; everything in heaven will be Christ-like: yea Christ is the heaven of his people. To be in Christ and to be with Christ is the essence of heaven:

*“Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence remove
Or but conceal His Face.”*

Here is the object of our meditation. Our meditation of him shall be sweet.”

III. Let me proceed to point out a blessed result — “Our MEDITATION OF HIM SHALL BE SWEET.”

This depends upon the character very much. Ah! I know some persons come into chapel, who are very glad when they hear the minister pronounce the benediction, and dismiss the assembly; they are very glad when all is over, and they would rather hear the parting doxology than the text. As for a meditation on Christ, instead of saying it is sweet, they would say, It is precious dry. If they happen to hear an anecdote or a tale, they do not mind remembering that; but a meditation which should be entirely on Christ, would be dry enough to them, and they would be glad to hear it brought to a close. Ah! that is because of the taste you have in your mouth. There is something wrong about your palate. You know, when we have been taking some kind of medicine, and our mouth has been impregnated with a strong flavor, whatever we eat acquires that taste. So it is with you. You have got your mouth out of taste with some of the world’s poor dainties; you have some of the powder of the apples of Sodom hanging on your lips, that spoils the glorious flavor of your meditation on Jesus. In fact, it prevents your meditating on Christ at all. It is only a hearing of the meditation with your ears, not a receiving it with your hearts. But here the Psalmist says, “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

What a mercy, dear friends, that there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it. For I am sure, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. There is little here that seems sweet at first, but what has some bitter flavor afterward; and there are too many things that are actually bitter, and void of any relish. Go through the great laboratory of this world and how many will be the cases that you will see marked bitter! There are perhaps more of aloes put in our Cup than of any other ingredient. We have to take a great quantity of bitters in the course of our lives. What a mercy then it is, that there is one thing that is sweet! “My meditation of him shall be sweet; so sweet, beloved, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has departed, and he who was her strength, the

stay of her life and her sustenance, has been laid in the grave — have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, “Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my husband; ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;’ blessed be his name!” What was the reason of her patient submission? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and his lands swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habbakuk’s words, “Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, etc., etc., yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. “Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh! how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ!

Now, if any of you have come here with your mouths out of taste, through affliction and trouble, if you have been saying with Jeremiah, “Thou has filled my mouth with gravel stones and made me drunken with worm-wood” — if so, take a little of his choice cordial; I assure you it is sweet; *Lacrymae Christi*, as it is called. If thou wilt take these tears of Jesus and put them in thy mouth, they will take away all the unpleasant flavor. Or again, I bid you take this meditation upon Christ, as a piece of scented stuff that was perfumed in heaven. It matters not what thou hast in thy house; this shall make it redolent of Paradise — shall make it smell like those breezes that once blew through Eden’s garden, wafting the odor of flowers. Ah! there is nothing that can so console your spirits, and relieve all your distresses and troubles, as the feeling that now you can meditate on the person of Jesus Christ. “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

But, my dear hearers, shall I send you away without asking you whether you have ever had such a meditation upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? I do not like to preach a sermon, without pressing it home to the conscience of my hearers. I never like to bring you out a sword and show it you, and say, “There is a sword, and it is sharp;” I always like to make you feel that it is sharp, by cutting you with it. Would to God the sword

of the Spirit might penetrate many of your hearts now! When I see so many gathered together even on a week-day, I am astonished. But wherefore have ye come, my brethren? What went ye out for to see? a reed shaken with the wind? What have ye come out for to see? a prophet? Nay, but I say that you have come to see something more than a prophet. You have come to see and hear somewhat of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord. How many of you meditate on Christ? Christian men and women, do you not live below your privileges, many of you? Are you not living without having choice moments of communion with your Jesus? Methinks, if you had a free pass to heavens palace, you would use it very often; if you might go there and hold communion with some person whom you dearly loved, you would often be found there. But here is your Jesus, the king of heaven, and he gives you that which can open the gates of heaven and let you in to hold company with him, and yet you live without meditating upon his work, meditating upon his person, meditating upon his offices, and meditating upon his glory.

Christian men and women! I say to you, is it not time we should begin to live nearer to God? What is to become of our churches? I do not know what to think of Christendom at large. As I travel through the country and go here and there, I see the churches in a most awfully dwindled state. True, the Gospel is preached in most; but it is preached as it might be by bumble-bees in pitchers - always the same monotonous sound, and no good is done. I fear that the fault lies in the pews, as well as in the pulpit. If hearers are meditative, preachers must be meditative. It is very true that water does not run up-hill; but when you begin to meditate and pray over the word, your ministers will see that you have gone beyond them, and they will set to and meditate themselves, and give you the Gospel just as it comes fresh from their hearts, food for people's souls.

And for the rest of you — you who have never meditated on Jesus Christ — what do you think shall become of you when your bitterness shall be in your mouth? When you taste death, how do you hope to destroy its ill flavor? Yet “that last, that bitter cup which mortal man can taste” is but a dire presentiment. When you have to drink that gall in hell for ever — when the cup of torments which Jesus did not drain for you will hate to be drained by yourself — what will you do then? The Christian can go to heaven, because Christ has drunk destruction dry for him; but the ungodly

and unconverted man will have to drink the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. What will you do then? The first drops are bad enough, when you sip here the drops of remorse on account of sin; but that future cup in hell — that terrific mixture which God deals out to the lost in the pit — what will you do when you have to drink that? when your meditation will be, that you rejected Jesus, that you despised his Gospel, that you scoffed at his word? What will you do in that dread extremity? Many of you business men! will your ledger serve you with a sweet meditation in hell? Lawyer will it be sweet for you to meditate on your deeds when you go there? Laboring man! will it be a sweet meditation to thee, to think that thy wages were spent in drunkenness, or thy Sabbath profaned, and thy duties neglected? And thou, professor! will it be a sweet meditation to sit down and think of thine hypocrisy? And ah! ye carnally-minded men, who are indulging the flesh, and pampering the appetite, and not serving the Lord, “whose God is your belly, and whose glory is in your shame,” will your career furnish a sweet meditation to you at last?

Be assured of this: your sins must be your meditation, then, if Christ is not your meditation now. May there be great searchings of heart this night! How often do your convictions disperse like the smoke from the chimney, or the chaff from the winnowers’ hand; they soon vanish. It will not profit you to live at this rate — hearing sermons and forgetting them. Take heed to the voice of warning, lest God should say, “He that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.” O wicked men! wicked men! one word to you, all of you who know not God, and ye shall go. I will give you a subject for your meditation to-night. It shall be a parable. A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, “What is your employment?” He said, “I am a blacksmith.” “Go home,” said he, “and make me a chain of such a length” He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no wages all the while he was making the chain, only the trouble and the pains of making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said, “Go and make it twice as long.” He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it up again, and the monarch said, “Go and make it longer still.” Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said, “Take it, bind him hand and foot

with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” There were his wages for making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil! Your master the devil is telling you to make a chain. Some of you have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says, “Go and make it longer still. Next Sunday morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Saturday night you will be drunk, and put another link on; next Monday you will do a dishonest action, and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say, “More links on still!” And then, at last, it will be, “Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire.” “For the wages of sin is death.” There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do good. You must have strong medicines sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts! Amen.

THE TENSES

SERMON NO. 2718

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
MARCH 17TH, 1901,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. ON
THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 13TH, 1880.

“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” — 2 Corinthians 1:10.

WHEN children are learning their grammar, they have to pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs; and it is important for Christians also to remember their tenses, — to recollect the past, the present, and the future. Our text brings all three very vividly before us, and reminds us that God hath delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver.

First, let us think for a little while concerning the past. How old art thou, my friend? How many of thy years hast thou employed profitably, and how many hast thou allowed to run to waste? For how many years hast thou wrought the will of the flesh, and been a servant of sin and Satan? How long hast thou been born again? What is thine age spiritually? Take down the record of thy life, and examine it, from the days of thy childhood, through youth and early manhood, up till now. It is a book which should do us good to read; in some respects, all its pages may make us weep; and yet, viewed in another light, many of them may give us cause to sing. This is the one book in the library that many people do not like to take down and read, for there are so many blots in it, and so many humbling records; yet “God requireth that which is past,” and it is a token of wisdom for a man to talk with his past years, and to learn from them the many lessons they are able to teach. All the days we have lived will go before us to the judgment seat, and each one will bear its record, and leave it there; so let us not be oblivious of that which God remembers, but let us

recollect it that we may be penitent for all that has been wrong in it, and that we may be grateful for all that has been right.

Next, think about the second part of life, namely, the time present; and here let me urge upon you, dear friends, the importance of valuing the present. In fact, time present is the only time that you have. The past has gone, and you cannot recall it; the future will never really be yours, for, when it comes, it will be present, too. It is only in the present that we live; so that, if we waste these precious hours that are with us now, we waste all that we have. If we serve not God to-day, when will we serve him? To-morrow? Nay, for when that opportunity comes, “to-morrow” will have been changed into “to-day.” Let us endeavor, as God shall help us, even to watch our moments so as not to waste one of them. It is a good thing to have our life divided up into short periods. The other day, I saw John Wesley’s diary, or rather, horary, for it had in it not merely an entry for every day, but for every distinct occupation for every twenty minutes. The good man made his days to have many hours in them, and his hours seemed to have more minutes in them than most men’s hours have, because he did not waste any of them, but diligently used them all in his Master’s service. God help us all to do the same by paying great attention to the present portion of our life!

As for the future, there is an idle curiosity which prompts men to try to live in it; that we must renounce. But there is a gracious expectation which enables us to live in it, a holy anxiety which prompts us to prepare for it. It is greatly wise for us to talk with those years that are to come if we talk with them in view of their end. I would have you familiar with your graves, for you will soon be in them; and more familiar still with your resurrection dwelling-place, remembering that God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Let us often project ourselves beyond the present into the future; to gather strength from the future, is frequently the best way to deal with the present. You will be able more easily to bear your present burdens when you think how short is the time in which you will have to carry them. Your “light affliction, which is but for a moment,” will seem scarcely like a feather’s weight to you when you anticipate the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” which God hath prepared for you.

I recommend to you, therefore, this rule of three, and advise you always to consider the past, the present, and the future; and just now I invite you to do so in connection with the delivering mercy of God. He hath delivered us; he doth deliver us; he will deliver us. And, first, I am going to point out to you three trains of thought; next, three lines of argument; and, thirdly, three inferences.

I. First, THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.

The first is this, memory, which tells us of the deliverances in the past: “who delivered us from so great a death.” Take the words exactly as Paul wrote them, and recall how God has delivered some of us from death. A few here, perhaps, have been very near to death in sickness. Some of us have several times in our lives looked into eternity; our illness has been no child’s play, and we have realized the possibility, or even the probability of our soon passing away from all the engagements of this mortal life, and standing before our God. But we have been raised up again; we have come forth from our chamber, tottering on our staff, perhaps, through weakness, yet we are still preserved, the living, the living, to praise the Lord, as we do this day. I have no doubt that almost all of you have had, at one time or another, some very special proof that “unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”

Our past deliverances, however, have not only been from physical death; we have had greater deliverances than that. There was, first of all, our deliverance from spiritual death. Do you not remember the time, dear brother, dear sister, when you were brought out of nature’s darkness into God’s marvellous light? You say that you do not know the day when this great change took place; never mind if you do not, it is not at all essential if you can now say, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” Some of us do remember the very day when we came to Christ, and rested in him; and we do, with our whole heart and soul, bless him that we were delivered from that terrible death which had so long held us in captivity. God rescued us by his grace, and enabled us to come forth from our grave of sin, looking unto Jesus, and longing to be made like him.

Further, some of you remember when you were delivered from despair. It is an awful thing to be driven away from all hope of salvation, and to be at your wits’ end. You were not all brought to Christ in a terrible tempest, as

some of us were; many of you came to him under happier circumstances. Be very thankful that it was so; but some of us were hard put to it when we tried to touch the hem of his garment, we were pressed and crushed in the crowd, and seemed to lose our very breath. I remember how, when I was under conviction of sin, my soul rolled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man; yet the Lord delivered me, and taught me to rest upon him, and thus even full assurance became possible although I had thought, aforetime, that mercy could never reach me. Beloved, if I am describing your experience as well as my own, let us together bless the Lord for his mercy in deliverance from so great a death. The remembrance of our deliverance from sin and despair must take the first rank amongst our grateful reminiscences.

But since then, have you not been many times delivered out of temptation? You said, with the psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" yet the Lord graciously preserved you. If you look back with careful eye, you will see many occasions where, if it had not been for interposing mercy, you would either have fallen into the bog on your right hand, or into the quagmire on your left. If the Lord had not piloted your vessel, it would have been wrecked on the rocks of Scylla or engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis. Do you not wonder, sometimes, how you ever got through that peculiar temptation, which was so suitable to your circumstances, and so fascinating to your flesh? Yet you did not know, at the time, that it was a temptation; and you had not the wisdom necessary to meet the craft of Satan; yet you were not taken captive in the Satanic net, cunningly as it was spread; and for that deliverance you must bless the name of the Lord. There are some of you who ought to praise him for deliverances over which you wept at the time. He would not let you have what you desired; you were disappointed, and you talked about your heart being broken. Ah! but the Lord's dealings with you saved you from having a broken heart. You said, "Alas! alas! I have lost something which I fondly cherished." It was well that you did lose it, for that which you thought was a bracelet sparkling with jewels was a viper, which, had you grasped it, would have stung you to death. Blessed be God for not hearing some of our prayers! Blessed be the Lord for not gratifying many of our desires!

We ought to praise him, too, for our deliverances in the time of trouble. You are not all tried alike. I am very thankful that some of you are not troubled as others are; but I know that I am addressing some whose trials have been very many and very heavy. Your road has been a very rough one. John Bunyan truly says, "A Christian man is seldom long at ease; when one trouble's gone, another doth seize;" and that has been true in the lives of many of us. We can say, with the psalmist, "We went through fire and through water." Some of God's children have been brought very low in their circumstances, so that they have had to live "from hand to mouth," — though I do not know that many of us live very differently from that; — but there are some godly people who never have any reserve store even if they do not actually come to want. I do not know that there is anything very grievous in that, for the sparrows and the ravens live in that style, yet God cares for them. But some of you find it to be a trial to have scantiness in the home, or sickness in your own person, or one who is dear to you as your own life constantly afflicted. There are all sorts of losses and crosses, trials and troubles, for the godly to endure. Yes; but none of these things have crushed us yet, for the Lord hath delivered us. Here is a poor widow, and she wonders how she ever brought up that large family of little children. She scarcely knew how to provide for them all when she had a husband, and yet, when the head of the house was gone, they were provided for; it is very wonderful, yet it was done; and you, who seemed to see all your prospects suddenly dissolve, like the mirage of the desert, were helped. You said, at one time, "If such-and-such a thing should happen, it would kill me." It did happen, yet it did not kill you, for you are here to testify to the Lord's delivering mercy. One Job's messenger after another came to bring you evil tidings, yet the Lord delivered you from the trials which threatened to crush you. I cannot stay to mention all those past deliverances; and, probably, most of them are not even known to us. Glory be to God for unknown mercies, — favors which came in the night when we most needed them, favors which helped us to sleep and to awake refreshed, favors that stole, with silent footfall, into our home and our heart, and went away leaving traces of the sacred oil of divine mercy behind them.

That is the first train of thought, — memory, which tells of deliverances in the past.

The second is observation, which calls attention to present deliverance: “and doth deliver.” Open your eyes, my brethren and sisters, and see how God is delivering you at this moment. I do not say that, with the most widely opened eye, you will perceive all your deliverances; for, many times, you have been saved from trouble, while, on other occasions, you have been delivered out of it. I have often told you the story of the good old Puritan who met his son at a half-way house. When the young man came in, he said, “Father, I had a very special providence as I rode here to-day.” “What was that, my son?” “My horse stumbled three times very badly, yet I was not thrown.” “And I have had an equally special providence in riding here.” “What was that?” “My horse never stumbled all the way, so I was not thrown.” You know that, if we are in a railway accident, and escape from any hurt, we say, “What a providence!” Yes, but what a providence it was when you were preserved from a railway accident by stopping at home! Oftentimes, we do not see the very thing that has the most of mercy in it. What evidences of divine deliverance there are in the fact that you are here this moment! A comparatively trifling incident might have resulted in your death. You may be, tomorrow morning, in doubt as to which of two ways you should take; but there will be the providence of God directing you which to choose, and your choice of that one may affect the whole of the rest of your life.

If you are not just now being assailed by any temptation, it is because God is delivering you from it. Yet it may be that Satan is planning some fresh temptation with which to assail you; but, though he desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. We might have fallen into doctrinal error had it not been for God’s restraining mercy. How apt thoughtful people are to be carried away by the particular novelty of the hour! It seems as if they could not resist the cogency of the argument by which the new teaching is supported, but we have been kept from yielding to it by having our hearts established in the faith, so that we have not believed every novel doctrine, but have judged it by the Word of God, and so have been kept from wandering into devious ways.

How graciously God is preserving many of us from the tongue of slander! It is a wonderful thing for any man to live much in public without being accused of some vile crime; and the woman who lives in the most retired

position, the housewife who does nothing but look after her own children, will find somebody or other slandering her. You cannot always escape from the envenomed tongue of slander, be you what you will and where you will; and for God to keep the reputation of any Christian man unstained year after year, is a subject for the greatest thankfulness.

We do not know where or what we might have been if God's gracious protection had not been like a wall of fire round about us, as it is even now, for still doth the Lord deliver all those who put their trust in him. I want you, dear brothers and sisters, to believe with unquestioning confidence that God is delivering you just now. You know that he has delivered you, be quite as sure that he is delivering you at this moment. "Oh!" says one, "I am shut up in the dungeon of despair." Yes; but your Lord has a key that can open the door, and so let you out. "Ay; but I am in great want." But he knows all about it, and he has his basket in his hand full of good things with which he is going to supply all your needs. "Oh!" says another, "but I am sinking in the flood." But he is throwing the life-belt over you. "Oh, but I am fainting!" But he is putting a bottle of sweet perfume to your nose to refresh your spirit. God is near thee, to revive and cheer thy fainting soul. Perhaps someone says, "I find faith concerning the past and concerning the ultimate future tolerably easy; but it is faith for the next hour or two I cannot so readily exercise." At certain times, it is found that trial is peculiarly present, but one cannot always realize that God is "a very present help in trouble;" yet it is true. He hath delivered, and he doth deliver.

The third train of thought in this, — expectation looks out of the window upon the future: "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Yes, dear friends, there may be many trials before you yet; but there is a mass of mercy laid up in store to meet those trials. Troubles such as you have never yet known, as well as repetitions of those you have experienced, will surely come upon you; but as your days are, so shall your strength be, for your Lord will continue to deliver you. As the eyes gradually fail, and the limbs grow weak, and the infirmities of age creep over us, we are apt to be distressed; yet our Lord will not forsake us. When severe sickness invades our mortal frame, and our pains are multiplied and intensified, we wonder how we shall hold out to the end; and especially as we look forward to the time of death, — not always viewing it in the true

light, we say, "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? How shall we be able to bear the stern realities of our last hours?" Be of good comfort, my brother, my sister; he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver. As surely as the trial comes, the way of escape shall be opened up for you by your Lord. Will you try to realize all this of which I have been speaking? He hath delivered you; then, give him your gratitude: he is delivering you; then, give him your confidence: he will deliver you; then give him a full and joyful expectation, and begin even now to praise him for mercies which are yet to come, and for grace which you have not tasted yet, but which you shall taste in his good time.

II. Now, in the second place, THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT, all running to the same point.

The point to be proved is that the Lord will deliver his people; and I argue that he will deliver us in the future because he has already begun to deliver us. There is a chain of continuity here; he hath delivered, he doth deliver, and he will deliver. He began to work for our deliverance long before we sought him. The first movement was not from us to God, but from God to us. We were lying dead in trespasses and sins, and he came and quickened us. He gave his Son to die for us many centuries before we were born; he provided the gospel for us long before you and I had ever sinned; in all things he had the start, and was beforehand with us. Yet he need not have done all this, except that it was by his own choice and free will that he acted. I do rejoice in the free will of God which moved him to deliver us.

Surely, then, since the motive that impelled him to save us must have been in himself alone, that motive is still there. If he had begun to deliver us because he saw some goodness in us, or because we first applied to him, then he might leave us after all; but as the commencement was with himself, out of his own heart, spontaneously, depend upon it that, as he began the work, he will carry it on. God has no more knowledge of any one of us than he had at the first. When he began with us, he knew what we should be; foresaw all our sins and all our follies, all our ingratitude and all our backsliding. He did not enter, blindfold, upon a task which, after second thoughts, he would have to relinquish; but, even from eternity, he saw us just as we have turned out to be. Yet he began with us; and having begun with the deliberation of eternal love, let us be quite sure that he will

prosecute his gracious purpose with the perseverance of eternal love. If there had been, at the first, some reason in us why God should begin to deliver us, then, that reason being removed from us, God might cease to deliver us; but as the reason was not in us, but in himself, since he can never change, the reason for our deliverance abides the same, and the argument is good and clear, — God hath delivered us, then he will deliver us.

The next argument comes from the fact that, as he is now delivering us, therefore he will continue to do so. Here is the continuity of his grace. Now look, beloved; he has, up to this hour, continued to deliver you and me who have trusted him. How many times has he delivered me? Out of how many troubles have I been delivered? From how many sins have I been delivered? Well, then, if the Lord has kept on delivering me so long, I argue that, if he had ever meant to stop, he would have stopped before now; and, therefore, —

*“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.”*

When a man begins to build, we reckon that he will finish the building if he can. We know that our God can complete what he has commenced, so we conclude that he will do so. I feel that he has gone so far with me that he cannot give me up now.

*“Can he have taught me to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”*

No, that can never be; and many of you must feel just as I do about this matter. Some of you are, as it were, sitting on the very doorstep of heaven; you are over eighty years of age, so you cannot be here long; cannot you trust the Lord for the few months or years you have yet to live? He has been helping you, my aged sister, ever since you were a girl; and he has delivered you out of all sorts of troubles, do you think that he will leave you now? And my dear venerable brother, you knew the Lord when you were but a boy, and he has never left you yet; will he forsake you now? No; blessed be his name, he will not! All those years of his favor go to

confirm us in the conviction that he will keep on delivering us till he brings us safely home.

The Lord has not only delivered us so often, but he has also done it in such a wonderful way, that he must go on working in a similar fashion. What marvellous wisdom has he sometimes displayed in delivering us from the consequences of our own folly! Often hath he seemed to lavish his mercy upon us that he might help us in our time of need, and not once has he failed us. There is not one broken promise of his, nor one covenant blessing that he has ever withheld from us. If any of you, who have known him the longest, have aught to say against your God, say it; but you have not. You have never had any reason for doubting him, nor have you ever had any suspicion of his faithfulness raised in your mind by anything that he has done which might lead you to mistrust him in the future. He hath delivered, he is delivering, and he will yet deliver. There are two arguments drawn from the past and the present.

The best argument, however, comes from God himself: “in whom we trust.” He is always the same, and everything is ever present to his unchanging mind. What was the nature of God when he first determined to deliver me? Was it love? Then, it is love now. What was the motive which impelled the Son of God when he came from above, and snatched me from the deep waters? It was love, surprising love; and it is surprising love which still moves him to deliver me. Did I sing about his faithfulness, the other day? That faithfulness is just the same to-day. Have I adored his wisdom? That wisdom is not exhausted.

There is not only the same nature in God as there always was, but there is also the same unchanging purpose. You and I shift and change; and we are obliged to do so, because we make rash promises and faulty plans; but God, who is infinitely wise, always keeps to his purpose. Now, if it was his original purpose to save us, — and it must have been, or he would never have delivered us as he has done, — that purpose still stands, and shall for ever stand. Though earth’s old columns bow, though heaven and earth shall pass away, as the morning rime dissolves in the beams of the rising sun, yet the decree of the immutable Jehovah shall never be changed. “For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

III. Time fails me, so I can only very briefly show you that THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw from it is, that we shall always be in danger so long as we are here. The Lord hath delivered, doth deliver, and he will deliver, so we shall always need divine deliverance while we are in this world. We must not expect here to be ever out of gun-shot of the enemy. You may depend upon it, brethren and sisters in Christ, that you will always have tribulation as long as you are in the world, you will have trials in the flesh, you will have trials in the spirit, you will have trials from God, and trials from Satan; and if, at any time, you are a long while without any trouble, keep a good look-out for it, for it is probably on the way to you. We should always suspect some danger nigh when we perceive too much delight. When God has given us a long stretch of smooth sailing, it well behoves us to steer our vessel cautiously, and to be ready to furl our sails at any moment, for a cyclone may be upon us before we know where we are. We need not ask the Lord to send us trouble, but when it comes, let us have the grace to accept it, and to glorify God in it. While we are in this world, we shall always know that it is the world, so let us not make any mistake about the matter; the devil is the devil, the world is the world, and the flesh is the flesh. None of these things have changed, and the mercy is that God has not changed, he is still the same as ever he was. If I found that the world was not the world, I might be afraid that God was not God; but that can never be the case, So, as trials are always arising, I may fairly suspect that they always will come while this time-state lasts; but I also fully believe that God will always be the same, and that he will deliver all who trust in him.

The second inference from the text is, that we may constantly expect a display of God's delivering grace. The past says, "He has delivered;" the present says, "He doth deliver;" and the future says, "He will yet deliver." Yesterday, God was very gracious to me; to-morrow he will be very gracious to me; and the same will be true the next day, and the next day, and the next day, until there shall be no more days, and time shall be swallowed up in eternity. Between here and heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of grace. From here to the throne of the Highest, you will have to be continually supplied with new grace from the Lord who sits on high. Dear brother, you never live a truly holy, happy,

blessed day, except by divine grace. You never think a right thought, never do a right act, you never make any advance heavenward except by grace. I like to think that it is so, that every day I am a monument of mercy; that every day a fresh display of sovereign grace is made to me; every day my Father feeds me, my Savior cleanses me, the Comforter sustains me. Every day, new manifestations of the lovingkindness of the Lord break forth upon my wondering soul, and give me fresh visions of his miraculous love. I could not find another word to express what I wanted to say, that one seemed to leap into my mouth just then, — his miraculous love! And so it is, miracle-working love, making the Christian's life to be a series of miracles, at which angels shall gaze for ever in astonished adoration of the amazing love of God to guilty men. So I reckon that we may go onward with great confidence; for, although every day will bring dangers, every day will also witness divine deliverances.

Thirdly, the last inference I draw from the text is, that our whole life should be filled with praise of God our Deliverer. How doth it run? He delivered us, and now we deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He delivered us; he doth deliver us; — but what about the future? We must deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He hath delivered; he doth deliver; and he will yet deliver; — the same Person, working in the beginning, in the center, and at the close. It is all of God from first to last; there is not one deliverance which you have ever had which you can ascribe to anyone but the Lord alone. Inside heaven's gate, all the praise is given to the Triune Jehovah: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;" and outside heaven's gate, let us sing the same song, to the same tune; let it always be to the praise of grace, grace, GRACE; to the God of grace, the Father of grace, the Christ of grace, the Holy Ghost and his grace; and to God be all the glory, for ever and for ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 196, 733, 735.

PLOUGHING THE ROCK

SERMON NO. 2977

*“Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?”
— Amos 6:12.*

THESE expressions are proverbs, taken from the familiar sayings of the east country. A proverb is generally a sword with two edges, or, if I may so say, it has many edges, or is all edge, and hence it may be turned this way and that way, and every part of it will have force and point. A proverb has often many bearings, and you cannot always tell what was the precise meaning of him who uttered it. The connection would abundantly tolerate two senses in this place. An ancient commentator asserts that it has seven meanings, and that any one of them would be consistent with the context. I cannot deny the assertion, and if it be correct it is only one among many instances of the manifold wisdom of the Word of God. Like those curiously carved Chinese balls in which there is one ball within another, so in many a holy text there is sense within sense, teaching within teaching, and each one worthy of the Spirit of God.

The first sense of the text upon which I would say just a word or two is this: the prophet is expostulating with ungodly men upon their pursuit of happiness where it never can be found. They were endeavoring to grow rich and great and strong by oppression. The prophet says, “Ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.” Justice was bought and sold among them, and the book of the law was made the instrument of fraud. “Yet,” says the prophet, “there is no gain to be gotten this way — no real profit, no true happiness. As well may horses run upon a rock, and oxen plough the sand: it is labor in vain.”

If any of you try to content yourselves with this world, and hope to find a heaven in the midst of your business and your family without looking upward for it, you labor in vain. If you hope to find pleasure in sin, and think that it will go well with you if you despise the law of God, you will make a great mistake. You might as well seek for roses in the grottoes of

the sea, or look for pearls on the pavements of the city. You will find what your soul requires nowhere but in God. To seek after happiness in evil deeds is to plough a rock of granite. To labor after true prosperity by dishonest means is as useless as to till the sandy shore. “Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” Young man, you are killing yourself with ambition; you seek your own honor and emolument, and this is a poor, poor object for an immortal soul. And you, too, sir, are wearing out your life with care; your mind and body both fail you in endeavoring to amass riches, as if a man’s life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesses: you are ploughing a rock; your cares will not bring you joy of heart or content of spirit; your toil will end in failure. And you, too, who labor to weave a righteousness by your works apart, from Christ, and fancy that with the diligent use of outward ceremonies you may be able to do the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart, you, too, are ploughing thankless rock. The strength of fallen nature exerted at its utmost can never save a soul. Why, then, plough the rock any longer? Give over the foolish task.

So far, I believe, we have not misread the text, but have mentioned a very probable meaning of the words; still, another strikes me, which I think equally suitable, and upon it I shall dwell, by God’s help.

It is this. God will not always send his ministers to call men to repentance. When men’s hearts remain obdurate, and they do not and will not repent, then God will not always deal with them in mercy. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” There is a time of ploughing, but when it is evident that the heart is wilfully hardened, then wisdom itself suggests to mercy that she should give over her efforts. “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?” No, there is a limit to the efforts of kindness, and in fullness of time the labor ceases, and the rock remains unploughed henceforth and for ever.

I. Taking that sense, we shall speak upon it, and remark, first, that **MINISTERS LABOUR TO BREAK UP MEN’S HEARTS**: the wise preacher tries by the power of the Holy Ghost to break up the hard clods of the heart, so that it may receive the heavenly seed.

Many truths are used like sharp ploughshares to break up the heart. Men must be made to feel that they have sinned, and they must be led to repent of sin. They must receive Christ, not with the head only, but with the heart; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. There must be emotion: we must cut into the heart with the ploughshare of the law. A farmer who is too tender-hearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest. Here is the failing of certain divines, they are afraid of hurting anyone's feelings, and so they keep clear of all the truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp ploughshare on their premises, and are never likely to have a stack in their rickyard. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish, and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds. This kind of love is real cruelty to men's souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the lancet, or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into hell rather than distress their minds. It is pleasant to prophesy smooth things, but woe unto the man who thus degrades himself. Is this the spirit of Christ? Did he conceal the sinner's peril? Did he cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did he lull souls into slumber by smooth strains of flattery? Nay, but with honest love and anxious concern he warned men of the wrath to come, and bade them repent or perish. Let the servant of the Lord Jesus in this thing follow his Master, and plough deep with a sharp ploughshare, which will not be balked by the hardest clods. This we must school ourselves to do. If we really love the souls of men, let us prove it by honest speech. The hard heart must be broken, or it will still refuse the Savior who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have, and yet may be saved; but those things which go with the ploughing of the heart are indispensable; there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God, there must be an acknowledgment of guilt and a penitent petition for mercy; there must, in a word, be a thorough ploughing of the soul before we can expect the seed to bring forth fruit.

II. But the text indicates to us that AT TIMES MINISTERS LABOR IN VAIN. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" In a short time a ploughman feels whether the plough will go or not, and so does the minister. He may use the very same words in one place which he

has used in another, but he feels in the one place great joy and hopefulness in preaching, while with another audience he has heavy work, and little hope. The plough in the last case seems to jump out of the furrow; and a bit of the share is broken off now and then. He says to himself, "I do not know how it is, but I do not get on at this," and he finds that his Master has sent him to work upon a particularly heavy soil. All laborers for Christ know that this is occasionally the case. You must have found it so in a Sunday-school class, or in a cottage meeting, or in any other gathering where you have tried to teach and preach Jesus. You have said to yourself every now and then, "Now I am ploughing a rock. Before, I turned up rich mould which a yoke of oxen might plough with ease, and a horse might even run at the work; but now the horse may tug, and the oxen may wearily toil till they gall their shoulders, but they cannot cut a furrow; the rock is stubborn to the last degree."

There are such hearers in all congregations. They are as iron, and yet they are side by side with a fine plot of ground. Their sister, their brother, their son, their daughter, all these have readily felt the power of the gospel; but they do not feel it. They hear it respectfully; and they so far allow it free course that they permit it to go in at one ear and out at the other, but they will have nothing more to do with it. They would not like to be Sabbath-breakers and stop away from worship; they therefore do the gospel the questionable compliment of coming where it is preached and then refusing to regard it. They are hard, hard, hard bits of rock, the plough does not touch them.

Many, on the other hand, are equally hard; but it is in another way. The impression made by the word is not deep or permanent. They receive it with joy, but they do not retain it. They listen with attention, but it never comes to practice with them. They hear about repentance, but they never repent. They hear about faith, but they never believe. They are good judges of what the gospel is, and yet they have never accepted it for themselves. They will not eat; but still they insist that good bread shall be put on the table. They are great sticklers for the very things which they personally reject. They are moved to feeling; they shed tears occasionally, but still their hearts are not really broken up by the word. They go their way, and forget what manner of men they are. They are rocky-hearted through and through: all our attempts to plough them are failures.

Now this is all the worse, because certain of these rocky-hearted people have been ploughed for years, and have become harder instead of softer. Once or twice ploughing, and a broken share or two, and a disappointed ploughman or two, we might not mind, if they would yield at last; but these have since their childhood known the gospel and never given way before its power. It is a good while since their childhood now with some of them. Their hair is turning grey, and they themselves are getting feeble with years. They have been entreated and persuaded times beyond number, but labor has been lost upon them. In fact, they used to feel the word, in a certain fashion, far more years ago than they do now. The sun, which softens wax, hardens clay, and the same gospel which has brought others to tenderness and repentance has exercised a contrary effect upon them, and made them more careless about divine things than they were in their youth. This is a mournful state of things, is it not?

Why are certain men so extremely rocky? Some are so from a peculiar stolidity of nature. There are many people in the world whom you cannot very well move, they have a great deal of granite in their constitution, and are more nearly related to Mr. Obstinate than to Mr. Pliable. Now, I do not think badly of these people, because one knows what it is to preach to an excitable people, and to get them all stirred, and to know that in the end they are none the better; whereas some of the more solid and immovable people when they are moved are moved indeed; when they do feel they feel intensely, and they retain any impression that is made. A little chip made in granite by very hard blows will abide there, while the lashing of water, which is easy enough, will leave no trace even for a moment. It is a grand thing to get hold of a fine piece of rock and to exercise faith about it. The Lord's own hammer has mighty power to break, and in the breaking great glory comes to the Most High.

Worse still, certain men are hard because of their infidelity — not heart-infidelity all of it, but an infidelity which springs out of a desire not to believe, which has helped them to discover difficulties. These difficulties exist, and were meant to exist, for there would be no room for faith if everything were as plain as the nose on one's face. These persons have gradually come to doubt, or to think that they doubt, essential truths, and this renders them impervious to the gospel of Christ.

A much more numerous body are orthodox enough, but hard-hearted for all that. Worldliness hardens a man in every way. It often dries up all charity to the poor, because the man must make money, and he thinks that the poor-rates are sufficient excuse for neglecting the offices of charity. He has no time to think of the next world; he must spend all his thoughts upon the present one. Money is tight, and therefore he must hold it tight; and when money brings in little interest he finds therein a reason for being the more niggardly. He has no time for prayer, he must get down to the counting-house. He has no time for reading his Bible, his ledger wants him. You may knock at his door, but his heart is not at home; it is in the counting-house, wherein he lives and moves and has his being. His god is his gold, his bliss is his business, his all in all is himself. What is the use of preaching to him? As well may horses run upon a rock, or oxen drag a plough across a field sheeted with iron a mile thick.

With some, too, there is a hardness, produced by what I might almost call the opposite of stern worldliness, namely, a general levity. They are naturally butterflies flitting about and doing nothing. They never think, or want to think. Half a thought exhausts them, and they must needs be diverted, or their feeble minds will utterly weary. They live in a round of amusement. To them the world is a stage, and all the men and women only players. It is of little use to preach to them: there is no depth of earth in their superficial nature; beneath a sprinkling of shifting, worthless sand lies an impenetrable rock of utter stupidity and senselessness. I might thus multiply reasons why some are harder than others, but it is a well assured fact that they are so, and there I leave the matter.

III. I shall now ask everybody to judge whether the running of horses upon a rock, and the ploughing there with oxen, shall always be continued. I assert that IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT GOD'S SERVANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTINUE TO LABOR IN VAIN. These people have been preached to, taught, instructed, admonished, expostulated with, and advised; shall this unrecompensed work be always performed? We have given them a fair trial; what do reason and prudence say? Are we bound to persevere till we are worn out by this unsuccessful work? We will ask it of men who plough their own farms; do they recommend perseverance when failure is certain? Shall horses run upon the rock? Shall one plough there with oxen? Surely not for ever.

I think we shall all agree that labor in vain cannot be continued for ever if we consider the ploughman. He does not want to be much considered; but still his Master does not overlook him. See how weary he grows when the work discourages him. He goes to his Master with, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "Why hast thou sent me," says he, "to a people that have ears but hear not? They sit as thy people sit, and they hear as thy people hear, and then they go their way and they forget every word that is spoken, and they obey not the voice of the Lord." See how disappointed the preacher becomes. It is always hard work when you appear to get no forwarder, although you do your utmost. No man, whoever he may be, likes to be set upon work which appears to be altogether a waste of time and effort. To his own mind it seems to have a touch of the ridiculous about it, and he fears that he will be despised of his fellows for aiming at the impossible. Shall it always be the lot of God's ministers to be trifled with? Will the great Husbandman bid his ploughmen spill their lives for nought? Must his preachers continue to cast pearls before swine? If the consecrated workers are so bidden by their Lord they will persevere in their painful task; but their Master is considerate of them, and I ask you also to consider whether it is reasonable to expect a zealous heart to be for ever occupied with the salvation of those who never respond to its anxiety? Shall the horses always plough upon the rock? Shall the oxen always labor there?

Again, there is the Master to be considered. The Lord — is he always to be resisted and provoked? Many of you have had eternal life set before you as the result of believing in Jesus; and you have refused to believe. It is a wonder that my Lord has not said to me, "You have done your duty with them; never set Christ before them again; my Son shall not be insulted." If you offer a beggar in the street a shilling and he will not have it, you cheerfully put it into your purse and go your way; you do not entreat him to have his wants relieved. But, behold, our God in mercy begs sinners to come to him, and implores them to accept his Son. In his condescension he even stands like a salesman in the market, crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." In another place he says of himself, "All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation." If the Lord of mercy

has been refused so long in the sight of you who reverence him, does not some indignation mingle with your pity, and while you love sinners and would have them saved, do you not feel in your heart that there must be an end to such insulting behavior? I ask even the careless to think of the matter in this light, and if they do not respect the ploughman, yet let them have regard to his Master.

And then, again, there are so many other people who are needing the gospel, and who would receive it if they had it, that it would seem to be wise to leave off wearying oneself about those who despise it. What did our Lord say? He said that if the mighty things which had been done in Bethsaida and Chorazin had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. What is more wonderful still, he says that if he had wrought the same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah which were wrought in Capernaum, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Does it not occur to us at once to give the word to those who will have it, and leave the despisers to perish in their own wilfulness? Does not reason say, "Let us send this medicine where there are sick people who will value it"? Thousands of people are willing to hear the gospel. See how they crowd wherever the preacher goes — how they tread upon one another in their anxiety to listen to him; and if these people who hear him every day will not receive his message, "in God's name," saith he, "let me go where there is a probability of finding soil that can be ploughed." "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plough there with oxen?" Must I work always where nothing comes of it? Does not reason say, let the word go to China, to Hindostan, or to the utmost parts of the earth, where they will receive it; for those who have it preached in the corners of their streets despise it?

I shall not lengthen this argument, but shall solemnly put the question again. Would any of you continue to pursue an object when it has proved to be hopeless? Do you wonder that when the Lord has sent his servants to speak kind, gracious, tender words, and men have not heard, he says to them, "They are joined unto their idols; let them alone"? There is a boundary to the patience of men, and we soon arrive at it; and assuredly there is a limit, though it is long before we outrun it, to the patience of God. "At length," he says, "it is enough. My Spirit shall no longer strive with them." If the Lord says this, can any of us complain? Is not this the

way of wisdom? Does not prudence itself dictate it? Any thoughtful mind will say, “Ay, ay, a rock cannot be ploughed for ever.”

IV. Fourthly. THERE MUST BE AN ALTERATION, then, and that speedily. The oxen shall be taken off from such toil. It can be easily done, and done soon. It can be effected in three ways.

First, the unprofitable hearer can be removed so that he shall no more hear the gospel from the lips of his best approved minister. There is a preacher who has some sort of power over him; but as he rejects his testimony, and remains impenitent, the man shall be removed to another town, where he shall hear monotonous discourses which will not touch his conscience. He shall go where he shall be no longer persuaded and entreated; and there he will sleep himself into hell. That may be readily enough done; perhaps some of you are making arrangements even now for your own removal from the field of hope.

Another way is to take away the ploughman. He has done his work as best he could, and he shall be released from his hopeless task. He is weary. Let him go home. The soil would not break up, but he could not help that; let him have his wage. He has broken his plough at the work; let him go home and hear his Lord say, “Well done.” He was willing to keep on at the disheartening labor as long as his Master bade him; but it is evidently useless, therefore let him go home, for his work is done. He has been sore sick, let him die, and enter into his rest. This is by no means improbable.

Or, there may happen something else. The Lord may say, “That piece of rock shall never trouble the ploughman any more. I will take it away.” And he may take it away in this fashion: the man who has heard the gospel, but rejected it, will die. I pray my Master that he will not suffer any one of you to die in your sins, for then we cannot reach you any more, or indulge the faintest hope for you. No prayers of ours can follow you into eternity. There is one name by which you may be saved, and that name is sounded in your ears — the name of Jesus; but if you reject him now, even that name will not save you. If you do not take Jesus to be your Savior he will appear as your judge. I pray you, do not destroy your own souls by continuing to be obstinate against almighty love.

God grant that some better thing may happen. Can nothing else be done? This soil is rock; can we not sow it without breaking it? No. Without repentance there is no remission of sin. But is there not a way of saving men without the grace of God? The Lord Jesus did not say so; but he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." He did not hint at a middle course or hold out a "larger hope," but he declared, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and so he must be. Dream not of a back door to heaven, for the Lord has provided none.

What then? Shall the preacher continue his fruitless toil? If there is only half a hope left him, he is willing to go on and say, "Hear, ye deaf, and see, ye blind, and live, ye dead." He will even so speak this day, for his Master bids him preach the gospel to every creature; but it will be hard work to repeat the word of exhortation for years to those who will not hear it.

Happily there is one other turn which affairs may take. There is a God in heaven, let us pray to him to put forth his power. Jesus is at his side, let us invoke his interposition. The Holy Ghost is almighty, let us call for his aid. Brothers who plough and sisters who pray, cry to the Master for help. The horse and the ox evidently fail, but there remains One above who is able to work great marvels. Did he not once speak to the rock, and turn the flint into a stream of water? Let us pray him to do the same now.

And, oh, if there is one who feels and mourns that his heart is like a piece of rock, I am glad he feels it; for he who feels that his heart is a rock gives some evidence that the flint is being transformed. O rock, instead of smiting thee, as Moses smote the rock in the wilderness and erred therein, I would speak to thee. O rock, wouldst thou become like wax? O rock, wouldst thou dissolve into rivers of repentance? Harken to God's voice! O rock, break with good desire! O rock, dissolve with longing after Christ, for God is working upon thee now. Who knows but at this very moment thou shalt begin to crumble down. Dost thou feel the power of the Word? Does the sharp ploughshare touch thee just now? Break and break again, till by contrition thou art dissolved, for then will the good seed of the gospel come to thee, and thou shalt receive it into thy bosom, and we shall all behold the fruit thereof.

And so I will fling one more handful of good corn, and have done. If thou desirest eternal life, trust Jesus Christ, and thou art saved at once. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," says Christ, "for I am God, and beside me there is none else." He that believeth in him hath everlasting life. "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

O Lord, break up the rock, and let the seed drop in among its broken substance, and get thou a harvest from the dissolved granite, at this time, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE JOY OF HARVEST

SERMON NO. 3315

“They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest.” — Isaiah 9:3.

THE other day I kept the feast with a company who shouted “Harvest Home.” I was glad to see the rich and poor rejoicing together; and when the cheerful meal was ended, I was glad to turn one of the tables into a pulpit, and in the large barn to preach the gospel of the ever-blessed God to an earnest audience. My heart was merry in harmony with the occasion, and I shall now keep in the same key, and talk to you a little upon the joy of harvest. Londoners forget that it is harvest time; living in this great desert of dingy bricks we hardly know what a wheat-ear is like, except as we see it dry and white in the window of a corn-dealer’s shop; yet let us all remember that there is such a season as harvest, when by God’s goodness the fruits of the earth are gathered in.

WHAT IS THE JOY OF HARVEST which is here taken as the simile of the joy of the saints before God? I am afraid that to the more selfish order of spirits the joy of harvest is simply that of personal gratification at the increase of wealth. Sometimes the farmer only rejoices because he sees the reward of his toils, and is so much the richer man. I hope that with many there mingles the second cause of joy; namely, gratitude to God that an abundant harvest will give bread to the poor, and remove complaining from our streets. There is a lawful joy in harvest, no doubt, to the man who is enriched by it; for any man who works hard has a right to rejoice when at last he gains his desire. It would be well if men would always recollect that their last and greatest harvest will be to them according to their labor. He that soweth to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, and only the man that soweth to the spirit will of the spirit reap life everlasting. Many a young man commences life by sowing what he calls his wild oats, which he had better never have sown, for they will bring him a terrible harvest. He expects that from these wild oats he will gather a harvest of true pleasure, but it cannot be: the truest pleasures of life spring from the good

seed of righteousness, and not from the hemlock of sin. As a man who sows thistles in his furrows must not expect to reap the golden wheat sheaf, so he who follows the ways of vice must not expect happiness. On the contrary, if he sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind. When a sinner feels the pangs of conscience he may well say, "This is what I sowed." When he shall at last receive the punishment of his evil deeds he will blame no one but himself: he sowed tares and he must reap tares. On the other hand, the Christian man, though his salvation is not of works, but of grace, will have a gracious reward given to him by his Master. Sowing in tears, he shall reap in joy. Putting out his talents to interest, he shall enter into his Master's joy, and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The joy of harvest in part consists of the reward of labor; may such be our joy in serving the Lord.

The joy of harvest has another element in it, namely, that of gratitude to God for favors bestowed. We are singularly dependent on God; far more so than most of us imagine. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they went forth every morning and gathered the manna. Our manna does not come to us every morning, but it comes once a year. It is as much a heavenly supply as if it lay like a hoar-frost round about the camp. If we went out into the field and gathered food which dropped from the clouds we should think it a great miracle; and is it not as great a marvel that our bread should come up from the earth as that it should come down from the sky? The same God who bade the heavens drop with angels' food bids the dull earth in its due season yield corn for mankind.

Therefore, whenever we find that harvest comes, let us be grateful to God, and let us not suffer the season to pass over without psalms of thanksgiving. I believe I shall be correct if I say that there is never in the world, as a rule, more than sixteen months' supply of food; that is to say, when the harvest is gathered in, there may be sixteen months' supply; but at the time of harvest there is not usually enough wheat in the whole world to last the population more than four or five months; so that if the harvest did not come we should be on the verge of famine. We live still from hand to mouth. Let us pause and bless God, and let the joy of harvest be the joy of gratitude.

To the Christian it should be great joy, by means of the harvest, to receive an assurance of God's faithfulness. The Lord has promised that seed-time

and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease; and when you see the loaded wain carrying in the crop you may say to yourself, "God is true to his promise. Despite the dreary winter and the damp spring, autumn has come with its golden grain." Depend upon it, that as the Lord keeps this promise he will keep all the rest. All his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus: if he keeps his covenant to the earth, much more will he keep his covenant with his own people, whom he hath loved with an everlasting love. Go, Christian, to the mercy-seat with the promise on your lip and plead it. Be assured it is not a dead letter. Let not unbelief cause you to stammer when you mention the promise before the throne, but say it boldly — "Fulfil this word unto thy servant on which thou hast caused me to hope." Shame upon us that we so little believe our God. The world is full of proofs of his goodness. Every rising sun, every falling shower, every revolving season certifies his faithfulness. Wherefore do we doubt him? If we never doubt him till we have cause for it we shall never know distrust again. Encouraged by the return of harvest, let us resolve in the strength of the Spirit of God that we will not waver, but will believe in the divine word and rejoice in it.

Once more. To the Christians, in the joy of harvest there will always be the joy of expectation. As there is a harvest to the husbandman for which he waiteth patiently, so there is a harvest for all faithful waiters who are looking for the coming and the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The mature Christian, like the ripe ear of corn, hangs down his head with holy humility. When he was but green in the things of God he stood erect and was somewhat boastful, but now that he has become full of the blessing of the Lord he is humbled thereby, and bows himself down; he is waiting for the sickle, and he dreads it not, for no common reaper shall come to gather Christ's people — he himself shall reap the harvest of the world. The Lord leaves the destroying angel to reap the vintage and to cast it into the wine-vat to be trodden with vengeance; but as for the grain which he himself has sown, he will gather it himself with his own golden sickle. We are looking for this. We are growing amongst the tares, and sometimes we are half afraid lest the tares should be stronger than ourselves and choke the wheat; but we shall be separated by-and-by, and when the corn is well winnowed and stored in the garner, we shall be there. It is this expectation which even now makes our hearts throb with joy. We

have gone to the grave with precious sheaves that belonged to our Master, and when we were there we thought we could almost say, "Lord, if they sleep they shall do well. Let us die with them." Our joy of harvest is the hope of being at rest with all the saints, and for ever with the Lord. A view of these shadowy harvests upon earth should make us exceedingly glad, because they are the image and foreshadowing of the eternal harvest above.

So much about the joy of harvest; but I hasten onward. WHAT JOYS ARE THOSE WHICH TO THE BELIEVER ARE AS THE JOY OF HARVEST? It is a common notion that Christians are an unhappy people. It is true that we are tried, but it is false that we are miserable. With all their trials, believers have such a compensation in the love of Christ that they are still a blessed generation, and it may be said of them, "Happy art thou, O Israel."

One of the first seasons in which we knew a joy equal to the joy of harvest — a season which has continued with us ever since it commenced — was when we found the Savior, and so obtained salvation. You recollect for yourselves, brethren and sisters, the time of the ploughing of your souls. My heart was fallow, and covered with weeds; but on a certain day the great Husbandman came and began to plough my soul. Then black horses were his team, and it was a sharp ploughshare that he used, and the ploughers made deep furrows. The ten commandments were those black horses, and the justice of God, like a ploughshare, tore my spirit. I was condemned, undone, destroyed, lost, helpless, hopeless, — I thought hell was before me. Then there came a cross ploughing, for when I went to hear the gospel it did not comfort me; it made me wish I had a part in it, but I feared that such a boon was out of the question. The choicest promises of God frowned at me, and his threatenings thundered at me. I prayed, but found no answer of peace. It was long with me thus. After the ploughing came the sowing. God who ploughed the heart made it conscious that it needed the gospel, and the gospel seed was joyfully received. Do you recollect that auspicious day when at last you began to have some little hope? It was very little — like a green blade that peeps up from the soil: you scarce knew whether it was grass or corn, whether it was presumption or true faith. It was a little hope, but it grew very pleasantly. Alas, a frost of doubt came; snow of fear fell; cold winds of despondency blew on you, and you said, "There can be no hope for me." But what a glorious day was that when at last the wheat which God had sown

ripened, and you could say, "I have looked unto him and have been lightened: I have laid my sins on Jesus, where God laid them of old, and they are taken away, and I am saved." I remember well that day, and so no doubt do many of you. O sirs! No husbandman ever shouted for joy as our hearts shouted when a precious Christ was ours, and we could grasp him with full assurance of salvation in him. Many days have passed since then, but the joy of it is still fresh with us. And, blessed by God, it is not the joy of the first day only that we look back upon; it is the joy of every day since then, more or less; for our joy no man taketh from us; still we are walking in Christ, even as we received him. Even now all our hope on him is stayed, all our help from him we bring; and our joy and peace continue with us because they are based upon an immovable foundation. We rejoice in the Lord, yea, and we will rejoice.

The joy of harvest generally shows itself by the farmer giving a feast to his friends and neighbors; and, usually, those who find Christ express their joy by telling their friends and their neighbors how great things the Lord hath done for them. The grace of God is communicative. A man cannot be saved, and always hold his tongue about it: as well look for dumb choirs in heaven as for a silent church on earth. If a man has been thirsty, and has come to the living stream, his first impulse will be to cry, "Ho! Every one that thirsteth!" Do you feel the joy of harvest, the joy that makes you wish that others should share with you? If so, do not repress the impulse to proclaim your happiness. Speak of Christ to brothers and sisters, to friends and kinsfolk; and, if the language be stammering, the message in itself is so important that the words in which you couch it will be a secondary consideration. Tell it, tell it out far and wide — that there is a Savior, that you have found him, and that his blood can wash away transgression. Tell it everywhere; and so the joy of harvest shall spread o'er land and sea, and God shall be glorified.

We have another joy which is like the joy of harvest. We frequently have it, too. It is the joy of answered prayer. I hope you know what it is to pray in faith. Some prayer is not worth the words used in presenting it, because there is no faith mixed with it. "With all thy sacrifices thou shalt offer salt," and the salt of faith is needful if we would have our sacrifices accepted. Those who are familiar with the mercy-seat know that prayer is a reality, and that the doctrine of divine answers to prayer is no fiction.

Sometimes God will delay to answer for wise reasons: then his children must cry, and cry, and cry again. They are in the condition of the husbandman who must wait for the precious fruits of the earth; and when at last the answer to prayer comes, they are then in the husbandman's position when he receives the harvest. Remember Hannah's wail and Hannah's word. In the bitterness of her soul she cried to God, and when her child was given to her she called it "Samuel," meaning, "Asked of God"; for, said she, "For this child I prayed." He was a dear child to her, because he was a child of prayer. Any mercy that comes to you in answer to prayer will be your Samuel mercy, your darling mercy. You will say of it, "For this mercy I prayed," and it will bring the joy of harvest to your spirit. If the Lord desires to surprise his children he has only to answer their prayers; for the most of them would be astonished if an answer came to their petitions. I know how they speak about answers to prayer. They say, "How remarkable! How wonderful!" as if it were anything remarkable that God should be true, and that the Most High should keep his promise. Oh for more faith to rest upon his word! And we should have more of these harvest joys.

We have another joy of harvest in ourselves when we conquer a temptation. We know what it is to get under a cloud sometimes: sin within us rises with a darkening force, or an external adversity beclouds us, and we miss the plain path we were accustomed to walk in. A child of God at such times will cry mightily for help; for he is fearful of himself and fearful of his surroundings. Some of God's people have been by the week and month together exposed to the double temptation, from without and from within, and have cried to God in bitter anguish. It has been a very hard struggle: the sinful action has been painted in very fascinating colors, and the siren voice of temptation has almost enchanted them. But when at last they have got through the valley of the shadow of death without having slipped with their feet; when, after all, they have not been destroyed by Apollyon, but have come forth again into the daylight, they feel a joy unspeakable, compared with which the joy of harvest is mere childish merriment. Those know deep joy who have felt bitter sorrow. As the man feels that he is the stronger for the conflict, as he feels that he has gathered experience and stronger faith from having passed through the trial, he lifts

up his heart, and rejoices, not in himself, but before his God, with the joy of harvest. Brethren beloved, you know what that means.

Again, there is such a thing as the joy of harvest when we have been rendered useful. The master passion of every Christian is to be useful. There should be a burning zeal within us for the glory of God. When the man who desires to be useful has laid his plans and set about his work, he begins to look out for the results; but perhaps it will be weeks, or years, before results will come. The worker is not to be blamed that there are no fruits as yet, but he is to be blamed if he is content to be without fruits. A preacher may preach without conversions, and who shall blame him? But if he be happy, who shall excuse him? It is ours to break our own hearts if we cannot by God's grace break other men's hearts; if others will not weep for their sins it should be our constant habit to weep for them. When the heart becomes earnest, warm, zealous, God usually gives a measure of success, some fifty-fold, some a hundred-fold. When the success comes it is the joy of harvest indeed. I cannot help being egotistical enough to mention the joy I felt when first I heard that a soul had found peace through my youthful ministry. I had been preaching in a village some few Sabbaths with an increasing congregation, but I had not heard of a conversion, and I thought, "Perhaps I am not called of God. He does not mean me to preach, for if he did he would give me spiritual children." One Sabbath my good deacon said, "Don't be discouraged. A poor woman was savingly impressed last Sabbath." How long do you suppose it was before I saw that woman? It was just as long as it took me to reach her cottage. I was eager to hear from her own lips whether it was a work of God's grace or not. I always looked upon her with interest, though only a poor laborer's wife, till she was taken away to heaven, after having lived a holy life. Many since then have I rejoiced over in the Lord, but that first seal to my ministry was peculiarly dear to me. It gave me a sip of the joy of harvest. If somebody had left me a fortune it would not have caused me one hundredth part of the delight I had in discovering that a soul had been led to the Savior. I am sure Christian people who have not this joy have missed one of the choicest delights that a believer can know this side heaven. In fact, when I see souls saved, I do not envy Gabriel his throne nor the angels their harps. It shall be our heaven to be out of heaven for a

season if we can but bring others to know the Savior and so add fresh jewels to the Redeemer's crown.

I will mention another delight which is as the joy of harvest, and that is, fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not so much a matter for speech as for experience and delight. If we try to speak of what communion with Christ is, we fail. Solomon, the wisest of men, when inspired to write of the fellowship of the church with her Lord, was compelled to write in allegories and emblems, and though to the spiritual mind the Book of Canticles is always delightful, yet to the carnal mind it seems a mere love song. The natural man discerneth not the things that be of God, for they are spiritual, and can only be spiritually discerned. But, oh, the bliss of knowing that Christ is yours, and of entering into nearness of communion with him. To thrust your hand into his side, and your finger into the print of the nails; these be not everyday joys; but when such near and dear communings come to us on our highdays and holydays, they make our souls like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, or, if you will, they cause us to tread the world beneath our feet and all that earth calls good or great. Our condition matters nothing to us if Christ be with us; — he is our God, our comfort, and our all, and we rejoice before him as with the joy of harvest.

I have no time to enlarge further; for I want to close with one other practical word. Many of us are anxiously desiring a harvest which would bring to us an intense delight. Of late, divers persons have communicated to me in many ways the strong emotion they feel of pity for the souls of men. Others of us have felt a mysterious impulse to pray more than we did, and to be more anxious than ever we were that Christ would save poor perishing sinners. We shall not be satisfied until there is a thorough awakening in this land. We did not raise the feeling in our own minds, and we do not desire to repress it. We do not believe it can be repressed; but others will feel the same heavenly affection, and will sigh and cry to God day and night until the blessing comes. This is the sowing, this is the ploughing, this is the harrowing — may it go on to harvesting. I long to hear my brethren and sisters universally saying, “We are full of anguish, we are in agony till souls be saved.” The cry of Rachel, “Give me children, or I die,” is the cry of your minister this day, and the longing of thousands more besides. As that desire grows in intensity a revival is approaching.

We must have spiritual children born to Christ, or our hearts will break for the longing that we have for their salvation. Oh for more of these longings, yearnings, cravings, travailings! If we plead till the harvest or revival comes we shall partake in the joy of it.

Who will have the most joy? Those who have been the most concerned about it. You who do not pray in private, nor come out to prayer-meetings, will not have the joy when the blessing comes, and the church is increased. You had no share in the sowing, therefore you will have little share in the reaping. You who never speak to others about their souls, who take no share in Sunday-school or mission work, but simply eat the fat and drink the sweet — you shall have none of the joy of harvest, for you do not put your hands to the work of the Lord. And who would wish that idlers should be happy? Rather in our zeal and jealousy we feel inclined to say, “Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” If you come to the help of the Lord by his own divine Spirit, you shall share the joy of harvest. Perhaps none will have more of that joy than those who shall have the privilege of seeing their own dear ones brought to God. Some of you have children who are a trial to you whenever you think of them; let them be such a trial to you that they drive you to incessant prayer for them, and, if the blessing comes, why should it not drop on them? If a revival comes, why should not your daughter yet be converted, and that wild boy of yours be brought in, or even your grey-headed father, who has been sceptical and unbelieving — why should not the grace of God come to him? And, oh, what a joy of harvest you will have then! What bliss will thrill through your spirit when you see those who are united to you in ties of blood united to Christ your Lord! Pray much for them with earnest faith, and you shall yet have the joy of harvest in your own house, a shout of harvest home in your own family.

Possibly, my hearer, you have not much to do with such joy, for you are yourself unsaved. Yet it is a grand thing for an unconverted person to be under a ministry that God blesses, and with a people that pray for conversions. It is a happy thing for you, young man, to have a Christian mother. It is a great boon for you, O unconverted woman, that you have a godly sister. These make us hopeful for you. Whilst your relations are prayerful, we are hopeful for you. May the Lord Jesus be yours yet. But,

ah! If you remain unbelieving, however rich a blessing comes to others, it will leave you none the better for it. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land"; but there are some who may cry in piteous accents, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." It has been remarked that those who pass through a season of revival and remain unconverted are more hardened and unimpressed than before. I believe it to be so, and I therefore pray the divine Spirit to come with such energy that none of you may escape his power. May you be led to pray,

*"Pass me not, O mighty Spirit!
Thou canst make the blind to see;
Witnesser of Jesus' merit,
Speak the word of power to me,
Even me.*

*"Have I long in sin been sleeping,
Long been slighting, grieving thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?
Oh forgive and rescue me,
Even me."*

Oh for earnest, importunate prayer from all believers throughout the world! If our churches could be stirred up to incessant, vehement crying to God, so as to give him no rest till he make Zion a praise in the earth, we might expect to see God's kingdom come, and the power of Satan fall. As many of you as love Christ, I charge you by his dear name to be much in prayer; as many of you as love the Church of God, and desire her prosperity, I beseech you keep not back in this time of supplication. The Lord grant that you may be led to plead till the harvest joy is granted. Do you remember one Sabbath my saying, "The Lord deal so with you as you deal with his work during this next month." I feel as if it will be so with many of you — that the Lord will deal so with you as you shall deal with his Church. If you scatter little you shall have little, if you pray little you shall have little favor; but if you have zeal and faith, and plead much and work much for the Lord, good measure, pressed down and running over, shall the Lord return into your own bosoms. If you water others with drops you shall receive drops in return; but if the Spirit helps you to pour out rivers of living water from your own soul, then floods of heavenly grace shall flow into your spirit. God bring in the unconverted, and lead

them to a simple trust in Jesus; then shall they also know the joy of harvest. We ask it for his name's sake. Amen.

THE CURSE REMOVED

SERMON NO. 3254

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 15TH, 1911.

*“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.
— Galatians 3:13*

THE law of God is a divine law, holy, heavenly, perfect. Those who find fault with the law, or in the least degree depreciate it, do not understand its design, and have no right idea of the law itself. Paul says, “the law is holy, but I am carnal; sold under sin.” In all we ever say concerning justification by faith, we never intend to lower the opinion which our hearers have of the law, for the law is one of the most sublime of God’s works. There is not a commandment too many; there is not one too few; but it is so incomparable, that its perfection is a proof of its divinity. No human lawgiver could have given forth such a law as that which we find in the decalogue. It is a perfect law; for all human laws that are right are to be found in that brief compendium and epitome of all that is good and excellent toward God, or between man and man.

But while the law is glorious, it is never more misapplied than when it is used as a means of salvation. God never intended men to be saved by the law. When he proclaimed it on Sinai, it was with thunder, fire, and smoke; as if he would say, “O man, hear my law; but thou shalt tremble while thou hearest it.” Hear it! It is a law which hath the blast of a terrible trumpet, even like the day of destruction, of which it is but the herald, if thou offendest it, and findest none to bear the doom for thee. It was written on stone; as if to teach us that it was a hard, cold, stony law — one which would have no mercy upon us, but which, if we break it, would fall upon us, and dash us into a thousand pieces. O ye who trust in the law for your salvation! ye have erred from the faith; ye do not understand God’s designs; ye are ignorant of every one of God’s truths. The law was given by Moses to make men feel themselves condemned, but never to

save them; its very intention was to “conclude us all in unbelief, and to condemn us all, that he might have mercy upon all.” It was intended by its thunders to crush every hope of self-righteousness, by its lightnings to scathe and demolish every tower of our own works, that we might be brought humbly and simply to accept a finished salvation through the one mighty Mediator who has “finished the law, and made it honorable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness,” whereby we stand, stand complete before our Maker at last, if we be in Christ. All that the law doth, you will observe, is to curse; it can not bless. In all the pages of revelation you will find no blessings that the law ever gave to one that offended it. There were blessings, and those were comparatively small, which might be gained by those who kept it thoroughly; but no blessing is ever written for one offender. Blessings we find in the gospel; curses we find in the law.

This afternoon we shall briefly consider, first, the curse of the law; secondly, the curse removed; thirdly, the great Substitute who removed it — “He was made a curse for us.” And then we shall come, in the last place, solemnly to ask each other, whether we are included in the mighty number for whom Christ did bear iniquities, and for whom “He was made a curse.”

I. First, then, **THE CURSE OF THE LAW.** All who sin against the law are cursed by the law; all who rebel against its commands are cursed — cursed instantly, cursed terribly.

1. We shall regard that curse, first as being a universal curse, resting upon every one of the seed of Adam. Perhaps some here will be inclined to say, “Of course the law of God will curse all those who are loose in their lives, or profane in their conversation. We can all of us imagine that the swearer is a cursed man, cursed by God. We can suppose that the wrath of God rests upon the head of the man who is filthy in his life, and whose conversation is not upright, or who is a degraded man, under the ban of society.” But ah! my friend, it is not quite so easy to get at the real truth, which is this, that the curse of God rests upon every one of us, as by nature we stand before him. Thou mayest be the most moral in the world, but yet the curse of God is upon thee; thou mayest be lovely in thy life, modest in thy carriage, upright in thy behavior, almost Christlike in thy

conduct, yet, if thou hast not been born again, and regenerated by sovereign grace, the curse of God still rests upon thine head. If thou hast but committed one sin in thy life, God's justice is so inexorable, that it condemns a man for one solitary offense; and though thy life should henceforth be one continued career of holiness, if thou hast sinned but once, unless thou hast an interest in the blood of Christ, the thunders of Sinai are launched at thee, and the lightnings of terrible vengeance flash all around thee.

Ah! my hearers, how humbling is this doctrine to our pride, that the curse of God is on every man of the seed of Adam; that every child born in this world is born under the curse, since it is born under the law; and that the moment I sin, though I transgress but once, I am from that moment condemned already; for "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." — cursed without a single hope of mercy, unless he find that mercy in the Substitute "who was made a curse for us." It is an awful thought, that the trail of the serpent is on the whole earth; that the poison is in the fountain of every heart; that the stream of the blood in all our veins is corrupt; that we are all condemned; that each one of us, without a single exception, whether he be philanthropist, senator, philosopher, divine, prince, or monarch, is under the curse unless he has been redeemed from it by Christ.

2. The curse, too, we must remark, while universal, is also just. This is the great difficulty. There are many persons who think that the curse of God upon those who are undeniably wicked is, of course, right; but that the curse of God upon those who for the most part appear to be excellent, and who may have sinned but once, as an act of injustice. We answer, "Nay, when God pronounces the curse, he doth it justly; he is a God of justice; 'just and right is he.'" And mark thee, man, if thou art condemned, it shall be by the strictest justice; and if thou hast sinned but once, the curse is righteous when it lights upon thy head. Dost thou ask me how this is? I answer, Thou sayest thy sin is little; then, if the sin be little, how little trouble it might have taken thee to have avoided it! If thy transgression be but small, at how small an expense thou mightest have refrained from it! Some have said, "Surely the sin of Adam was but little; he did but take an apple." Ay, but in its littleness was its greatness. If it was a little thing to take the fruit, with how little trouble might it have been avoided! And

because it was so small an act, there was couched within it the greater malignity of guilt. So, too, thou mayest never have blasphemed thy God, thou mayest never have desecrated his Sabbath; yet, insomuch as thou hast committed a little sin, thou art justly condemned, for a little sin hath in it the essence of all sin; and I know not but that what we call little sins may be greater in God's sight than those which the world universally condemns, and against which the hiss of the execration of humanity continually rises. I say, God is just, although from his lips should rush thunders to blast the entire universe; God is just, although he curses all. Tremble, man, and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish by the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

So the curse is universal, and it is just.

3. But let us notice, next, the curse is also fearful. Some there be who think it little to be cursed of God; but O! if they knew the fearful consequences of that curse; they would think it terrible indeed. It were enough to make our knees knock together, to chill our blood, and start each individual hair of our head upon its end, if we did but know what it is to be under the curse of God. What does that curse include? It involves death, the death of this body; that is by no means an insignificant portion of its sentence. It includes spiritual death, a death of that inner life which Adam had — the life of the spirit, which hath now fled, and can only be restored by that holy Spirit who "quickeneth whom he will." And it includes, last of all, and worst of all, that death eternal, a dwelling forever in the place

*"Where solemn groans, and hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts,"*

make up the only music. Death eternal includes all that can be gathered in that terrible, that awful — we had almost said unutterable — word "hell." This is a curse which rests on every man by nature. We make no exception of rank or degree; for God has made none. We offer no hope of exception of character or reputation; for God has made none. The whole of us are shut up to this, that (so far as the law is concerned) we must die — die here and die in the next world, and die a death which never dies; feel a worm which shall gnaw forever, and a fire which never can be extinguished, even by a fold of tears of future penitence. There we must be forever, O!

forever lost. Could we estimate that curse, I say again, the torments that tyrants could inflict we might well afford to ridicule, the injuries that this body can sustain we might well afford to despise, compared with that awful avalanche of threatening which rushes down with fearful force from the mountain of God's truth. Condemnation — that curse of God — abideth on us all.

4. We hasten from this point, beloved, for it is fearful work to speak upon it; but yet we must not depart from it entirely, till we have hinted at one thought more; and that is, that the curse of God which comes upon sinful men is a present curse. O! my dear hearers, could I lay hold of your hands, if ye be not converted, I would labor with tears and groans to get you to grasp this thought. It is not so much a condemnation in the future that you have to dread as a damnation now. Yes, sitting where thou art, my hearer, if thou art out of Christ, thou art condemned now; thy condemnation is sealed; thy death-warrant has been stamped by the great seal of the Majesty of heaven; the angel's sword of vengeance is already unsheathed, and over thy head this afternoon. Whosoever thou mayest be, if thou art out of Christ, there hangeth a sword over thee, a sword suspended by a hair, which death shall cut; and then that sword shall descend, dividing thy soul from thy body, and sending both of them to pains eternal. O! ye might start up from your seats with fear, if ye did but know this, some of you. Ye are reputable, ye are respectable, ye are honorable, perhaps right honorable, and yet condemned men, condemned women. On the walls of heaven ye are proscribed, written up there as deicides, who have slain the Savior — as rebels against God's government, who have committed high treason against him; and perhaps even now the dark-winged angel of death is spreading his pinions upon the blast, hastening to hurry you down to destruction. Say not, O sinner, that I would affright thee; say, rather, that I would bring thee to the Savior; for whether thou hearest this or not, or believest it or not, thou canst not alter the truth thereof — that thou art now, if thou hast not given thyself to Christ, "condemned already;" and wherever thou sittest, thou art but still in thy condemned cell; for this whole earth is but one huge prison-house, wherein the condemned one doth drag along a chain of condemnation, till death takes him to the scaffold, where the fearful execution of terrific woe must take place upon

him. Now condemned and forever condemned; hear that word. “The curse of the law!”

II. But now I must speak, in the second place, of THE REMOVAL OF THAT CURSE. This is a sweet and pleasant duty. Some of you, my dear friends, will be able to follow me in your experience, while I just remind you how it was, that in your salvation Christ removed the curse.

1. First, you will agree with me when I say that the removal of the curse from us is done in a moment. It is an instantaneous thing. I may stand here one moment under the curse; and if the Spirit look upon me, and I breathe a prayer to heaven — if by faith I cast myself on Jesus — in one solitary second, ere the clock hath ticked, my sins may be all forgiven. Hart sung truly, when he said —

*“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation if full, through his blood.”*

You will remember in Christ’s life, that most of the curses he wrought — yea, I believe all — were instantaneous cures. See! there lies a man stretched on his couch, from which he hath not risen for years. “Take up thy bed, and walk,” said Christ in majesty. The man takes up that bed, and without the intervention of weeks of convalescence at once carries it, leaping like a hart. There is another. From his closed lips a sound hath scarcely ever escaped; he is dumb; Christ toucheth his lips; “Ephphatha, be opened;” and he sings at once. He does not barely speak, but he speaks plain; the tongue of the dumb sings. Ay, and even in the cases where Christ healed death itself, he did it instantaneously. When that beautiful creature lay asleep in death upon the bed, Jesus went to her; and though her dark ringlets covered up her eyes, which were now glazed in death, Jesus did but take her clay-cold hand in his, and say, “Talitha cumi! damsel, I say unto thee, Arise;” and no sooner had he said it, than she sat up, and opened her eyes; and to show that she was not merely half alive, or half restored, she rose up, and ministered to him. We do not say that the great work of conversion is instantaneous; that may take some time; for Christ commences in the heart a work, which is to be carried on through life in sanctification; but the justification, the taking away the

curse, is done in a single moment. “Unwrite the curse,” says God. It is done. The acquittal is signed and sealed; it taketh not long.

*“Fully discharged by Christ I am,
From sin’s tremendous curse and blame.”*

I may stand here at this moment, and I may have believed in Christ but five minutes ago; still, if I have believed in Christ but that short space of time, I am as justified, in God’s sight, as I would be should I live until these hairs are whitened by the sunlight of heaven, or as I shall be when I walk among the golden lamps of the city of palaces. God justifieth his people at once; the curse is removed in a single moment. Sinner, hear that! Thou mayest now be under condemnation; but ere thou canst say “now” again, thou mayest be able to say — “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus.” We may be fully absolved in a moment.

2. Mark, beloved, in the next place, that this removal of the curse from us, when it does take place, is an entire removal. It is not a part of the curse which is taken away. Christ doth not stand at the foot of Sinai, and say, “Thunders! diminish your force;” he doth not catch here and there a lightning, and bind its wings; nay, but when he cometh he bloweth away all the smoke, he putteth aside all the thunder, he quencheth all the lightning; he removeth it all. When Christ pardoneth, he pardoneth all sin; the sins of twice ten thousand years he pardons in an hour. Thou mayest be old and gray-headed, and hitherto unpardoned; but though thy sins exceed in number the stars spread in the sky, one moment takes them all away. Mark that “all!” That sin of midnight; that black sin which, like a ghost, has haunted thee all thy life; that hideous crime; that unknown act of blackness which hath darkened thy character; that awful stain upon thy conscience — they shall be all taken away. And though thou hast a stain upon that hand — a stain which thou hast often sought to wash out by all the mixtures that Moses can give thee — thou shalt find, when thou art bathed in Jesus’ blood, that thou shalt be able to say, “All clean, my Lord, all clean; not a spot now; all is gone; I am completely washed from head to foot; the stains are all removed.” It is the glory of this removal of the curse that it is all taken away; there is not a single atom left. Hushed now is the law’s loud thunder; the sentence is entirely reversed, and there is no fear left.

3. We must say again upon this point, that when Christ removes the curse, it is an irreversible removal. Once let me be acquitted, who is he that condemns me? There be some in these modern times who teach that God justifieth, and yet, after that, condemns the same person whom he has justified. We have heard it asserted pretty boldly, that a man may be a child of God to-day — hear it, ye heavens, and be astonished — and be a child of the devil to-morrow; we have heard it said, but we know it is untrue, for we find nothing in Scripture to warrant it. We have often asked ourselves, Can men really believe that, after having been “begotten again to a lively hope,” that birth in God, through Christ, and by his Spirit, can yet fail? We have asked ourselves, Can men imagine that, after God hath once broken our chains, and set us free, he will call us back, and bind us once again, like Prometheus, to the great rocks of despair? Will he once blot out the handwriting that is against us, and then record the charge again? Once pardoned, then condemned? We trow, that had Paul been in the way of such men, he would have said, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” There is no condemnation to us, being in Christ Jesus; we “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is a sweet thought, that Satan himself can never rob me of my pardon. I may lose my copy of it, and lose my comfort; but the original pardon is filed in heaven. It may be that gloomy doubts may arise, and I may fear to think myself forgiven: but

*“Did Jesus upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine.”*

*“O! my distrustful heart!
How small thy faith appears.
Far greater, Lord, thou art,
Than all my doubts and fears.
‘Midst all my sin, and fear, and woe,
Thy Spirit will not let me go.”*

I love, at times, to go back to the hour when I hope I was forgiven through a Savior’s blood. There is much comfort in it to remember that blessed hour when first we knew the Lord.

*“Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did thee meet?”*

Perhaps thou dost; perhaps thou canst look back to the very place where Jesus whispered thou wast his. Canst thou do so? O! how much comfort it will give thee! for, remember, once acquitted, acquitted forever. So saith God's word. Once pardoned, thou art clear; once set at liberty, thou shalt never be a slave again; once hath Sinai been appeased, it shall never roar twice. Blessed be God's name! we are brought to Calvary, and we shall be brought to Zion too. At last shall we stand before God; and even there we shall be able to say —

*“Great God! I am clean;
Through Jesus' blood I'm clean.”*

III. And now we are brought, in the third place, to observe THE GREAT SUBSTITUTE by whom the curse is removed.

The curse of God is not easily taken away; in fact, there was but one method whereby it could be removed. The lightnings were in God's hand; they must be launched; he said they must. The sword was unsheathed; it must be satisfied; God vowed it must. How, then, was the sinner to be saved? The only answer was this. The Son of God appears; and he says, “Father! launch thy thunderbolts at me; here is my breast — plunge that sword in here; here are my shoulders — let the lash of vengeance fall on them;” and Christ, the Substitute, came forth and stood for us, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” It is our delight to preach the doctrine of substitution, because we are fully persuaded that no gospel is preached where substitution is omitted. Unless men are told positively and plainly that Christ did stand in their room and stead, to bear their guilt and carry their sorrows, they never can see how God is to be “just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.”

We have heard some preach a gospel, something after this order — that though God is angry with men, yet out of his great mercy, for the sake of something that Christ has done, he does not punish them, but remits the penalty. Now, we hold, that this is not of God's gospel; for it is neither just to God, nor safe to man. We believe that God never remitted the penalty, that he did not forgive the sin without punishing it, but that there was blood for blood, and stroke for stroke, and death for death, and punishment for punishment, without the abatement of a solitary jot or tittle; that Jesus Christ, the Savior, did drink the veritable cup of our

redemption to its very dregs; that he did suffer beneath the awful crushing wheels of divine vengeance, the self-same pains and sufferings which we ought to have endured. O! the glorious doctrine of substitution! When it is preached fully and rightly, what a charm and what power it hath. O! how sweet to tell sinners, that though God hath said, "Thou must die," their Maker stoops his head to die for them and Christ incarnate breathes his last upon a tree, that God might execute his vengeance, and yet might pardon all believers in Jesus because he has met all the claims of divine justice on their account.

Should there be one here who does not understand substitution, let me repeat what I have said. Sinner, the only way thou canst be saved is this. God must punish sin; if he did not, he would undefine himself; but if he has punished sin in the person of Christ for thee, thou art fully absolved, thou art quite clear; Christ hath suffered what thou oughtest to have suffered, and thou mayest rejoice in that. "Well," sayest thou, "I ought to have died." Christ hath died! "I ought to have been sent to hell." Christ did not go there to endure that torment forever; but he suffered an equivalent for it, something which satisfied God. The whole of hell was distilled into his cup of sorrows; he drank it. The cup which his father gave him, he drank to its dregs.

*"At one tremendous draught of love,
He drank destruction dry."*

for all who believe in him. All the punishment, all the curse, on him was laid. Vengeance now was satisfied; all was gone, and gone for ever; but not gone without having been taken away by the Savior. The thunders have not been reserved, they have been launched at him, and vengeance is satisfied, because Christ has endured the full penalty of all his people's guilt.

IV. Now we come to answer that last question: HOW MANY AMONG US CAN SAY, THAT "CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW, HAVING BEEN MADE A CURSE FOR US?"

The first part of our discourse has been entirely doctrinal; some of you have not cared for it, because you did not feel you were interested in it. It was natural it should be so. At the reading of a will, doth the servant stay to listen? Nay, there is nothing for her; but if a man be a son, how doth he

open his ear to catch the sound, to know if there be an estate for him; and however ill the lawyer may read that will, how anxious he is to catch every word, and know if there is a portion for him among the children! Now, beloved, let us read the will again, to see if you belong to those for whom Christ made a satisfaction. The usual way with most of our congregation is this — they write themselves down for Christ's long before God has done it. You make a profession of religion, you wear a Christian's cloak, you behave like a Christian, you take a seat in a Christian church or chapel, and you think you are christianized at once; whereas one half of our congregations who fancy themselves to be Christians have made a great mistake; never were they more apart from any character than from being true Christians. Let me beg you not to suppose yourselves to be believers, because your parents were so, or because you belong to an orthodox church. Religion is a thing which we must have for ourselves; and it is a question which we all ought to ask, whether we are all interested in the atonement of Christ, and have a portion in the merits of his agonies?

Come, then, I will put a question to thee. First, let me ask thee this, my friend — Wast thou ever condemned by the law in thine own conscience? "Nay, sayest thou, "I know not what thou meanest." Of course thou dost not; and thou hast no hope, then, that thou art safe. But I will ask thee yet again: Hast thou been condemned by the law in thy conscience? Hast thou ever heard the word of God saying in thy own soul, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them?" And hast thou felt that thou wast cursed? Didst thou ever stand before God's bar, like a poor condemned criminal before the judge, ready for execution? Hast thou, as John Bunyan would have had it, ever had the rope upon thy neck? Hast thou ever seen the black cap put upon the face of thy Judge? Hast thou ever thought thyself about to be turned off from the gallows? Hast thou ever walked the earth, as if at every step the earth would open beneath thee, and swallow thee up? Hast thou ever felt thyself to be a worthless, ruined, sin-condemned, law-condemned, conscience-condemned sinner? Hast thou ever fallen down before God, and said: "Lord, thou art just; though thou slay me, I will say, Thou art just; for I am sinful, and I deserve thy wrath?" As the Lord liveth, if thou hast never felt that, thou art a stranger to his grace; for the man who acquits himself God condemneth; and if the law condemn thee, God will acquit

thee. So long as thou hast felt thyself condemned, thou mayest know that Christ died for condemned ones, and shed his blood for sinners; but and if thou foldest thine arms in self-security, if thou sayest: "I am good, I am righteous, I am honorable," be thou warned of this — thine armor is the weaving of a spider; it shall be broken in pieces; the garments of the righteousness are light as the web of the gossamer, and shall be blown away by the breath of the Eternal, in that day when he will unspin all that nature hath ever woven. Ay, I bid thee now take heed; if thou hast never been condemned by the law, thou hast never been acquitted by grace.

And now another question I will ask thee: Hast thou ever felt thyself to be acquitted by Christ? "No," saith one, "I never expected to feel that; I thought that we might know it perhaps when we came to die — that a few eminent Christians might then possibly know themselves to be forgiven; but I think, sir, you are very enthusiastic to ask me whether I have ever felt myself to be forgiven." My dear friend, you mistake. Do you think, if a man had been a galley-slave, chained to an oar for many a year, if he were once set free he would not know whether he were free or not? Do you think that a slave who had been toiling for years, when once he trod upon the land of freedom, if you should say to him: "Do you know that you are emancipated?" Do you think he would not know it? Or a man that has been dead in his grave, if he were awakened to life, do you think he would not know it? There may be times when he hath forgotten the season; but he will know himself to be alive; he will feel and know himself to be free. Tell me it is enthusiastic to ask you whether you have ever felt your chains broken? Sirs, if you have never felt your chains fall off from you, then be it know that your chains are on you; for when God breaketh our chains from off us, we know ourselves to be free. The most of us, when God did set us free from our prison-house, did leap for very joy; and we remember the mountains and the hills did burst forth before us into singing, and the trees of the field did clap their hands. We shall never forget that gladsome moment; it is impressed upon our memory; we shall remember it till life's latest hour. I ask thee, again, Didst thou ever feel thyself forgiven? And if thou sayest "No," then thou hast no right to think thou art. If Jesus hath never whispered in thine ear, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," thou hast no right to think thyself pardoned. O! I beseech thee, examine thyself, and know whether thou hast

been condemned by the law, and whether thou hast been acquitted by Christ!

And, lastly, my friends, I may have, and doubtless have, many present here who have simply come to spend an hour, but who have no care, no interest, no concern about their own souls — who are, perhaps, utterly and entirely careless as to whether they are condemned or not. O! if I could speak to you as I would wish, I would speak —

*“As though I ne'er might speak again,
A dying man to dying men.”*

When I remember that I shall likely enough never see the faces of many of you again, I feel that there is a deep and an awful responsibility lying on me to speak to such of you as are careless. There are some of you who are putting off the evil day; and you are saying, “If I be condemned, I care not for it.” Ah! my friend, if I saw thee carelessly asleep on thy bed, when the flames were raging in thy chamber, I would shout in thine ear, or I would drag thee from thy couch of slumber. If I knew that while thou hadst a bad disease within thee, thou wouldst not take the medicine, and that if thou didst not take it thou wouldst die, I would implore thee on my knees to take that medicine that would save thee. But, alas! here you are; you are in danger of destruction, many of you, and you have a disease within you that must soon destroy your lives; and yet what careless, hardened, thoughtless creatures you are, just caring for the body, and not seeking for Christ! As the angel put his hand upon Lot, and said, “Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, but flee to the mountain,” so would I do to you. I would come to each of you, and say, “My brother, carelessness may avail thee now; but carelessness will not stop the voice of death when he speaks. Indifference may silence my voice in your conscience; but when that gloomy skeleton tyrant comes to address thee, indifference will not do then. Now thou mayest laugh; now thou mayest dance; now thou mayest be merry; now thy cup may be full to the brim; but what wilt thou do in that day, when the heavens are clothed with glory, when the books are opened, when the great white throne is set, and when thou comest to be condemned or acquitted before thy Maker? Do, I beseech thee, do forestall the day. I beg of thee, for Christ’s sake, bethink thyself even now before thy Judge; conceive him there in yonder heavens upon his throne; imagine that now thou art looking upon him. Oh! my

hearer, what wilt thou do? Thou art before the judgment-throne, without Christ; thou art there naked. ‘Rocks! hide me! hide me! hide me! I am naked!’ But thou art dragged out, sinner! What wilt thou do now? Thou art dragged naked before thy Judge. I see thee bend thy knee; I hear thee cry, ‘O Jesus, clothe me now!’ ‘Nay,’ saith Jesus, ‘the robe now is hung up forever, not to be worn by thee.’ ‘Savior! spread thy wings over me!’ ‘Nay,’ saith he, ‘I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.’ “Do I talk realities, or mere fictions? Why, realities; and yet if I were reading a novel to you, you would be lost in tears; but when I tell you God’s truth, that soon his chariot shall descend to earth, and he shall judge us all, you sit unmoved and careless of that event. But oh! be it known to every careless sinner, death and judgment are not the things they fancy; everlasting wrath and eternal severance from God are not such light things to endure as they have conceived. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” “Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall abide with everlasting torments?”

But to close: have I one here who is saying, “What must I do to be saved, for I feel myself condemned?” Hear thou Christ’s own words — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Dost thou ask me what it is to believe? Hear, then, the answer. To believe is to look to Jesus. that little word “look” expresses beautifully what a sinner is to do. There is little in its appearance, but there is much in its meaning. Believing is letting the hands lie still, and turning the eyes to Christ. We can not be saved by our hands; but we are saved through our eyes, when they look to Jesus. Sinner! it is no use for thee to try and save thyself; but to believe in Christ is the only way of salvation; and that is, throwing self behind your back, and putting Christ right before thee.

I never can find a better figure than the negro’s one: to believe is to fall flat down upon the promise, and there to lie. To believe is as a man would do in a stream. It is said, that if we were to fold our arms, and lie motionless, we could not sink. To believe is to float upon the stream of grace. I grant you, you shall do afterward; but you must live before you can do. The gospel is the reverse of the law. The law says, “Do and live;” the gospel says, “Live first, then do.” The way to do, poor sinner, is to say, “Here, Jesus, here I am; I give myself to thee.” I never had a better idea of

believing than I once had from a poor countryman. I may have mentioned this before; but it struck me very forcibly at the time, and I can not help repeating it. Speaking about faith he said, "The old enemy has been troubling me very much lately; but I told him that he must not say any thing to me about my sins, he must go to my Master, for I had transferred the whole concern to him, bad debts and all." That is believing. Believing is giving up all we have to Christ, and taking all Christ has to ourselves. It is changing houses with Christ, changing clothes with Christ, changing our unrighteousness for his righteousness, changing our sins for his merits. Execute the transfer, sinner; rather, may God's grace execute it, and give thee faith in it; and then the law will be no longer thy condemnation, but it shall acquit thee. May Christ add his blessing! May the Holy Spirit rest upon us! And may we meet at last in heaven! Then will we "sing to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

THE WORDLESS BOOK

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“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” — Psalm 51:7.

I DARESAY you have most of you heard of a little book which an old divine used constantly to study, and when his friends wondered what there was in the book, he told them that he hoped they would all know and understand it, but that there was not single word in it. When they looked at it, they found that it consisted of only three leaves; the first was black, the second was red, and the third was pure white. The old minister used to gaze upon the black leaf to remind him of his sinful state by nature, upon the red leaf to call to his remembrance the precious blood of Christ, and upon the white leaf to picture to him the perfect righteousness which God has given to believers through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ his Son.

I want you, dear friends to read this book this evening, and I desire to read it myself. May God the Holy Spirit graciously help us to do so to our profit!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE BLACK LEAF.

There is something about this in the text, for the person who used this prayer said, “Wash me,” so he was black and needed to be washed; and the blackness was of such a peculiar kind that a miracle was needed to cleanse it away, so that the one who had been black would become white, and so white that he would be “whiter than snow.”

If we consider David’s case when he wrote this Psalm, we shall we that he was very black. He had committed the horrible sin of adultery, which is so

shameful a sin that we can only allude to it with bated breath. It is a sin which involves much unhappiness to others besides the persons who commit it; and it is a sin which, although the guilty ones may repent, cannot be undone. It is altogether a most foul and outrageous crime against God and man, and they who have committed it do indeed need to be washed.

But David's sin was all the greater because of the circumstances in which he was placed. He was like the owner of a great flock, who had no need to take his neighbor's one ewe lamb when he had so many of his own. The sin in his case was wholly inexcusable, for he so well knew what a great evil it was. He was a man who had taken delight in God's law, meditating in it day and night, He was, therefore, familiar with the commandment which expressly forbid that sin; so that, when he sinned in this way, he sinned as one does who takes a draught of poison, not by mistake, but well knowing what will be the consequences of drinking it. It was wilful wickedness on David's part for which there cannot be the slightest palliation.

Nay, more; not only did he know the nature of the sin, but he also knew the sweetness of communion with God, and must have had a clear sense of what it must have meant for him to lose it. His fellowship with the Most High had been so close that he was called "the man after God's own heart." How sweetly has he sung of his delight in the Lord. You know that, in your happiest moment, when you want to praise the Lord with your whole heart, you cannot find any better expression than David has left you in his Psalms. How horrible it is that the man who had been in the third heaven of fellowship with God should have sinned in this foul fashion.

Besides, David had received many providential mercies at the Lord's hands. He was but a shepherd lad, and God took him from feeding his father's flock, and made him king over Israel. The Lord also delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, enabled him to overthrow and slay giant Goliath, and to escape the malice of Saul when he hunted him as a, partridge upon the mountains. The Lord preserved him from many perils, and at last firmly established him upon the throne; yet,

after all these deliverances and mercies, this man, so highly favored by God, fell into this gross sin.

Then, also, it was a further aggravation of David's sin that it was committed against Uriah. If you read through the lists of David's mighty men, you will find at the end the name of Uriah the Hittite; he had been with David when he was outlawed by Saul, he had accompanied his leader in his wanderings, he had shared his perils and privations, so it was a shameful return on the part of the king when he stole away the wife of his faithful follower who was at that very time fighting against the king's enemies. Searching through the whole of Scripture, or at least through the Old Testament, I do not know where we have the record of a worse sin committed by one who yet was a true child of God. So David had good reason to pray to the Lord, "Wash me," for he was indeed black with a special and peculiar blackness.

But now, turning from David, let us consider our own blackness in the sight of God. Is there not, my dear friend, a peculiar blackness about your case as a sinner before God? I cannot picture it, but I ask you to call it to your remembrance now that your soul may be humbled on account of it. Perhaps you are the child of Christian parents, or you were the subject of early religious impressions; or it may be that you have been in other ways specially favored by God, yet you have sinned against him, sinned against light and knowledge, sinned against a mother's tears a father's prayers, and a pastor's admonitions and warnings. You were very ill once, and thought you were going to die, but the Lord spared your life and restored you to health and strength, yet you went back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Possibly a sudden sense of guilt alarmed you, so that you could not enjoy your sin, yet you could not break away from it. You spent your money for that which was not bread, and your labor for that which did not satisfy you, yet you on wasting your substance with riotous living until you came to beggary, but even that did not wean you from your sin. In the house of God you had many solemn warnings, and you went home again and again resolving to repent, yet your resolves soon melted away, like the morning cloud and the early dew, leaving you more hardened than ever. I remember John B. Gough, at Exeter Hall, describing himself in his drinking days as seated upon a wild horse which was hurrying him to his destruction until a

stronger hand than his own seized the reins, pulled the horse down upon its haunches, and rescued the reckless rider. It was a terrible picture, yet it was a faithful representation of the conversion of some of us. How we drove the spurs into that wild horse, and urged it to yet greater speed in its mad career until, it seemed as if we would even ride over that gracious Being who was determined to save us! That was sin indeed, not merely against the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and against the warnings which were being continually given to us, but it was what the apostle calls treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Let me, beloved, before I turn away from this black leaf, urge you to study it diligently, and to try to comprehend the blackness of your heart and the depravity of your lives. That false peace which results from light thoughts of sin is the work of Satan; get rid of it at once, if he has wrought it in you. Do not be afraid to look at your sins, do not shut your eyes to them; for you to hide your face from them may be your ruin, but for God to hide His face from them will be your salvation. Look at your sins and meditate upon them until they even drive you to despair. "What!" says one, "until they drive me to despair?" Yes; I do not mean that despair which arises from unbelief, but that self-despair which is so near akin, to confidence in Christ. The more God enables you to see your emptiness, the more eager will you be to avail yourself of Christ's fullness. I have always found that, as my trust in self went up, my trust in Christ went down; and as my trust in self went down my trust in Christ went up, so I urge you to take an honest view of your own blackness of heart and life, for that will cause you to pray with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Weigh yourselves in the scales of the sanctuary, for they never err in the slightest degree. You need not exaggerate a single item of your guilt, for just as you are you will find far too much sin within you if the Holy Spirit will enable you to see yourselves as you really are.

II. But now we must turn to the second leaf, THE BLOOD-RED LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which brings to our remembrance the precious blood of Christ.

When the sinner cries, "Wash me," there must be some fount of cleansing where he can be washed "whiter than snow." So there is, but there is

nothing but the crimson blood of Jesus that can wash out the crimson stain of sin. What is there about Jesus Christ that makes him able to save all who a unto God by him? This is a matter upon which Christians ought to mediate much and often. Try to understand, dear friends, the greatness of the atonement. Live much under the shadow of the cross. Learn to —

*“View the flowing
Of the Savior’s precious blood,
By divine assurance knowing
He has made your peace with God.”*

Feel that Christ’s blood was shed for you, even for you. Never be satisfied till you have learned the mystery of the five wounds; never be content till you are “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

The Power of Jesus to cleanse from sin must lie, first, in the greatness of his person. It is not conceivable that the sufferings of a mere man, however holy or great he might have been, could have made atonement for the sins of the whole multitude of the Lord’s chosen people. It was because Jesus Christ was one of the persons in the Divine Trinity, it was because the Son of Mary was none other than the Son of God, it was because he who lived, and labored, and suffered and died, and was the great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made, that his blood has such efficacy that it can wash the blackest sinner so clean that they are “whiter than snow.” The death of the best man who ever lived could not make an atonement even for his own sins, much less could it atone for the guilt of others; but when God himself “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,” and “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” no limit can be set to the value of the atonement that he made. We hold most firmly the doctrine of particular redemption, that Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it; but we do not hold the doctrine of the limited value of his precious blood. There can be no limit to Deity, there must be infinite value in the atonement which was offered by him who is divine. The only limit of the atonement is in its design, and that design was that Christ should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him; but in itself the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the whose world, and if the

entire race of mankind could be brought to believe in Jesus, there is enough efficacy in his precious blood to cleanse everyone born of woman from every sin that all of them have ever committed.

But the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus must also lie in the intense sufferings which he endured in making atonement for his people. Never was there another case like that of our precious Savior. In his merely physical sufferings there may have been some who have endured as much as he did, for the human body is only capable of a certain amount of pain and agony, and others beside our Lord have reached that limit; but there was an element in his sufferings that, was never present in any other case. The fact of his dying in the room, and place, and stead of his people, the one great sacrifice for the whole of his redeemed, makes his death altogether unique, so that not even the noblest of the noble army of martyrs can share the glory with him. His mental sufferings also constituted a very vital part of the atonement, the sufferings of his soul were the very soul of his sufferings. If you can comprehend the bitterness of his betrayal by one who had been his follower and friend, and of his desertion by all his disciples, his arraignment for sedition and blasphemy before creatures whom he had himself made; if you can realize what it was for him, who did no sin, to be made sin for us, and to have laid upon him the iniquity of us all; if you can picture to yourself how he loathed sin and shrank from it, you can form some slight idea of what his pure nature must have suffered for our sakes. We do not shrink from sin as Christ did because we are accustomed to it, it was once the element in which we lived, and moved had our being; but his holy nature shrank from evil as a sensitive plant recoils from the touch. But the worst of his sufferings must have been when his Father's wrath was poured out upon him as he bore what his people deserved to bear, but which now they will never have to bear.

*“The waves of swelling grief
Did o'er his bosom roll,
And mountains of almighty wrath
Lay heavy on his soul.”*

For his Father to have to hide his face from him so that he cried in his agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” must have been a veritable hell to him. This was the tremendous drought of wrath which

our Savior drank for us to its last dregs so that our cup might not have one drop of wrath in it for ever. It must have been a great atonement that was purchased at so great price.

We may think of the greatness of Christ's atonement in another way. It must have been a great atonement which has safely landed such multitudes of sinners in heaven, and which has saved so many great sinners, and transformed them into such bright saints. It must be a great atonement which is yet to bring innumerable myriads into the unity of the faith, and into the glory of the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven. It is so great an atonement, sinner, that if thou wilt trust to it, thou shalt be saved by it however many and great thy sins may have been. Art thou afraid that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to cleanse thee? Dost thou fear that his atonement cannot bear the weight of such a sinner as thou art? I heard, the other day, of a foolish woman at Plymouth who for a long while, would not go over the Saltash Bridge because she did not think it was safe. When, at length, after seeing the enormous traffic that passed safely over the bridge, she was induced to trust herself to it, she trembled greatly all the time, and was not easy in her mind until she was off it. Of course, everybody laughed at her for thinking that such a ponderous structure could not bear her little weight. There may be some sinner, in this building, who is afraid that the great bridge which eternal mercy has constructed, at infinite cost, across the gulf which separates us from God, is not strong enough to bear his weight. If so, let me assure him that across that bridge of Christ's atoning sacrifice millions of sinners, as vile and foul as he is, have safely passed, and the bridge has not even trembled beneath their weight, nor has any single part of it ever strained or displaced. My poor fearful friend, your anxiety lest the great bridge of mercy should not be able to bear your weight reminds me of the fable of the gnat that settled on the bull's ear, and then was concerned lest the powerful beast should be incommoded by his enormous weight. It is well that you should have a vivid realization of the weight of your sins, but at the same time you should also realize that Jesus Christ, by virtue of his great atonement, is not only able to bear the weight of your sins, but he can also carry — indeed, he has already carried upon his shoulders the sins of all who shall believe in him right to the end of time; and he has borne them away into the land of forgetfulness, where they shall not be

remembered or recovered for ever. So efficacious is the blood of the everlasting covenant that even you, black as you are, may pray, with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

III. This brings me to THE WHITE LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which is just as full of instruction as either the black leaf or the red one: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

What a beautiful sight it was, this morning, when we looked out, and saw the ground all covered with snow! The trees were all robed in silver; yet it is almost an insult to the snow to compare it to silver, for silver at its brightest is not worthy to be compared with the marvelous splendor that was to be seen wherever the trees appeared adorned with beautiful festoons above the earth which was robed in its pure white mantle. If we had taken a piece of what we call white paper, and laid it down upon the surface of newly-fallen snow, it would have seemed quite begrimed in comparison with the spotless snow. This morning's scene at once called the text to my mind: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You, O black sinner, if you believe in Jesus, shall not only be washed in his precious blood until you become tolerably clean, but you shall be made white, you shall be "whiter than snow." When we have gazed upon the pure whiteness of the snow before it has become defiled, it has seemed as though there could be nothing whiter. I know that, when I have been among the Alps, and have for hours looked upon the dazzling whiteness of the snow, I have been almost blinded by it. If the snow were to lie long upon the ground, and if the whole earth were to be covered with it, we should soon all be blind. The eyes of man have suffered with his soul through sin, and just as our soul would be unable to bear a sight of the unveiled purity a God, our eyes cannot endure to look upon the wondrous purity of the snow. Yet the sinner, black through sin, when brought under the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, becomes "whiter than snow."

Now, how can a sinner be made "whiter than snow"? Well, first of all, there is a permanence about the whiteness of a blood-washed sinner which there is not about the snow. The snow that fell this morning was much of it anything but white this afternoon. Where the thaw had begun to work, it looked yellow even where no foot of man had trodden upon it; and as for the snow in the streets of London, you know how soon its whiteness

disappears. But there is no fear that the whiteness which God gives to a sinner will ever depart from him; the robe of Christ's righteousness which is cast around him is permanently white.

*“This spotless robe the same appears
When ruin'd nature sinks in years
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new.”*

It is always “whiter than snow.” Some of you have to live in smoky, grimy London, but the smoke and the grime cannot discolor the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. In yourselves, you are stained with sin; but when you stand before God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the stains of sin are all gone. David in himself was black and foul when he prayed the prayer of our text, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ he was white and clean. The believer in Christ is as pure in God's sight at one time as he is at another. He does not look upon the varying purity of our sanctification as our ground of acceptance with him; but he looks upon the matchless and immutable purity of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he accepts us in Christ, and not because of what we are in ourselves. Hence, when we are once “accepted in the Beloved,” we are permanently accepted; and being accepted in him, we are “whiter than snow.”

Further, the whiteness of snow is, after all, only created whiteness. It is something which God has made, yet it has not the purity which appertains to God himself; but the righteousness which God gives to the believer is a divine righteousness, as Paul says, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. “ And remember that this is true of the very sinner who before was so black that he had to cry to God, “Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” There may be one who came into this building black as night through sin; but if he is enabled now, by grace, to trust in Jesus, his precious blood shall at once cleanse him so completely that he shall be “whiter than snow.” Justification is not a work of degrees; it does a progress from one stage to another, but it is the work of a moment and it is complete. God's great gift of eternal life is in a moment, and you may not be able to discern the exact moment when it is bestowed. Yet you may know even that; for, as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you

are born of God, you have passed from death unto life, you are saved, and to all eternity. The act of faith is a very simple thing, but it is the most God-glorifying act that a man can perform. Though there is no merit in faith, yet faith is a most ennobling grace, and Christ puts a high honor upon it when he says, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Christ puts the crown of salvation upon the head of faith, yet faith will never wear it herself, but lays it at the feet of Jesus, and gives him all the honor and glory.

There may be one in this place who is afraid to think that Christ will save him. My dear friend, do my Master the honor to believe that there are no depths of sin into which you may have gone which are beyond his reach. Believe that there is no sin that is too black to be washed away by the precious blood of Christ, for he has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," and "all manner of sin" must include yours. It is the very greatness of God's mercy that sometimes staggers a sinner. Let me use a homely simile to illustrate my meaning. Suppose you are sitting at your table, carving the joint for dinner, and suppose your dog is under the table, hoping to get a bone or a piece of gristle for his portion. Now, if you were to set the dish with the whole joint on it down on the floor, he would probably be afraid to touch it lest he should get a cut of the whip; he would know that a dog does not deserve such a dinner as that, and that is just your difficulty, poor sinner, you know that you do not deserve such grace as God delights to give. But the fact that it is of grace shuts out the question of merit altogether. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." God's gifts are like himself, immeasurably great. Perhaps some of you think you would be content with crumbs or bones from God's table. Well, if he were to give me a few crumbs or a little broken meat, I would be grateful for even that, but it would not satisfy me; but when he says to me, "Thou art my son, I have adopted thee into my family, and thou shalt go no more out for ever;" I do not agree with you that it is too good to be true. It may be too good for you but it is not too good for God; he gives as only he can give. If I were in great need, and obtained access to the Queen, and after laying my case before her, she said to me, "I feel a very deep interest in your case, here is a penny for you," I should be quite sure that I had not seen the Queen, but that some lady's maid or servant had been

making a fool of me. Oh, no! the Queen gives as Queen, and God gives as God; so that the greatness of his gift, instead of staggering us, should only assure us that it is genuine, and that it comes from God. Richard Baxter wisely said, “O Lord, it must be great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy is of no use to me!” So, sinner, go to the great God, with your great sin, and ask for great grace that you may be washed in the great fountain filled with the blood of the great sacrifice, and you shall have the great salvation which Christ has procured, and for it you shall ascribe great praise for ever and ever to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION

PSALM 51

It is a Psalm, and therefore it is to be sung. It is dedicated to the chief Musician, and there is music in it, but it needs a trained ear to catch the harmony. The sinner with a broken heart will understand the language and also perceive the sweetness of it; but as for the proud and the self-righteous, they will say, “It is a melancholy dirge,” and turn away from it in disgust. There are times, to one under a sense of sin, when there is no music in the world like that of the 51st Psalm, and it is music for the chief Musician, for “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;” and this is the Psalm of penitence, and there is joy in it, and it makes joy even to the chief Musician himself.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

Here is a man of God, a man of God deeply conscious of his sin, crying for mercy, crying with all his heart and soul, and yet with his tear-dimmed eyes looking up to God, and spying out the gracious attributes of Deity, lovingkindness, and tender mercies, multitudes of them. There is no eye that is quicker to see the mercy of God than an eye that is washed with the tears of repentance. When we dare not look upon divine justice, when that burning attribute seems as if it would smite us with blindness, we can turn to that glorious rainbow of grace round about the throne, and rejoice in the lovingkindness and the tender mercies of our God.

2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

“If washing will not remove it, burn it out, O Lord; but do cleanse me from it; not only from the guilt of it and the consequent punishment, but from the sin itself. Make me clean through and through. ‘ Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.’”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

“ As if the record of it were painted on my eyeballs. I cannot look anywhere without seeing it. I seem to taste it in my meat and drink; and when I fall asleep, I dream of it, for thy wrath has come upon me, and now my transgression haunts me wherever I go.”

4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

This is the sting of sin to a truly penitent man, that he has sinned against God. The carnal mind sees nothing in that. If ever it does repent, it repents of doing wrong to man. It only takes the manward side of the transgression; but God’s child, though grieved at having wronged man, feels that the deluge of his guilt — that which drowns everything else — is that he has sinned against his God. It is the very token and type and mark of an acceptable repentance that it has an eye to sin as committed against God.

Now observe that the psalmist, having thus sinned, and being thus conscious of his guilt, is now made to see that, if the evil came out of him, it must have been in him at first; he would not have sinned as he had done had there not been an unclean fountain within him.

5, 6. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: —

Then it is not sufficient for me to be washed outside, and being outwardly moral is not enough. “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts:” —

6. And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

In that part which is even hidden from myself, where sin might lurk without my knowing it, there wouldst thou spy it out. I pray thee, Lord, eject all sin from me, rid me of the most subtle form of iniquity that may be concealed within me.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

This is a grand declaration of faith. I know not of such faith as this anywhere else. The faith of Abraham is more amazing; but, to my mind,

this faith of poor broken-hearted David, when he saw himself to be black with sin and crimson with crime, and yet could say, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” is grand faith. It seems to me that a poor, trembling, broken-down sinner, who casts himself upon the infinite mercy of God, brings more glory to God than all the angels that went not astray are ever able to bring to him.

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot sin with impunity. Worldlings may do so as far as this life is concerned; but a child of God will find that, to him, sin and smart, if they do not go together, will follow very closely upon one another’s heels. Ay, and our Father in heaven chastens his people very sorely, even to the breaking of their bones; and it is only when he applies the promises to our hearts by the gracious operation of his Holy Spirit, and makes the chambers of our soul to echo with the voice of his lovingkindness, that we “hear joy and gladness” again. It is only then that our broken bones are bound up, and begin to rejoice once more.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins,*

David could not bear that God should look upon them.

9. *And blot out all mine iniquities.*

“Put them right out of sight. Turn thy gaze away from them, and then put them out of everybody’s sight.”

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”*

Make me over again; let the image of God in man be renewed in me. Nay, not the image only, but renew the very Spirit of God within me.”

11, 12. *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;*

“Lift me up, and then keep me up. Let me never sin against thee again.”

12,13. *And uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will teach transgressors thy ways;*

There are no such teachers of righteousness as those who have smarted under their own personal sin; they can indeed tell to others what the ways of God are. What are those ways? His ways of chastisement, — how he will smite the wandering; his ways of mercy, — how he will restore and forgive the penitent.

13. *And sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

He felt sure that they would be converted; and if anything can be the means of converting sinners, it is the loving faithful testimony of one who has himself tasted that the Lord is gracious. If God has been merciful to you, my brother or my sister, do not hold your tongue about it, but tell to others what he has done for you; let the world know what a gracious God he is.

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

I like that confession and that prayer of David. He does not mince matters, for he had guiltily caused the blood of Uriah to be shed, and here he owns it, with great shame, but with equal honesty and truthfulness. An long as you and I call our sins by pretty names, they will not be forgiven. The Lord knows exactly what your sin is, therefore do not try to use polite terms about it. Tell him what it is, that he may know that you know what it is. “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.”

“But surely,” says someone, “there is nobody here who needs to pray that prayer.” Well, there is one in the pulpit at least, who often feels that he has need to pray it; for what will happen if I preach not the gospel, or if I preach it not with all my heart? It may be that the blood of souls shall be required at my hands. And my brothers and sisters, if anything in your example should lead others into sin, or if the neglect of any opportunities that are presented to you should lead others to continue in their sin till they perish, will not the sin of bloodguiltiness be possible to you? I think you had better each one pray David’s prayer, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.” “And then, O Lord, if I once get clear of that, ‘my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.’”

15. *O Lord, open thou my lips;*

He is afraid to open them himself lest he should say something amiss. Pardoned sinners are always afraid lest they should err again.

15, 16. *And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest no sacrifice; else would give it:*

“Whatever there is in the whole world that thou desirest, I would gladly give it to thee, my God.”

16-18. *Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; —*

You see that the psalmist loves the chosen people of God. With all his faults, his heart is right towards the kingdom under his charge. He feels that he has helped to break down Zion, and to do mischief to Jerusalem, so he prays, “Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:” —

18, 19. *Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

Once get your sins forgiven, and then God will accept your sacrifices. Then bring what you will with all your heart, for an accepted sinner makes an accepted sacrifice, through Jesus Christ.

THE BROAD WALL

SERMON NO. 3281

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“The broad wall.” — Nehemiah 3:8.

IT SEEMS that around Jerusalem of old, in the time of her splendor, there was a broad wall, which was her defense and her glory. Jerusalem is a type of the Church of God. It is always well when we can see clearly, distinctly, and plainly, that around the Church to which we belong there runs a broad wall.

This idea of a broad wall around the Church suggests three things: separation, security, and enjoyment. Let us examine each of these in its turn.

I. First, the SEPARATION of the people of God from the world is like that broad wall surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem.

When a man becomes a Christian he is still in the world, but he is no longer to be of it. He was an heir of wrath, but he has now become a child of grace. Being of a distinct nature, he is required to separate himself from the rest of mankind, as the Lord Jesus Christ did, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” The Lord’s Church was separated in his eternal purpose. It was separated in his covenant and decree. It was separated in the atonement, for even there we find that our Lord is called “the savior of all men, especially of them that believe.” An actual separation is made by grace, is carried on in the work of sanctification, and will be completed in that day when the heavens shall be on fire, and the saints shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air; and in that last tremendous day, he shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and then there shall be a great gulf fixed, across

which the ungodly cannot go to the righteous, neither shall the righteous approach the wicked.

Practically, my business is to say to those of you who profess to be the Lord's people, take care that you maintain a broad wall of separation between yourselves and the world. I do not say that you are to adopt any peculiarity of dress, or to take up some singular style of speech. Such affectation gendereth, sooner or later, hypocrisy. A man be as thoroughly worldly in one coat as in another, he may be quite as vain and conceited with one style of speech as with another; nay, he may be even more of the world when he pretends to be separate, than if he had left the pretense of separation alone. The separation which we plead for is moral and spiritual. Its foundation is laid deep in the heart, and its substantial reality is very palpable in the life.

Every Christian, it seems to me, should be more scrupulous than other men in his dealings. He must never swerve from the path of integrity. He should never say, "It is the custom: it is perfectly understood in the trade." Let the Christian remember that custom cannot sanction wrong, and that its being "understood" is no apology for misrepresentation. A lie "understood" is not therefore true. While the golden rule is more admired than practiced by ordinary men, the Christian should always do unto others as he would that they should do unto him. He should be one whose word is his bond, and who, having once pledged his word, sweareth to his own hurt, but changeth not. There ought to be an essential difference between the Christian and the best moralist, by reason of the higher standard which the gospel inculcates, and the Savior has exemplified. Certainly, the highest point to which the best unconverted man can go might well be looked upon as a level below which the converted man will never venture to descend.

Moreover, the Christian should especially be distinguished by his pleasures, for it is here, usually, that the man comes out in his true colors. We are not quite ourselves, perhaps, in our daily toil, where our pursuits are rather dictated by necessity than by choice. We are not alone; the society we are thrown into imposes restraints upon us; we have to put the bit and the bridle upon ourselves. The true man does not then show himself; but when the day's work is done, then the "birds of a feather

flock together.” It is with the multitude of traders and commercial men as it was with those saints of old, of whom, when they were liberated from prison, it was said, “Being let go, they went unto their own company.” So will your pleasures and pastimes give evidence of what your heart is, and where it is. If you can find pleasure in sin, then in sin you choose to live, and unless grace prevent, in sin you will not fail to perish. But if your pleasures are of a nobler kind, and your companions of a devouter character; if you seek spiritual enjoyments, if you find your happiest moments in worship, in communion, in silent prayer, or in the public assembling of yourselves with the people of God, then your higher instincts become proof of your purer character, and you will be distinguished in your pleasures by a broad wall which effectually separates you from the world.

Such separation should be carried, I think, into everything which affects the Christian. “What have they seen in thy house?” was the question asked of Hezekiah. When a stranger comes into our house it should be so ordered that he can clearly perceive that the Lord is there. A man ought scarcely to tarry a night beneath our roof, without gathering that we have a respect unto him that is invisible, and that we desire to live and move in the light of God’s countenance. I have already said that I would not have you cultivate singularities for singularity’s sake; yet, as the most of men are satisfied if they do as other people do, you must never be satisfied until you do more and better than other people, having found out a mode and course of life as far transcending the ordinary worldling’s life, as the path of the eagle in the air is above that of the mole which burrows under the soil.

This broad wall between the godly and the ungodly should be most conspicuous in the spirit of our mind. The ungodly man has only this world to live for; do not wonder if he lives very earnestly for it. He has no other treasure; why should he not get as much as he can of this? But you, Christian, profess to have immortal life, therefore, your treasure is not to be amassed in this brief span of existence. Your treasure is laid up in heaven and available for eternity. Your best hopes overleap the narrow bounds of time, and fly beyond the grave; your spirit must not, therefore, be earth-bound and grovelling, but soaring and heavenly. There should be about you always the air of one who has his shoes on his feet, his loins

girded, and his staff in his hand — away, away, away to a better land. You are not to talk of this world as though it were to last for ever. You are not to hoard it and treasure it up, as though you had set your heart upon it, but you are to be on the wing as though you had not a nest here, and never could have, but expected to find your resting-place among the cedars of God, in the hill-tops of glory.

Depend upon it, the more unworldly a Christian is the better it is for him. Methinks I could mention several reasons why this wall should be very broad. If you are sincere in your profession, there is a very broad distinction between you and unconverted people. Nobody can tell how far life is removed from death. Can you measure the difference? They are as opposite as the poles. Now, according to your profession, you are a living child of God, you have received a new life, whereas the children of this world are dead in trespasses and sins. How palpable the difference between light and darkness? Yet, you profess to have been “sometimes darkness,” but now you are made “light in the Lord.” There is, therefore, a great distinction between you and the world if you are what you profess to be. You say, when you put on the name of Christ, that you are going to the Celestial City, to the New Jerusalem; but the world turns its back upon the heavenly country, and goes downward to that other city of which you know that destruction is its doom; your path is different from theirs. If you be what you say you are, the road you take must be diametrically opposite to that of the ungodly man. You know the difference between their ends. The end of the righteous shall be glory everlasting, but the end of the wicked is destruction. Unless then you are a hypocrite, there is such a distinction between you and others as only God himself could make — a distinction which originates here, to be perpetuated throughout eternity. When the social diversities occasioned by rank and dependency, riches and poverty, ignorance and learning, shall all have passed away; the distinctions between the children of God and the children of men, between saints and scoffers, between the chosen and the castaway, will still exist. I pray you, then, maintain a broad wall in your conduct, as God has made a broad wall in your state and in your destiny.

Remember again, that our Lord Jesus Christ had a broad wall between him and the ungodly. Look at him and see how different he is from the men of his time. All his life long you observe him to be a stranger and a foreigner

in the land. Truly, he drew near to sinners, as near as he could draw, and he received them when they were willing to draw near to him; but he did not draw near to their sins. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” When he went to his own city of Nazareth, he only preached a single sermon, and they would have cast him headlong down the hill if they could. When he passed through the street, he became the song of the drunkard, the butt of the foolish, the mark at which the proud shot out the arrows of their scorn. At last, having come to his own, and his own having received him not, they determined to thrust him altogether out of the camp, so they took him to Golgotha, and nailed him to the tree as a malefactor, a promoter of sedition. He was the great Dissenter, the great Nonconformist of his age. The National Church first excommunicated, and then executed him. He did not seek difference in things trivial; but the purity of his life and the truthfulness of his testimony, roused the spleen of the rulers and the chief men of their synagogues. He was ready in all things to serve them and to bless them, but he never would blend with them. They would have made him a king. Ah! if he would but have joined the world, the world would have given him the chief place, as the world’s Prince said on the mountain: “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” But he drives away the fiend, and stands immaculate and separate even to the close of his life. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. If you follow Christ, go without the camp. But if there be no difference between you and your fellow-man, what will you say unto the King in the day when he cometh and findeth that you have on no wedding garment by which you can be distinguished from the rest of mankind? Because Christ made a broad wall around himself, there must be such an one around his people.

Moreover, dear friends, you will find that a broad wall of separation is abundantly good for yourselves. I do not think any Christian in the world will tell you that when he has given way to the world’s customs, he has ever been profited thereby. If you can go and find an evening’s amusement in a suspicious place, and feel profited by it, I am sure you are not a Christian; for, if you were a Christian indeed, it would pain your conscience, and unfit you for devouter exercises of the heart. Ask a fish to spend an hour on dry land, and, I think, did it comply, the fish would find that it was not much to its benefit, for it would be out of its element. And

it will be so with you in communion with sinners. When you are compelled to associate with worldly people in the ordinary course of business, you find much that grates upon the ear, that troubles the heart, and annoys the soul. You will be often like righteous Lot, vexed with the conversation of the wicked, and you will say with David:

*“Ah! woe is me that I
In Meshech dwell so long:
That I in tabernacles stay,
To Kedar that belong!”*

Your soul would pine and sigh to come forth and wash your hands of everything that is impure and unclean. As you find no comfort there, you will long to get away to the chaste, the holy, the devout, the edifying fellowship of the saints. Make a broad wall, dear friends, in your daily life. If you begin to give way a little to the world, you will soon give way a great deal. Give sin an inch, and it will take an ell. “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves,” is an apt motto of economy. So, too, guard against little sins, if you would be clear of the great transgression. Look after the little approaches to worldliness, the little givings-up towards the things of ungodliness, and then you will not make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Another good reason for keeping up the broad wall of separation is, that you will do most good to the world thereby. I know Satan will tell you that if you bend a little, and come near to the ungodly, then they also will come a little way to meet you. Ay, but it is not so. You lose your strength, Christian, the moment you depart from your integrity. What do you think ungodly people say behind your back, if they see you inconsistent to please them? “Oh!” say they, “there is nothing in his religion, but vain pretense; the man is not sincere.” Although the world may openly denounce the rigid Puritan, it secretly admires him. When the big heart of the world speaks out, it has respect to the man that is sternly honest, and will not yield his principles — no, not a hair’s breadth. In such an age as this, when there is so little sound conviction, when principle is cast to the winds, and when a general latitudinarianism, but of thought and of practice, seems to rule the day, it is still the fact, that a man who is decided in his belief, speaks his mind boldly, and acts according to his profession — such a man is sure to command the reverence of

mankind. Depend upon it, woman, your husband and your children will respect you none the more because you say, "I will give up some of my Christian privileges," or "I will go sometimes with you into that which is sinful." You cannot help them out of the mire if you go and plunge into the mud yourself. You cannot help to make them clean if you go and blacken your own hands. How can you wash their faces then? You young man in the shop — you young woman in the work-room — if you keep yourselves to yourselves in Christ's name, chaste and pure for Jesus, not laughing at jests which should make you blush: not mixing up with pastimes that are suspicious; but, on the other hand, tenderly jealous of your conscience as one who shrinks from a doubtful thing as a sinful thing, holding sound faith and being scrupulous of the truth — if you will keep yourselves, your company in the midst of others shall be as though an angel shook his wings, and they will say to one another, "Refrain from this or that just now, for so-and-so is there." They will fear you, in a certain sense; they will admire you, in secret; and who can tell but they, at last, may come to imitate you.

Would ye tempt God? Would ye challenge the desolating flood? Whenever the church comes down to mingle with the world, it behooves the faithful few to fly to the ark and seek shelter from the avenging storm. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair to look upon, then it was that God said it repented him that he had made men upon the face of the earth, and he sent the deluge to sweep them away. A separate people God's people must be, and they shall be. It is his own declaration, "The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be numbered among the people." The Christian is, in some respects like the Jew. The Jew is the type of the Christian. You may give the Jew political privileges, as he ought to have; he may be adopted into the State, as he ought to be; but a Jew he is, and a Jew he must be still. He is not a Gentile, even though he calls himself English, or Portuguese, or Spanish, or Polish. He remains one of the people of Israel, a child of Abraham, a Jew still; and you can mark him as such — his speech betrayeth him in every land. So should it be with the Christian; mixing up with other men, as he must in his daily calling; going in and out among them, like a man among men; trading in the market; dealing in the shop; mingling in the joys of the social circle; taking his part in politics, like a citizen, as he is; but, at the same time even,

having a higher and a nobler life, a secret into which the world cannot enter, and showing the world by his superior holiness, his zeal for God, his sterling integrity, and his unselfish truthfulness, that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. You cannot tell how concerned I am for some of you, that this broad wall should be kept up; for I detect in some of you at times a desire to make it very narrow, and, perhaps, to pull it down altogether. Brethren, beloved in the Lord, you may depend upon it that nothing worse can happen to a church than to be conformed unto this world. Write “Ichabod” upon her walls then; for the sentence of destruction has gone out against her. But, if you can keep yourselves as —

*“A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,” —*

you shall have your Master’s company; your graces shall grow; you shall be happy in your own souls; and Christ shall be honored in your lives.

II. Secondly; the broad wall round about Jerusalem INDICATED SAFETY.

In the same way, a broad wall round Christ’s church indicates her safety too. Consider who they are that belong to the church of God. A man does not become a member of Christ’s church by baptism, nor by birthright, nor by profession, nor by morality. Christ is the door into the sheepfold; every one who believes in Jesus Christ is a member of the true church. Being a member of Christ, he is a member, consequently, of the body of Christ, which is the church. Now, around the church of God — the election of grace, the redeemed by blood, the peculiar people, the adopted, the justified, the sanctified — around the church there are bulwarks of stupendous strength, munitions which guard them safely. When the foe came to attack Jerusalem, he counted the towers and bulwarks, and marked them well; but after he had seen the strength of the Holy City, he fled away. How could he hope ever to scale such ramparts as those? Brethren, Satan often counts the towers and bulwarks of the New Jerusalem. Anxiously does he desire the destruction of the saints, but it shall never be. He that rests in Christ is saved. He who hath passed through the gate of faith to rest in Jesus Christ may sing, with joyful confidence —

*“The soul that on Jesus hath lean’d for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”*

“I will be,” saith Jehovah, “a wall of fire round about thee.” Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of God’s power. If God be omnipotent, Satan cannot defeat him. If God’s power be on my side, who, then, shall hurt me? “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of God’s love. Who shall prevail against those whom God loves? I know that it is vain to curse those whom God hath not cursed, or to defy those whom the Lord hath not defied; for whomsoever he blesseth is blessed indeed. Balak, the son of Zippor, sought to curse the beloved people, and he went first to one hill-top and then to another, and looked down upon the chosen camp. But, aha! Balaam, thou couldst not curse them, though Balak sought it! Thou couldst only say, “They are blessed, yea, and they shall be blessed!”

God’s law is a broad wall around us, and so is his justice too. These once threatened our destruction, but now the justice of God demands the salvation of every believer. If Christ has died instead of me, it would not be justice if I had to die also for my sin. If God has received the full payment of the debt from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, then how can he demand the debt again? He is satisfied, and we are secure.

The immutability of God, also, surrounds his people like a broad wall. “I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” As long as God is the same, the rock of our salvation will be our secure hiding-place.

Upon this delightful truth, we might linger long, for there is much to cheer us in the strong security which God has given in covenant to his people. They are surrounded by the broad wall of electing love. Doth God choose them, and will he lose them? Did he ordain them to eternal life, and shall they perish? Did he engrave their names upon his heart, and shall those names be blotted out? Did he give them to his Son to be his heritage, and shall his Son lose his portion? Did he say, “They shall be mine, saith the

Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels," and shall he part with them? Has he who maketh all things obey him no power to keep the people whom he has formed for himself to be his own peculiar heritage? God forbid that we should doubt it. Electing love, like a broad wall, surrounds every heir of grace.

And oh, how broad is the wall of redeeming love. Will Jesus fail to claim the people he bought with so great a price? Did he shed his blood in vain? How can he revive enmity against those whom he hath once reconciled unto God, not imputing their transgressions unto them? Having obtained eternal redemption for them, will he adjudge them to everlasting perdition? Has he purged their sins by sacrifice, and will he then leave them to be the victims of satanic craft? By the blood of the everlasting covenant, every Christian—may be assured that he cannot perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hand. Unless the cross were all a peradventure, unless the atonement were a mere speculation, those for whom Jesus died are saved through his death. Therefore he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

As a broad wall which surrounds the saints of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. Does the spirit begin and not finish the operations of his grace? Ah no? Does he give life which afterwards dies out? Impossible! Hath he not told us that the Word of God is the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever? And shall the powers of hell or the evil of our own flesh destroy what God has pronounced immortal, or cause dissolution to that which God says is incorruptible? Is not the Spirit of God given us to abide with us for ever, and shall he be expelled from that heart in which he has taken up his everlasting dwelling place? Brethren, we are not of their mind, who are led by fear of fallacy to hazard such conjectures. We rejoice to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on." We like to sing —

*“Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes.”*

Almost every doctrine of grace affords us a broad wall, a strong bastion, a mighty bulwark, a grand munition of defense. Take, for instance, Christ's suretyship engagements. He is surety to his Father for his people. When

he brings home the flock, think you he will have to report that some of them are lost? At his hands will they be required. Not so!

*“I know that safe with him remains,
Protect by his power,
What I’ve committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour.”*

“Here am I,” will he say, “and the children whom thou hast given me, of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none.” He will keep all the saints even to the end. The honor of Christ is involved. If Christ loses one soul that leans upon him, the integrity of his crown is gone; for if there should be one believing soul in hell, the prince of darkness would hold up that soul and say — “Aha! Thou couldst not save them all! Aha! Thou Captain of Salvation, thou wast defeated here! Here is one poor little Benjamin, one Ready-to-Halt, that thou couldst not bring to glory, and I have him to be my prey for ever!” But it shall not be. Every gem shall be in Jesu’s crown. Every sheep shall be in Jesu’s flock. He shall not be defeated in any way, or in any measure; but he shall divide the spoil with the strong, he shall establish the cause he undertakes, he shall eternally conquer; glory be unto his great and good name!

Thus I have tried to show you the broad walls which are round about believers. They are saved, and they may say to their enemies, “the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at them, and laughed them to scorn! Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that hath risen again from the dead; who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us! For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor 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.”

III. The idea of a broad wall, and with this I close, SUGGESTS ENJOYMENT.

The walls of Ninevah and Babylon were broad; so broad that there was found room for several chariots to pass each other. Here men walked at sunset, and talked and promoted good fellowship. If you have ever been in

the city of York you will know how interesting it is to walk around the broad walls there. But our figure is drawn from the Orientals. They were accustomed to come out of their houses and walk on the broad walls. They used them for rest from toil, and for the manifold pleasures of recreation. It was very delightful when the sun was going down, and all was cool, to walk on those broad walls. And so, when a believer comes to know the deep things of God, and to see the defences of God's people, he walks along them and he rests. "Now," saith he, "I am at rest and peace; the destroyer cannot molest me; I am delivered from the noise of archers in the place of the drawing of water, and here I can exercise myself in prayer and meditation! Now that salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks, I will sing a song unto him who hath done these great things for me; I will take my rest and be quiet for he that believeth hath entered into rest; there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Broad walls, then, are for rest, and so are our broad walls of salvation.

Those broad walls were also for communion. Men came there and talked with one another. They leaned over the wall and whispered their loving words, conversed of their business, comforted one another, related their troubles and their joys. So, when believers come unto Christ Jesus they commune with one another, with the angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus Christ their Lord, who is best of all. Oh! on those broad walls, when the banner of love waves over them, they sometimes rejoice with a joy unspeakable, in fellowship with him who loved them and gave himself for them. It is a blessed thing in the Church when you get such a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel that you can have the sweetest communion with all the Church of the living God.

And then the broad walls were also intended for prospects and outlooks. The citizen came up on the broad wall, and looked away from the smoke and dirt of the city within, right across to the green fields, and the gleaming river, and the far off mountains, delighted to watch the mowing of hay, or the reaping of corn, or the setting sun beyond the distant hills. It was one of the common enjoyments of the citizen of any walled city, to come to the top of the wall in order to take views afar. So, when a man once gets into the altitudes of gospel doctrines, and has learned to understand the love of God in Christ Jesus, what views he can take! How he looks down upon the sorrows of life! How he looks beyond that narrow little stream

of death! How, sometimes, when the weather is bright and his eye is clear enough to let him use the telescope, he can see within the gates of pearl, and behold the joys which no mortal eye hath seen, and hear the songs which no mortal ear hath heard, for these are things, not for eyes and ears, but for hearts and spirits! Blessed is the man who dwelleth in the Church of God, for he can find on her broad walls places from which he can see the king in his beauty, and the land which is very far off!

Ah! dear friends, I wish that these things had to do with you all, but I am afraid they have not; for many of you are outside the wall, and when the destroyer comes none will be safe but those who are inside the wall of Christ's love and mercy. I would go to God that you would escape to the gate at once, for it is open. It will be shut — it will be shut one day, but it is open now. When night comes, the night of death, the gate will be shut, and you will come then and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But, the answer will be —

*"Too late, too late!
Ye cannot enter now."*

But it is not too late yet. Still Christ saith, "Behold, I set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Oh! that thou hadst the will to come and put thy trust in Jesus; for if thou dost so, thou shalt be saved. I cannot speak to some of you about security, for there are no broad walls to defend you. You have run away from the security. Perhaps you have been patching up with some untempered mortar a righteousness of your own, which will all be thrown down as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence. Oh! that you would trust in Jesus! Then would you have a broad wall which all the battering-rams of hell shall never be able to shake. When the storms of eternity shall beat against that wall, it shall stand fast for aye.

I cannot speak to some of you about rest, and enjoyment, and communion, for you have sought rest where there is none; you have got a peace which is no peace, you have found a comfort which will be your destruction. God make you to be distressed, and constrain you by sore stress to flee to the Lord Jesus and get true peace, the only peace, for "he is our peace." Oh! that you would close in with Christ and trust him, then you would rejoice in the present happiness which faith would give you; but, the

sweetest thing of all would be the prospect which should then unfold to you of the eternal happiness which Christ has prepared for all those who put their trust in him.

THE BROKEN FENCE

SERMON NO. 3381

“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.” — Proverbs 24:30-32.

THIS slothful man did no hurt to his fellow men: he was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else’s business. He did not trouble himself about other men’s concerns, for he did not even attend to his own, — it required too much exertion. He was not grossly vicious; he had not energy enough to care for that. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well alone, and, for the matter of that, he let ill alone, too, as the nettles and the thistles in his garden plainly proved. What was the use of disturbing himself? It would be all the same a hundred years hence; and so, he took things just as they came. He was not a bad man, so some said of him; and yet, perhaps, it will be found at last there is no worse man in the world than the man who is not good, for in some respects he is not good enough to be bad; he has not enough force of character about him to serve either God or Baal. He simply serves himself, worshipping his own case and adoring his own comfort. Yet he always meant to be right. Dear me! He was not going to sleep much longer, he would only have forty winks more, and then he would be at his work, and show you what he could do. One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest, and make up for the last time. The time never actually came for him to begin, but it was always coming. He always meant to repent, but he went on in his sin. He meant to believe, but he died an unbeliever. He meant to be a Christian, but he lived without Christ. He halted between two opinions because could not trouble himself to make up his mind; and so he perished of delay.

This picture of the slothful man and his garden and field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a

Christian, but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has within in him. He has backslidden; he has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into of listlessness, and indifference to the things of God; and while things have gone wrong within his heart, and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character is broken down, and he lies open to all evil. Upon this point we will now meditate. "The stone wall thereof was broken down."

Come, then, let us take a walk with Solomon, and stand with him and consider and learn instruction while we look at this broken-down fence. When we have examined it, let us consider the consequences of broken-down walls; and then, in the last place, let us try to rouse up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God's infinite mercy rouse us up before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices.

I. First let us take a LOOK AT THIS BROKEN FENCE.

You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence, for it was a stone wall. Fields are often surrounded with wooden palings which soon decay, or with hedges which may very easily have gaps made in them; but this was a stone wall. Such walls are very usual in the East, and are also common in some of our own counties where stone is plentiful. It was a substantial protection to begin with, and well shut in the pretty little estate which had fallen into such bad hands. The man had a field for agricultural purposes, and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil, for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance, and where these flourish better things can be produced; yet the idler took no care of his property, but allowed the wall to get into bad repair, and in many places to be quite broken down.

Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide.

In many cases sound principles were instilled in youth, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! Our parents, both by persuasion and example, taught many of us the things that are pure and

honest, and of good repute. We saw in their lives how to live. They also opened the word of God before us, and they taught us the ways or right both towards God and towards men. They prayed for us, and they prayed with us, till the things of God were placed round about us and shut us in as with a stone wall. We have never been able to get rid of our early impressions. Even in times of wandering, before we knew the Lord savingly, these things had a healthy power over us; we were checked when we would have done evil, we were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken, and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall. Young persons begin at first to talk lightly of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. By-and-by it is not merely the old-fashionedness of the ways, but the ways themselves that they despise. They seek other company, and from that other company they learn nothing but evil. They seek pleasure in places which it horrifies their parents to think of. This leads to worse, and if they do not bring their fathers' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave it is no virtue of theirs. I have known young men, who really were Christians, sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained from their mother's knee. It is a great calamity when professedly converted men become unfixed, unstable, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. It shows great faultiness of mind, and unsoundness of heart when we can trifle with those grave and solemn truths which have been sanctified by a mother's tears, and by a father's earnest life. "I am thy servant," said David, "and the son of thy handmaid": he felt it to be a high honor, and, at the same time a sacred bond which bound him to God, that he was the son of one who could be called God's handmaid. Take care, you who have had Christian training, that you do not trifle with it. "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck."

Protection to character is also found in the fact that solid doctrines have been learned. This is a fine stone wall. Many among us have been taught the gospel of the grace of God, and they have learned it well, so that they are able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal verities. A religion which is all excitement, and has

little instruction in it, may serve for transient use; but for permanent life-purposes there must be a knowledge of those great doctrines which are fundamental to the gospel system. I tremble when I hear of a man's giving up, one by one, the vital principles of the gospel and boasting of his liberality. I hear him say, "These are my views, but others have a right to their views also." That is a very proper expression in reference to mere "views," but we may not thus speak of truth itself as revealed by God: that is one and unalterable, and all are bound to receive it. It is not your view of truth, for that is a dim thing; but the very truth itself which will save you if you faith embraces it. I will readily yield my way of stating a doctrine, but not the doctrine itself. One man may put it in this way, and one in another; but the truth itself must never be given up. The spirit of the Broad School robs us of everything like certainty. I should like to ask some great men of that order whether they believe that anything is taught in the Scriptures which it would be worth while for a person to die for, and whether the martyrs were not great fools for laying down their lives for mere opinions which might be right or might be wrong? This Broad-churchism is a breaking down of stone walls, and it will let in the devil and all his crew, and do infinite harm to the church of God, if it be not stopped. A loose state of belief does great damage to any man's mind.

We are not bigots, but we should be none the worse if we so lived that men called us so. I met a man the other day who was accused of bigotry and I said, "Give me your hand, old fellow. I like to meet with bigots now and then, for the fine old creatures are getting scarce, and the stuff they are made of is so good that if there were more of it we might see a few men among us again and fewer molluses." Lately we have seen few men with backbone; the most have been of the jelly-fish order. I have lived in times in which I should have said, "Be liberal, and shake off all narrowness"; but now I am obliged to alter my tone and cry, "Be steadfast in the truth." The faith once delivered to the saints is now all the more attractive to me because it is called narrow, for I am weary of that breadth which comes of broken hedges. There are fixed points of truth, and definite certainties of creed, and woe to you if you allow these stone walls to crumble down. I fear me that the slothful are a numerous band, and that ages to come may have to deplore the laxity which has been applauded by this negligent generation.

Another fence which is too often neglected is that of godly habits which had been formed: the sluggard allows this wall to be broken down. I will mention some valuable guards of life and character. One is the habit of secret prayer. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. We cannot do without set seasons for drawing near to God. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous: to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants. At night, again, to go to your rest as the swine roll into their sty, without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful. The evening sacrifice should be devoutly offered as surely as we have enjoyed the evening fireside: we should thus put ourselves under the wings of the Preserver of men. It may be said, "We can pray at all times." I know we can: but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all. Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Spiritual life does not care for a cast-iron regulation, but since life casts itself into some mould or other, I would have you careful of its external habit as well as its internal power. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer.

I go a step farther, I believe that there is a great guardian power about family prayer, and I feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Romanism, at one time, could do nothing in England, because it could offer nothing but the shadow of what Christian men had already in substance. "Do you hear that bell tinkling in the morning?" "What is that for?" "To go to church to pray." "Indeed," said the Puritan, "I have no need to go there to pray. I have had my children together, and we have read a passage of Scripture, and prayed, and sang the praises of God, and we have a church in our house." Ah, there goes that bell again in the evening. What is that for? Why, it is the vesper bell. The good man answered that he had no need to trudge a mile or two for that, for his holy vespers had been said and sung around his own table, of which the big Bible was the chief ornament. They told him that there could be no service without a priest, but he replied that every godly man should be a priest in his own house. Thus have the saints defied the overtures of priestcraft, and kept the faith from generation to generation. Household

devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of Protestantism, and my prayer is that these may not be broken down.

Another fence to protect piety is found in week-night services. I notice that when people forsake week-night meetings the power of their religion evaporates. I do not speak of those lawfully detained to watch the sick, and attend to farm-work and other business, or as domestic servants and the like; there are exceptions to all rules; but I mean those who could attend if they had a mind to do so. When people say, "It is quite enough for me to be wearied with the sermons of the Sunday; I do not want to go out to prayer-meetings, and lectures, and so forth," — then it is clear that they have no appetite for the word; and surely this is a bad sign. If you have a bit of wall built to protect the Sunday and then six times the distance left without a fence, I believe that Satan's cattle will get in and do no end of mischief.

Take care, also, of the stone wall of Bible reading, and of speaking often one to another concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly, and commune with God, and you will thus, by the blessing of God's Spirit, keep up a good fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into the fields of your soul, and devour all goodly fruits.

Many have found much protection for the field of daily life in the stone wall of a public profession of faith. I am speaking to you who are real believers, and I know that you have often found it a great safeguard to be known and recognized as a follower of Jesus. I have never regretted — and I never shall regret — the day on which I walked to the little river Lark, in Cambridgeshire, and was there buried with Christ in baptism. In this I acted contrary to the opinions of all my friends whom I respected and esteemed, but as I had read the Green Testament for myself, I felt bound to be immersed upon the profession of my faith, and I was so. By that act I said to the world, "I am dead to you, and buried to you in Christ, and I hope henceforth to live in newness of life." That day, by God's grace, I imitated the tactics of the general who meant to fight the enemy till he conquered, and therefore he burned his boats that there might be no way of retreat. I believe that a solemn confession of Christ before men is as a thorn hedge to keep one within bounds, and to keep off those who hope to draw you aside. Of course it is nothing but a hedge, and it is of no use to

fence in a field of weeds, but when wheat is growing a hedge is of great consequence. You who imagine that you can be the Lord's, and yet lie open like a common, are under a great error; you ought to be distinguished from the world, and obey the voice which saith, "Come ye out from among them, be ye separate." The promise of salvation is to the man who with his heart believeth and with his mouth confesseth. Say right boldly, "'et others do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." By this act you come out into the king's highway, and put yourself under the protection of the Lord of pilgrims, and he will take care of you. Oftentimes, when otherwise you might have hesitated, you will say, "The vows of the Lord are upon me; how can I draw back?" I pray you, then, set up the stone wall, and keep it up, and if it has at any corner been tumbled over, set it up again, and let it be seen by your conduct and conversation that you are a follower of Jesus, and are not ashamed to have it known.

Keep to your religious principles like men, and do not turn aside for the sake of gain, or respectability. Do not let wealth break down your wall, for I have know some make a great gap to let their carriage go through, and to let in wealthy worldlings for the sake of their society. Those who forsake their principles to please men will in the end be lightly esteemed, but he who is faithful shall have the honor which cometh from God. Look well to this hedge of steadfast adherence to the faith, and you shall find a great blessing in it.

There is yet another stone wall which I will mention, namely, firmness of character. Our holy faith teaches a man to be decided in the cause of Christ, and to be resolute in getting rid of evil habits. "If thine eye offend thee" — wear a shade? No; "pluck it out." "If thine arm offend thee" — hang it in a sling? No; "cut it off and cast it from thee." True religion is very thorough in what it recommends. It says to us, "touch not the unclean thing." But many persons are so idle in the ways of God that they have no mind of their own: evil companions tempt them, and they cannot say, "No." They need a stone wall made up of noes. Here are the stones "no, no, NO." Dare to be singular. Resolve to keep close to Christ. Make a stern determination to permit nothing in your life, however gainful or pleasurable, if it would dishonor the name of Jesus. Be dogmatically true, obstinately holy, immovably honest, desperately kind, fixedly upright. If

God's grace sets up this hedge around you, even Satan will feel that he cannot get in, and will complain to God "hast thou not set a hedge about him?"

I have kept you long enough looking over the wall, let me invite you in, and for a few minutes let us CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BROKEN-DOWN FENCE.

To make short work of it, first, the boundary has gone. Those lines of separation which were kept up by the good principles which were instilled in him by religious habits, by a bold profession and by a firm resolve, have vanished, and now the question is, "Is he a Christian, or is he not?" The fence is so far gone that he does not know which is his Lord's property and which remains an open common: in fact, he does not know whether he himself is included in the Royal domain or left to be mere waste of the world's manor. This is for want of keeping up the fences. If that man had lived near to God, if he had walked in his integrity, if the Spirit of God had richly rested on him in all holy living and waiting upon God, he would have known where the boundary was, and he would have seen whether his land lay in the parish of All-saints, or in the region called No-man's-land, or in the district where Satan is the lord of the manor. I heard of a dear old saint the other day who, when she was near to death, was attacked by Satan, and, waving her finger at the enemy, in her gentle way, she routed him by saying, "Chosen! Chosen! Chosen!" She knew that she was chosen, and she remembered the text, "The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." When the wall stands in its integrity all round the field, we can resist the devil by bidding him leave the Lord's property alone. "Begone! Look somewhere else. I belong to Christ, not to you." To do this you must mend the hedges well so that there shall be a clear boundary line, and you can say, "Trespassers, beware!" Do not yield an inch to the enemy, but make the wall all the higher, the more he seeks to enter. O that this adversary may never find a gap to enter by.

Next, when the wall has fallen, the protection is gone. When a man's heart has its wall broken, all his thoughts will go astray, and wander upon the mountains of vanity. Like sheep, thoughts need careful folding, or they will be off in no time. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, but slothful men are sure to have plenty of them, for there is no keeping your thoughts out

of vanity unless you stop every gap and shut every gate. Holy thoughts, comfortable meditations, devout longings, and gracious communings will be off and gone if we sluggishly allow the stone wall to get out of repair.

Nor is this all, for as good things go out so bad things come in. When the wall is gone every passerby sees, as it were, an invitation to enter. You have set before him an open door, and in he comes. Are there fruits? He plucks them, of course. He walks about as if it were a public place, and he pries everywhere. Is there any secret corner of your heart which you would keep for Jesus? Satan or the world will walk in; and do you wonder? Every passing goat, or roaming ox, or stray ass visits the growing crops and spoils more than he eats, and who can blame the creature when the gaps are so wide? All manner of evil lusts and desires, and imaginations prey upon an unfenced soul. It is of no use for you to say, "Lead us not into temptation." God will hear your prayer, and he will not lead you there; but you are leading yourself into it, you are tempting the devil to tempt you. If you leave yourself open to evil influences the Spirit of God will be grieved, and he may leave you to reap the result of your folly. What think you, friends? Had you not better attend to your fences at once?

And then there is another evil, for the land itself will go away. "No," say you; "how can that be?" If a stone wall is broken down round a farm in England a man does not thereby lose his land, but in many parts of Palestine the land is all ups and downs on the sides of the hills, and every bit of ground is terraced and kept up by walls. When the walls fall the soil slips over, terrace upon terrace, and the vines and trees go down with it; then the rain comes and washes the soil away, and nothing is left but barren crags which would starve a lark. In the same manner a man may so neglect himself, and so neglect the things of God, and become so careless and indifferent about doctrine, and about holy living, that his power to do good ceases, and his mind, his heart, and his energy seem to be gone. The prophet said, "Ephraim is a silly dove, without heart": there are flocks of such silly doves. The man who trifles with religion sports with his own soul, and will soon degenerate into so much of a trifler that he will be averse to solemn thought, and incapable of real usefulness. I charge you, dear friends, to be sternly true to yourselves and to your God. Stand to your principles in this evil and wicked day. Now, when everything seems

to be turned into marsh and mire and mud, and religious thought appears to be silently sliding and slipping along, descending like a stream of slime into the Dead Sea of Unbelief, — get solid walls built around your life, around your faith, and around your character. Stand fast, and having done all, still stand. May God the Holy Ghost cause you to be rooted and grounded, built up and established, fixed and confirmed, never “casting away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”

Lastly, I want, if I can, TO WAKE UP THE SLUGGARD. I would like to throw a handful of gravel up to his window. It is time to get up, for the sun has drunk up all the dew. He craves “a little more sleep.” My dear fellow, if you take a little more sleep, you will never wake at all till you lift up your eyes in another world. Wake at once. Leap from your bed before you are smothered in it. Wake up! Do you not see where you are? You have let things alone till your heart is covered with sins like weeds. You have neglected God and Christ till you have grown worldly, sinful, careless, indifferent, ungodly. I mean some of you who were once named with the sacred name. You have become like worldlings, and are almost as far from being what you ought to be as others who make no profession at all. Look at yourselves, and see what has come of your neglected walls. Then look at some of your fellow-Christians, and mark how diligent they are. Look at many among them who are poor and illiterate, and yet they are doing far more than you for the Lord Jesus. In spite of your talents and opportunities, you are an unprofitable servant, letting all things run to waste. Is it not time that you bestirred yourself? Look, again, at others who, like yourself, went to sleep, meaning to wake in a little while. What has become of them? Alas, for those who have fallen into gross sin, and dishonored their character, and who have been put away from the church of God; yet they only went a little further than you have done. Your state of heart is much the same as theirs, and if you should be tempted as they have been, you will probably make shipwreck as they have done. Oh, see to it, you that slumber, for an idle professor is ready for anything. A slothful professor’s heart is tinder for the devil’s tinder-box: does your heart thus invite the sparks of temptation?

Remember, lastly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall he come and find you sleeping? Remember the judgment. What will you say to excuse

yourself, for opportunities lost, time wasted, and talents wrapped up in a napkin, when the Lord shall come?

As for you, my unconverted friend, if you go dreaming through this world, without any sort of trouble, and never look to the state of your heart at all, you will be a lost man beyond all question. The slothful can have no hope, for “if the righteous scarcely are saved,” who strive to serve their Lord, where will those appear who sleep on in defiance of the calls of God? Salvation is wholly and alone of grace, as you well know; but grace never works in men’s minds towards slumbering and indifference; it tends towards energy, activity, fervor, importunity, self-sacrifice. God grant us the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, that all things may be set in order, sins cut up by the roots within the heart, and the whole man protected by sanctifying grace from the wasters which lurk around, hoping to enter where the wall is low. O Lord, remember us in mercy, fence us about by thy power, and keep us from the sloth which would expose us to evil, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

THE PLOUGHMAN

SERMON NO. 3383

“Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?” — Isaiah 28:24.

UNLESS they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great Husbandman shall till us by his grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. If one of these days I shall hear that a country has been discovered where wheat grows without the work of the farmer, I may then, perhaps, hope to find one of our race who will bring forth holiness without the grace of God. Hitherto all land on which the foot of man has trodden has needed labor and care; and even so among men the need of gracious tillage is universal. Jesus says to all of us, “Ye must be born again.” Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plough of the law, and sows it with the seed of the gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents, and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live.

Yes, and the plough is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil. There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out, and do not appear again among men; and there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do; but human nature will always remain the same, and therefore there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man’s fields, and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry, carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral suasion; something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put his own right hand to the plough, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness. Good is never spontaneous in unrenewed humanity, and evil is never cut up till the ploughshare of almighty grace is driving through it.

The text leads our thoughts in this direction, and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?" This question may be answered in the affirmative, "Yes, in the proper season he does plough all day to sow"; and, secondly, this text may more properly be answered in the negative, "No, the ploughman does not plough every day to sow; he has other work to do according to the season."

I. First, our text may be ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE, — "Yes, the ploughman does plough all day to sow." When it is ploughing time he keeps on at it till his work is done; if it requires one day, or two days, or twenty days to finish his fields, he continues his task while the weather permits. The perseverance of the ploughman is instructive, and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plough the heart of man he ploughs all day, and herein is his patience; and, secondly, so ought the Lord's servants to labor all day with men's hearts, and herein is our perseverance.

"Doth the ploughman plough all day?" So doth God plough the heart of man, and herein is his patience. The team was in the field in the case of some of us very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children we woke in the night under a sense of sin; our father's teaching and our mother's prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us, and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred, and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school the reading of a chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible-class, or a solemn sermon, so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks. The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. Though we quenched the Spirit, though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the ploughshare; furrows were made in the soul, and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots although no seed of grace was as yet sown in our hearts. Some have continued in this state for many years, ploughed but now sown; but, blessed be God, it was not so with others of us; for we had not left boyhood before the good seed of the gospel fell upon our heart. Alas! There are many who do not thus yield to grace, and with them the ploughman ploughs all day to sow. I have seen

the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience, and yet continuing unhappy in it all, fearful, unrestful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plough. In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years, and all to no avail. Ah! And I have known the man come to middle life, and still he has not received the good seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up. He has gone on in business without God: day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses, and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come, and chidings of conscience, so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, "What shall I do in the end thereof?" The ploughman has ploughed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made ready and the good seed is cast in, to be received, nurtured, and multiplied a hundredfold.

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this ploughing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up his work — ploughing, ploughing, ploughing, ploughing, till darkness ended all. Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position. What! Threescore years old and yet unsaved? Forty years did God suffer the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but he has borne with you for sixty years. Seventy years old, and yet unregenerated! Ah, my friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Savior before you go to heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish for ever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life; but still remember —

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”*

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The ploughman ploughs all day; and the Lord waits that he may be gracious unto you. I have seen many aged persons converted, and therefore I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over forty years of age

if they had been hearers of the gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts. Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years; but yet the grace of God does not stop short at a certain age; those who enter the vineyard at the eleventh hour shall have their penny, and grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young. Come along, old friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to him even now, though you have stood out so long. You have been a sadly tough piece of ground, and the ploughman has ploughed all day; but if at last the sods are turned, and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope of you yet.

“Doth the ploughman plough all day?” I answer, — Yes, however long the day may be, God in mercy ploughs still, he is long-suffering, and full of tenderness and mercy and grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love.

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God’s part, but it teaches perseverance on our part. “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” Yes, he does; then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find him? The promise is, “He that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” When will I knock all day. It may be at the first seeking I may not find; what then? “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” Then will I seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive; what then? “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” Then will I ask all day. Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Do that at once. In the name of God do it at once, and you are saved at once. May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus, and you are at once in the kingdom of Christ. But if peradventure in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking; get to the foot of the cross, lay hold of it, and cry, “If I perish I will perish here. Lord, I come to thee in Jesus Christ for mercy, and if thou

art not pleased to look at me immediately, and forgive my sins, I will cry to thee till thou dost." When God's Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace. Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. They find peace when their hearts are roused to strong resolve to seek until they find. I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation, and hear the gospel till their souls live by it. If they are resolved to drive the plough through doubts, and fears, and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the grace of God.

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" Yes, when it is ploughing-time. Then, so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for —

*“Tis all my business here below
The precious gospel seed to sow.”*

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, rouse yourself, and plough on for the love of Jesus, and dying men. Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours, and while they last let us fulfill our task. Ploughing is hard work; but as there will be no harvest without it, let us just put forth all our strength, and never flag till we have performed our Lord's will, and by his Holy Spirit wrought conviction in men's souls. Some soils are very stiff, and cling together, and the labor is heart-breaking; others are like the unreclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble; they need a steam-plough, and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled, and therefore we must put forth more strength than the labor may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance; he called the next morning, and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him; he called again the next morning, but he was still refused; he went on till he called twenty times in vain, but on the twenty-first occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer, and by God's grace he saved a soul from death. "Why do you tell your child a thing twenty times?" asked some one of a mother. "Because," said she, "I find nineteen times is not enough." Now, when a soul is to be ploughed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not

do it. What then? Why, plough all day till the work is done. Whether you are ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble, and the reward of it is infinite. The grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service; it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it, and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

We prize that which costs us labor and service, and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts. It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. When you think of the ploughman's ploughing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. Seek —

*“With cries, entreaties, tears to save
And snatch them from the fiery wave.*

Doth the ploughman plough all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plough all day for souls that shall live for ever, if saved, to adore the grace of God, or shall live for ever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come, and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins, and plough all day.

I would beg all the members of our churches to keep their hands on the gospel plough, and their eyes straight before them. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" let Christians do the same. Start close to the hedge, and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plough as close to the ditch as you can, and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves, and drunkards in the slums around, do not neglect any of them; for if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds they will soon spread amongst the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn round, and make for the place you started from. And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again. And what next? Why, up and down again. You have visited that district with tracts; do it again, fifty-two times in the year — multiply your furrows. We must learn how to continue in well doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good for ever and ever, and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plough on, plough on, and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance. Ploughing is not

done with a skip and a jump: the ploughman ploughs all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in ploughing: there the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up, it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones, and makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for. Those whom the Lord fills with his grace will keep to their ploughing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” Then let us do the same, being assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown, and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord, and the angel reapers shall descend, and the shouts of the harvest-home shall fill both earth and heaven.

II. But, now, somewhat briefly, THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. “Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?” No, he does not always plough. After he has ploughed he breaks the clods, sows, reaps, and threshes. In the chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The ploughman has many other things to do beside ploughing. There is an advance in what he does; this teaches us that there is the like on God’s part, and should be the like on ours.

First, on God’s part, there is an advance in what he does. “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” No, he goes forward to other matters. It may be that in the case of some of you the Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plough you. You are feeling the terrors of the law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh, and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last for ever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen: “Doth the ploughman plough all day?” No, he is preparing for something else — he ploughs to sow. Thus doth the Lord deal with you; therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying, and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy, and you seek water, and there is none, and your tongue faileth for thirst; but the Lord will hear you, and deliver you. He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth. He will turn again, and he will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by his chiding, he will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation, and water it with the dews of heaven, and smile upon it with the sunlight of his grace; and there shall soon be in you, first the blade,

then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest. O ye who are sore wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry, Doth God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this, — “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land,” and what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”? Thou shalt be saved now, find peace now, if thou wilt have done with thyself and all looking to thine own good works to save thee, and wilt turn to him who paid the ransom for thee upon the tree. The Lord is gentle and tender and full of compassion, he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. Many of your doubts and fears come of unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh, and are not of God at all. Blame him not for what he does not send, and does not wish you to suffer. His mind is for your peace, not for your distress; for thus he speaks — “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” He has smitten, but he will smile; he has wounded, but he will heal; he has slain, but he will make alive; therefore turn unto him at once and receive comfort at his hands. The ploughman does not plough for ever, else would he reap no harvest; and God is not always heart-breaking, he also draws near on heart-healing errands.

You see, then, that the great husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that he goes on to productive work in the hearts of his people. He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul to bring forth fruit unto his praise and glory. “Oh!” says one, “I wish that would come true to me.” It will. “Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?” You expect by-and-by to see ploughed fields clothed with springing corn; and you

may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness. Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall advance, also, to a joyful experience. See that ploughman; he whistles as he ploughs, he does not own much of this world's good, but yet he is merry. He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home, and so he ploughs in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ, and you, too, shall be brimful of joy. Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come, press forward to it. Gospel sorrowing leads on to gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing, and the rejoicing knows no end. God will not chasten all day, but he will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till you shall be like himself. This then, is the advance that there is in God's work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience.

But what if the ploughing should never lead to sowing; what if you should be disturbed in conscience, and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plough, and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land, and then its end is to be burned. Oh! Man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation; God himself giving you up. Surely that is hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixity of character will operate eternally, and no hand of the merciful One shall come near to till the soul again. What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that this advance is a lesson to us; for we, too, are to go forward. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" No, he ploughs to sow, and in due time he sows. Some churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plough; at least, all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil, and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly; but doth the ploughman plough all day? You may draw up a large programme and promise great things; but pray do not stop there. Don't be making furrows all day; do get to your sowing. I fancy that those who promise most perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no programme at first, their course works itself out by its own inner force by the grace of God: they do not propose, but perform. They do not plough

all day to sow, but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom he saith, "the sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of advance. Let us go from preaching the law to preaching the gospel. "Doth the ploughman plough all day?" He does plough: he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground. Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinboro' streets, says, "It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the gospel, unless you use the sharp needle of the law." Some of my brethren do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin. If they must needs try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it; but I do not mean to be so foolish myself; my needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp, and when it carries with it the silken thread of the gospel, I am sure good work is done by it. You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Still, brethren, we must not plough all day. No, no, the preaching of the law is only preparatory to the preaching of the gospel. The stress of our business lies in proclaiming good tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ; we are not rugged prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of grace. Be not satisfied with revival services, and stirring appeals, but preach the doctrines of grace so as to bring out the full compass of covenant truth. Ploughing has had its turn, now for planting and watering. Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men, and then to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus has commanded us. We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher truths, from laying foundations to further upbuilding.

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from ploughing to something better, namely, from hearing and fearing to believing. How many years some of you have been hearing the gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state for ever? Will you never believe in him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal; the other night you went home almost broken-hearted; I should think you are ploughed enough by this time; and yet you have not received the seed of eternal life, for you have not

believed in the Lord Jesus. It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life, and yet never to be alive. It will be an awful thing to be almost in heaven, and yet for ever shut out. It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway-station just in time to see the train steaming out; I had much rather be half-an-hour behind time. To lose a train by half-a-second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of heaven and yet be shut out. You will be within a hair's breadth of glory, and yet be covered with eternal shame. O beware of being so near to the kingdom, and yet lost; almost, but not altogether saved. God grant that you may not be among those who are ploughed, and ploughed, and ploughed, and yet never sown. It will be of no avail at the last to cry, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. We had a seat at the chapel, we attended the services on week-nights as well as on Sundays, we went to prayer-meetings, we joined a Bible-class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds, we gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer, and read a chapter of the Bible every day." All these things may be done, and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Take heed lest your Lord should answer, "With all this, your heart never came to me; therefore, depart from me, I never knew you." If Jesus once knows a man he always knows him. He can never say to me, "I never knew you," for he has known me as his poor dependent, a beggar for years at his door. Some of you have been all that is good except that you never came into contact with Christ, never trusted him, never knew him. Ah me, how sad your state! Will it be always so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being ploughed, and are agitated about your souls, Go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh! If people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe. Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy. The difficulty of believing lies in there being no difficulty in it. "'f the prophet had bit thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" Oh, yes, you would have done it, and you would have thought it easy too; but when he simply says, "Wash, and be clean," there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride, and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required, and

believe in Jesus at once. May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self, and ready to accept the gospel. The word is nigh thee, let it be believed; it is in thy mouth, let it be swallowed down; it is in thy heart, let it be trusted. With your heart believe in Jesus, and with your mouth make confession of him, and you shall be saved. A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. O give up at once every false hope. I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines: —

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.
Be thou my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”*

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms, and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, “But, sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms.” I replied at once, “Tumble into them anyhow; faint away into Christ's arms, or die into Christ's arms, so long as you get there.” Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off can-ing and cannot-ing, and leaving it all to Christ, for he can do all things, though you can do nothing. “Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?” No, he makes progress, and goes from ploughing to sowing. Go, and do thou likewise: sow unto the Spirit the precious seed of faith in Christ, and the Lord will give thee a joyous harvest.

SOUL-THRESHING

SERMON NO. 3388

“For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.”
— Isaiah 28:27-28.

THE art of husbandry was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, and so the Lord, when he sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the prophet puts it, — “His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.” God has taught man to plough, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain, and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern husbandman could not thresh by machinery as we do; but still he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain. This is what is intended in the first clause by the “threshing instrument,” as also in that passage, “I have made thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth.” When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence: “Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cumin.” They had also flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cumin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. “The fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cumin with a rod.”

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books; but the meaning of the illustration is this — that as God has taught husbandmen to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does he in his infinite wisdom deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through

the same agony of conviction: we are not all to the same extent threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction; one escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels, as it were, the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations.

Our subject is just this. Threshing: all kinds of seeds need it, all sorts of men need it. Secondly, the threshing is done with discretion, and, thirdly, the threshing will not last for ever; for so the second verse of the text says: "Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen."

I. First, then, WE ALL NEED THRESHING. Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin; but they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them. The best of men are men at the best; and being men, they are not perfect, but are still compassed about with infirmity. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have been brought into our garner so joyfully. Even the wheat is joined to the straw, which was necessary to it at one time. About the kernel of the wheat the husk is wrapped, and this still clings to it even when it lies upon the threshing-floor. About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion, we are faulty. If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it, or, if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin be shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that it rains. So far as my own observation goes I have found out no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect; the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in heaven, but not in this poor fallen world. We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing-floor is intended to work for us.

Now, threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk. Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses, or the wheel of a cart to separate it. But there's the rub: our soul not only lieth in the dust, but "cleaveth" to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world; and this compact is not soon broken. In our hearts we hate every false way, and yet we sorrowfully confess, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which, if not sinful in themselves, yet tend in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts. It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father's house even when the king doth most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths. We were all born in the house of evil, and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity, so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath. That which was bred in the bone is hard to get out of the flesh. Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things and break us away from evil. This needs a divine hand, and nothing but the grace of God can make the threshing effectual. Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin, and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated altogether from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil, and abhor all iniquity. When we shake right out of the straw, and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet. It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark, and I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation. From a certain sort of sins we are very easily separated by the grace of God early in our spiritual life; but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight, and the work has to be repeated. The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the divine skill and power of the Holy Ghost, and by him only will it be accomplished.

Threshing becomes needful for the sake of our usefulness; for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honor God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing-floor, thou must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.

Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth, therefore every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other ere we can enter into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yea, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

Peradventure some of us to-day are lying up on the threshing-floor, suffering from the blows of chastisement. What then? Why, let us rejoice therein; for this testifies to our value in the sight of God. If the wheat were to cry out and say, "The great drag has gone over me, therefore the husbandman has no care for me," we should instantly reply, — The husbandman does not pass the corn-drag over the darnel or the nettles; it is only over the precious wheat that he turns the wheel of his cart, or the feet of his oxen. Because he esteems the wheat, therefore he deals sternly with it and spares it not. Judge not, O believer, that God hates you because he afflicts you; but interpret truly and see that he honors you by every stroke which he lays upon you. Thus saith the Lord, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Because a full atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus for all his people's sins, therefore he will not punish us as a judge; but because we are his dear children, therefore he will chastise us as a father. In love he corrects his own children that he may perfect them in his own image, and make them partakers of his holiness. Is it not written, "I will bring them under the rod of the covenant"? Has he not said, "I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction"? Therefore do not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the feeling of the flesh, but judge according to faith, and understand that, as threshing is a testimony to the value of the wheat, so affliction is a token of God's delight in his people.

Remember, however, that as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian. If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in heaven, for it is not the threshing-floor of the imperfect but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is therefore a humbling token, and so long as we feel it we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is a prophecy of our future perfection. We are under-going from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail: we shall by his prudence and wisdom be clean delivered from the husk of sin. We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us, and for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect. Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." If, we being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of spirits cause us to live unto himself by his holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work; and since we know whereunto tribulation tendeth, let us glory in it, and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes. We need threshing, the threshing proves our value in God's sight, and while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing.

II. Secondly, I would remark that GOD'S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION; "for the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument." The poor little fitches, a kind of small seed used for flavouring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. "Neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin": this little seed, perhaps the carraway, would have been ground by so great a weight: it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner. The fitches were soon removed from the stalks by being "beaten out with a staff," and the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. For tender seeds the farmer uses gentle means, and for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this, as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.

Reflect, my brother, that your threshing and mine are in God's hands. Our chastening is not left to servants, much less to enemies; "we are chastened of the Lord!" The Great Husbandman himself personally bids the laborers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way except as divine wisdom shall direct: they would turn the wheel upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a staff. I have seen God's servants trying both these follies; they have crushed the weak and tender, and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked. How roughly some ministers, some elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls; yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for, however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave his chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity, and preserve his own from being destroyed thereby. How glad I am of this; for there are many nowadays who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also he has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as fitches. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn: "the Lord preserveth the righteous." Not a stroke in providence is left to chance; the Lord ordains it, and arranges the time, the force, and the place of it. The divine decree leaves nothing uncertain; the jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives. Whether we bear the teeth of the corn-drag, or men do ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the divine hand, everything is by appointment, and the appointment is fixed by infallible wisdom. Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that the instruments used for our threshing are chosen also by the Great Husbandman. The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments, and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it; indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it," and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse-hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod, and the fitches might even prefer the wheel to the staff; but happily the matter is left to the

choice of One who judges unerringly. What dost thou know about it, poor sufferer? How canst thou judge of what is good for thee? "Ah!" cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty; but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school, with my uncle for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task, and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it. Either it was too thin, or too stout; and in consequence I was threatened by the sufferers with condign punishment if I did not do better next time. I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened. You smile at my simile, but you may smile also at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but this, Lord. Any affliction but this." How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial; for it would then be no trial at all. Almost every really useful medicine is unpleasant: almost all effectual surgery is painful: no trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial, and none the less right because it is bitter.

Notice, too, that God not only selects the instruments, but he chooses the place. Farmers in the East have large threshing-floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley, and upon these they turn horses and drags; but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement, and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits: they are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing-floor; but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment, and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to thy mind?" Should a child select the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial; it is hard to be crippled in youth, or to be poor in age, or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom. A part of the skill of the physician may lie, not only

in writing a prescription, but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken. One draught may be most useful in the morning, and another may be more beneficial in the evening; and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which he has prepared for us. I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age, and I would fain screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best, and there we must leave it. The instrument of the threshing, the place, the measure, the time, the end, are all appointed by infallible love.

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The husbandman is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh; the horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all his chastening. Courage, tried friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve: tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength such shall the affliction be: the wheat may feel the wheel, but the fitches shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure, and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke.

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, and quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you; yet have I personally realized this truth upon the bed of pain, and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions; I did not doubt his wisdom then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. Our Great Husbandman understands how to divide us from the husk, and he goes about his work in a way for which he deserves to be adored for ever.

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go —

*“If trials six be fix'd for men
They shall not suffer seven.
If God appoint afflictions ten
They ne'er can be eleven.”*

The old law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourgings there always comes in that “save one.” When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because ninety-and-nine failed to effect his purpose; but all the powers of earth and hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number. We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing. The Lord never sports with the feelings of his saints. “He does not afflict willingly,” and so we may be sure he never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the husbandman in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which he sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble, and perhaps it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured; those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled, nor shall they be. Possibly they have a feeble mind also, and that which others would laugh at would be death to them; they shall be kept as the apple of the eye.

If you are free from tribulation never ask for it; that would be a great folly. I did meet with a brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, “Do not worry about that; but be happy while you may.” Only a queer child would beg to be flogged. Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as he metes out to others: they do not need it, and they could not bear it; why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed; but what of that if they are a superior grain, a seed of larger usefulness, intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier threshing since their use is greater. It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horseman and must feel the wheel of the cart; and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes. There is not one amongst us but what would say, “I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did.” Yes; but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel. He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations, and driven to the verge of despair. At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of all the world, and then after days of

fighting with the pope and the devil he would go home to his bed and lie there broken-down and trembling. You see God's heroes only in the pulpit, or in other public places, you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life: else you might discover that the bread corn is bruised, and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow themselves. Envy no man; for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.

Brethren, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of his people; let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children; and if you have to rebuke your brother do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a staff and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go you and sow, and leave your elders to thresh.

Next, let us firmly believe in God's discretion, and be sure that he is doing the right thing by us. Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us let it be with a "nevertheless not as I will." Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come ye out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness, and the process of threshing will all the sooner be completed. God makes us wise in this matter!

III. A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is that THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOR EVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here: "Bread corn is bruised, but he will not always be threshing it." Oh, no. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Rejoice, ye daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, ye sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise him who is the health of your countenance. The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the

year round; for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord, O my soul! The Lord will yet bring home his banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last for ever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing-floors nor corn-drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds: "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle, and return in triumph." The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning cometh. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming — the day that shall go no more down for ever. Come, eat your bread with joy, and march onward with a merry heart; for the land which floweth with milk and honey is but a little way before you. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, abide the Great Husbandman's will, and may the Lord glorify himself in you. Amen.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

SERMON NO. 3392

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, APRIL 28TH, 1867.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Romans 5:1.

WE desire this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed, and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and who are now at the present moment walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace.

Wishing to speak of the text, then, in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me, not only with your ears, and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eye of your self-examination, asking yourselves, as we proceed step by step, “Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this matter? Have I been led into that truth?” And our hope will be that some person to whom these things have hitherto been merely external, and therefore valueless, may be led by God to get hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul, and heart, and conscience, so that they may enjoy them, and find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God, happily enjoying peace with the Most High.

Our first few thoughts shall be some plain, earnest talk concerning: —

I. A FEW PRELIMINARY DISCOVERIES WHICH A MAN MAKES BEFORE HE GETS PEACE WITH GOD.

These, I do not think, are by any means foreign to the text, or merely imported to it, but belong rightfully to it. You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been speaking about sin. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligible definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law, and that the law, by and of itself, could never restore them to the favor of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith.

Well, then, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is, that it is important to be justified in the sight of God. Many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening, and find a man at the counter, and you say to him, "Well, do you never go to a place of worship?" "No," he would say, "but I am quite as good as those who do." "How so?" "Well, I am a great deal better than some of them." "How is that?" "Well, I never failed in business; I never duped people in a limited liability company; I never told lies; I am no thief; I am not a drunkard; I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June; and that is more than you can say of some of your religious people." Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character. There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. He sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet if that man were really to think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of a creature must be, not to his fellow-creatures, but to his Creator, and that, however just a man may be to another man, yet if he be altogether unjust to God, he cannot escape without the severest penalty. But oh! the most of men think that so long as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow-men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will, and God's law trodden under their feet. Now, I think that everyone here who will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think, that he will see that, even though a man may go before the bar of his country, and say before any judge or jury, "I

have in nothing injured my fellow-man; I am just before men," yet it does not make the man's character perfect. Unless he is also able to say, "And I am also just before the presence of the God who made me, and whose servant I am," he has only kept one half, and that the less important, of God's law for him.

It cannot help being, it must be, important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day when he shall say, "Return ye children of men." We must then render up our souls to him who created us. Well, you can surely go as far as that with me — that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your Maker? I am thankful that you can go so far.

The next thing is this. A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that his past life has been marred badly, by serious offences against the law of God. Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark: we cannot see in it. We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that may be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is, and especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law, and, in the light of the divine Spirit, reads that perfect law, and compares with it his own imperfect heart and life. He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing and, sometimes, despair. Take but one command. Perhaps there are some here who will say, "I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command saith, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and I have never broken it; I am clean there." Ay, but now hear Christ explain the command, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, then, who amongst us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that be the meaning of the command, who can say, "I am innocent?" If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture, has to deal, not with our outward actions alone, but with our words, and with our thoughts, and with our imaginations — if it is so exceeding broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man, then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne? No, dear brethren, this must be understood by you, and by me, before we can be justified, that we are full of sin. What if I say that we are as full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We

are all sin. The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ's all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up. Unless you know yourselves to be lost, you will never care for that Savior who came "to seek and to save the lost." That is a second discovery, then; that it is important to be just before God, but that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law, and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position.

Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we ever can be just before God, on the footing of our own doing. We must give it up now, as an utterly lost case. The past is past: that can never be by us blotted out, and the present, inasmuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past; and the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better, and so salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility. The law said, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen, and when I put to him the question — he believed himself to be perfectly righteous, and I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it; but when I said to him, "Now, there is your own law for it, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them': have you continued in all things?" he said, "I have not." "Then," I said, "the curse is upon you: how do you hope to escape from it?" and I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had no answer; and it is a question which, when properly understood, no man can answer, except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, "He was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing." Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection. It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase, and had said, "If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward." But we have cracked it, chipped it; ah! my brethren, the most of

us have broken it and smashed it to pieces. But we will suppose that we have only cracked it a little. Yes, but even then we have lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole, and the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given. Never you say that you will not break it farther. Nay, but you have broken it. You have thrown yourselves now out of the list. It sometimes seems hard when you tell people that if they have violated the law in one point, they have broken the whole of it; but it is not so hard as it looks to be, for if I tell a man who is going down a coal-mine on a long chain that, if he shall break one link of the chain, it does not matter, though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound; if there is only one link that is broken, down will descend the basket, and the poor miner be dashed to pieces. Nobody thinks that hard. Everybody recognizes that as being a matter of mechanical law, that the strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part. And so the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point in which it fails. Alas! our obedience has failed, and, through it, no one of us can ever be just before God.

Now, I want to stop a minute, and put the question round the galleries, and below stairs. Have you all got as far as that? It is important to be just before God: we see that we are not so: do we see that we cannot be so? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the Eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, or you will keep on knocking at the door until you are quite sure that God has nailed it up for ever, and you will go scrambling over that Alp, and tumbling down this precipice, until you are convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it, and then you will give up your desperate endeavour and come to God in God's way, which is quite another way from your own. I trust that we are all convinced of this.

Let us notice one more preliminary discovery. A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that, inasmuch as he is not just before God, and cannot be, he is at the present moment under condemnation. God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man be not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him. If you are not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment. You are not executed, it is true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you,

and the sign that it is so is your unbelief, for “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all on a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country; but when I say that you have been condemned by the Court of Heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water or oil over a marble slab. And yet, my hearers, if thou didst but know the meaning of what I am saying — and I pray God the Holy Ghost to make thee know it — it would make thy very bones to quiver! God has condemned thee. Thou art out of Christ. Thou hast broken his law. God has lifted his hand to smite thee, and, though his mercy tarries for awhile, yet days and hours will soon be gone, and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution, and where will thy soul be then? Now, you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified, for until we are condemned by ourselves we are not acquitted by God. Again, I pause and say, Dost thou feel this, my dear hearer? If thou dost, instead of despairing, be hopeful. If thou hast the sentence of death within thee, be thankful for it, for now shall life be given thee from the hand of God’s grace.

Having occupied, perhaps, too much time over that, we now come more immediately into the text to: —

II. SHOW THE GOSPEL LEARNING WHICH IS TAUGHT TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely, these: that, inasmuch as through man’s sin, the way of obedience is for ever closed, so that we — none of us — can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offences, to bestow upon them his love, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. He has been pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to devise a way by which without injury to his justice, he can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into his heart, and make them his children, and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept God’s law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from himself.

I trust we have learned that; that there is a plan of salvation by grace, and by grace alone; and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works.

It is a blessed thing never to muddle in your head the doctrine of working, and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits, but if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together. It must be all works or else all grace. Now, God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It comes to us upon the footing of grace, pure grace alone. And this is God's plan, namely, that, inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience. Jesus, the Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law, and in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and our Savior's life and death make up a complete keeping and honoring of that law which we have broken and dishonored, and God's plan is this: "I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for his sake; and now, looking at you through him, I can bless you though you deserve it not; I can pass by your undeserving; I can blot out your sins like a cloud, and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what he has done; you have no merits, but he has boundless merits; you are full of sin and must be punished, but he has been punished instead of you, and now I can deal with you." This is the language of God, put into human words, "I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of my dear Son." This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you: all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Everyone of his merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if he were you — he in your stead, you in his stead. Substitution! that is the word! Christ the Substitute for sinners: Christ standing for men, and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, he "being made

sin for us who knew no sin.” Man standing in Christ’s place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favor, instead of Christ.

And this, I say, is through trusting, or believing. God’s way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon him.

“Therefore, being justified” — how? Not by works; that is not the link, but — ”being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ offers to God the substitution: through faith we accept it: and from that moment God accepts us.

Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the Assembly’s Catechism when you were but children: you have learned it in the various classes since then, but do you know it in your own soul, and do you know that God’s way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon his dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it, and that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you!

But, going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon: —

III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE OF THE TEXT.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you, too, through the preliminary discoveries, and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of another, and now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word.

“Being justified.” The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. You know what Adam was in naked innocence in Paradise. Such is every believer. Ay, and more than that. Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin, and we also have access with boldness unto God our Father because, through Jesus’ blood, we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brethren and sisters — scores and hundreds of them — all of whom are tonight just before God — perfectly so; completely so; so just that they never can be otherwise than just; so just that even in heaven they will be no more acceptable to God than they are here tonight. That is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for- nothing sinner. The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus,

but as soon as he trusted Christ, the merits of Christ became his merits, and he stands before God as though he were perfect, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” through the righteousness of Christ.

Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it. “Being justified by faith.” The way of reaching this state of justification is not by tears, nor prayers, nor humblings, nor working, nor Bible-reading, nor church-going, nor chapel-going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by faith, which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God, a dependence upon the promise of God, because it is God’s promise, and is worthy of dependence. It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said. This is faith, and every man who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight.

I know what the devil will say to you. He will say to you, “You are a sinner!” Tell him you know you are, but that for all that you are justified. He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ’s righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps and your backslidings, of your offences and your wanderings. Tell him, and tell your own conscience, that you know all that, but that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that, although your sin be great, Christ is quite able to put it all away. Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as sinners. You get a mangle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you, and you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means. You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves; you must know that you are sinners, and that in your hearts you are as big and as black sinners as the very worst and vilest, and you must come to Jesus, and leave your fancied righteousnesses, and your pretended goodnesses behind you, and you must take him for everything, and trust in him. Oh! to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness — to have the two together — repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice! Oh! if you could understand that saying of the spouse, “I am black, but comely” — for that is where we must come — black in myself, as black as hell, and yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus.

My dear brethren and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart?: —

*“In thy surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With thy Savior’s vesture on,
Holy as the holy one.”*

For so it is: you stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted: and notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear, and as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in his own obedience.

Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to enquire this evening. Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step farther, namely, to observe — and this is coming back, whilst it is also going forward — that “we are justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is the foundation: there is the mainspring. There is the tree that bears the fruit. We are justified by faith, but not by faith of itself. Faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight, because it is hard for us to keep it in mind. But remember that faith is not the work of the Spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree. That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me. My dear brethren, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, “Well, now, it is all right with me, for I fee this, and I feel that.” Very good these evidences are in their places, but evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect; when you have to say, “Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” you will find that, instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross. There was a time when I, too, could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the Spirit of God’s work in my soul I do thank God for it, and bless him for it now but I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the huckster walked: —

*“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”*

Brethren, it is down on the ground that we must live. We must build upon the rock itself. On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber, so as to get a little higher. Well, now, some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky, but when you get right down on the mountain itself, that never shakes, and you are perfectly secure there. So sometimes we get building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works — all very well in their way, but then they shake in the storm. Depend upon it, that the soul that clings to the rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it, and having nothing then to depend upon, more than the poor dying robber had when, without a single good work, he had to hang on the dying Christ alone — oh! believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in, Jesus, for a poor sinner when he is torn from his cups and his sins, and none but Jesus for the aged saint when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony: —

*“Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to thy cross I cling.”*

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And now, to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy — ”we have peace with God.” I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think. I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men travelling through fine scenery, and shutting their eyes for fear they should see. I always open mine as wide as ever I can, because I think I can see God in all the works of his hands, and what God has taken the trouble to make I think I ought to take the trouble to look at. Surely there must be something to see in a man’s works if he be a wise man; and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God, who is all-wise. Now, it is a delightful thing to say, when you look upon a landscape, lit up with sunlight and shaded with cloud, “Well, my Father made all this; I never saw him, but I do delight in the work of his hands; he made all this, and I am perfectly at peace with him.” Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall. There is thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a lightning’s flash. Now, those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with him may

stand there and say, "Well, it is my Father who is doing all this; that is his voice; the voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty." I love to hear my Father's voice. I never am so happy as in a tremendous storm, and when the lightning flash comes, I think — Well, it is only the flashing of my Father's eye: now, God is abroad: he seemed as if he had left the world before, but now he comes riding on the wings of the wind; let me go and meet him. I am not afraid! Suppose you are out at sea in a storm. You are justified by faith, and you say, "Well, let the waves roar; let them clap their hands: my Father holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, why should I be afraid?" Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when "earth is all in arms abroad." It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain. Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow-man. Everything is going to the bad. But the Christian says, "God is at the helm; the whole business of business is managed by the great King: let the sons of earth do as they will, but: —

*"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might."*

It is something to feel that my Father cannot do me a bad turn. Even if he should use his rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank him for it, for I am at perfect peace with him.

And then to come to die, and to feel, "I am going to God, and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife espoused goes to her husband, like a child home from school to the parents' arms. Oh! it is something to die with a sense of peace with God! Surely every thoughtful man will feel that. Now, if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your Father's will with perfect equanimity, let it be what it may. Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your souls.

Oh! I wish it were so with all present! It may be so if God the Spirit bring you to rest in Jesus. Nay, it shall be so, my dear friend; it shall be so with you tonight; though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting. Oh! believe

him! Trust him, and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God which, as the world did not give you, so the world shall never take away, but you shall have it for ever and ever. God grant it to each one of us! Amen.

WHEAT IN THE BARN

SERMON NO. 3393

“Gather the wheat into my barn.” — Matthew 13:30.

GATHER the wheat into my barn.” Then the purpose of the Son of man will be accomplished. He sowed good seed, and he shall have his barn filled with it at the last. Be not dispirited, Christ will not be disappointed. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” He went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, but he shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

“Gather the wheat into my barn”: then Satan’s policy will be unsuccessful. The enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, hopeful that the false wheat would destroy our materially injure the true; but he failed in the end, for the wheat ripened and was ready to be gathered. Christ’s garner shall be filled; the tares shall not choke the wheat. The evil one will be put to shame.

In gathering in the wheat, good angels will be employed: “the angels are the reapers.” This casts special scorn upon the great evil angel. He sows the tares, and tries to destroy the harvest; and therefore the good angels are brought in to celebrate his defeat, and to rejoice together with their Lord in the success of the divine husbandry. Satan will make a poor profit out of his meddling; he shall be balked in all his efforts, and so the threat shall be fulfilled, “Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat.”

By giving the angels work to do, all intelligent creatures, of whose existence we have information, are made to take an interest in the work of grace: whether for malice or for adoration, redemption excites them all. To all, the wonderful works of God are made manifest: for these things were not done in a corner.

We too much forget the angels. Let us not overlook their tender sympathy with us; they behold the Lord rejoicing over our repentance, and they rejoice with him; they are our watchers and the Lord’s messengers of

mercy; they bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against a stone; and when we come to die, they carry us to the bosom of our Lord. It is one of our joys that we have come to an innumerable company of angels; let us think of them with affection.

At this time I will keep to my text, and preach from it almost word by word. It begins with “but,” and that is A WORD OF SEPARATION.

Here note that the tares and the wheat will grow together until the time of harvest shall come. It is a great sorrow of heart to some of the wheat to be growing side by side with tares. The ungodly are as thorns and briars to those who fear the Lord. How frequently is the sigh forced forth from the godly heart: — “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” A man’s foes are often found within his own household; those who should have been his best helpers are often his worst hinderers: their conversation vexes and torments him. It is of little use to try to escape from them, for the tares are permitted in Gods providence to grow with the wheat, and they will do so until the end. Good men have emigrated to distant lands to found communities in which there should be none but saints, and alas! sinners have sprung up in their own families. The attempt to weed the ungodly and heretical out of the settlement has led to persecution and other evils, and the whole plan has proved a failure. Others have shut themselves away in hermitages to avoid the temptations of the world, and so have hoped to win the victory by running away: this is not the way of wisdom. The word for this present is, — “Let both grow together”; but there will come a time when a final separation will be made. Then, dear Christian woman, your husband will never persecute you again. Godly sister, your brother will heap no more ridicule upon you. Pious workman, there will be no more jesting and taunting from the ungodly. That “but” will be an iron gate between the god-fearing and the godless: then will the tares be cast into the fire, but the Lord of the harvest will say, “Gather the wheat into my barn.”

This separation must be made; for the growing of the wheat and the tares together on earth has caused much pain and injury, and therefore it will not be continued in a happier world. We can very well suppose that godly men and women might be willing that their unconverted children should dwell with them in heaven; but it cannot be, for God will not have his

cleansed ones defiled nor his glorified ones tried by the presence of the unbelieving. The tares must be taken away in order to the perfectness and usefulness of the wheat. Would you have the tares and the wheat heaped up together in the granary in one mass? That would be ill husbandry with a vengeance. They can neither of them be put to appropriate use till thoroughly separated. Even so, mark you, the saved and the unsaved may live together here, but they must not live together in another world. The command is absolute, — “Gather the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” Sinner, can you hope to enter heaven? You never loved your mother’s God, and is he to endure you in his heavenly courts? You never trusted your father’s Savior, and yet are you to behold his glory for ever? Are you to go swaggering down the streets of heaven, letting fall an oath, or singing a loose song? Why, you know, you get tired of the worship of God on the Lord’s day; do you think that the Lord will endure unwilling worshippers in the temple above? The Sabbath is a wearisome day to you; how can you hope to enter into the Sabbath of God? You have no taste for heavenly pursuits, and these things would be profaned if you were permitted to partake in them; therefore that word “but” must come in, and you must part from the Lord’s people never to meet again. Can you bear to think of being divided from godly friends for ever and ever?

That separation involves an awful difference of destiny. “Gather the tares in bundles to burn them.” I do not dare to draw the picture; but when the bundle is bound up there is no place for it except the fire. God grant that you may never know all the anguish which burning must mean; but may you escape from it at once. It is no trifle which the Lord of love compares to being consumed with fire. I am quite certain that no words of mine can ever set forth its terror. They say that we speak dreadful things about the wrath to come; but I am sure that we understate the case. What must the tender, loving, gracious Jesus have meant by the words, “Gather the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them”? See what a wide distinction between the lot of the Lord’s people and Satan’s people. Burn the wheat? Oh no; “Gather the wheat into my barn.” There let them be happily, safely housed for ever. Oh, the infinite distance between heaven and hell! — the harps and the angels, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth! Who can ever measure the width of that gulf which divides the glorified saint,

white-robed and crowned with immortality, from the soul which is driven for ever away from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power? It is a dreadful “but” — that “but” of separation. I pray you, remember that it will interpose between brother and brother, — between mother and child, — between husband and wife. “One shall be taken and the other left.” And when that sword shall descend to divide, there shall never be any after union. The separation is eternal. There is no hope or possibility of change in the world to come.

But, says one, “That dreadful ‘but’! Why must there be such a difference?” The answer is, Because there always was a difference. The wheat was sown by the Son of man: the false wheat was sown by the enemy. There was always a difference in character: — the wheat was good, the tares were evil. This difference did not appear at first, but it became more and more apparent as the wheat ripened, and as the tares ripened too. They were totally different plants; and so a regenerate person and an unregenerate person are altogether different beings. I have heard an unregenerate man say that he is quite as good as the godly man; but in so boasting he betrayed his pride. Surely there is as great a difference in God’s sight between the unsaved and the believer as between darkness and the light, or between the dead and the living. There is in the one a life which there is not in the other, and the difference is vital and radical. Oh, that you may never trifle with this essential matter, but be really the wheat of the Lord! It is vain to have the name of wheat, we must have the nature of wheat. God will not be mocked: he will not be pleased by our calling ourselves Christians while we are not so. Be not satisfied with church membership; but seek after membership with Christ. Do not talk about faith, but exercise it. Do not boast of experience, but possess it. Be not like the wheat, but be the wheat. No shams and imitations will stand in the last great day: that terrible “but” will roll as a sea of fire between the true and the false. Oh Holy Spirit! Let each of us be found transformed by thy power.

II. The second word of our text is “gather,” — that is A WORD OF CONGREGATION. What a blessed thing this gathering is! I feel it a great pleasure to gather multitudes together to hear the gospel; and is it not a joy to see a house full of people, on week-days and Sabbath-days, who are willing to leave their homes and to come considerable distances to listen to

the gospel? It is a great thing to gather people together for that; but the gathering of the wheat into the barn is a far more wonderful business. Gathering is in itself better than scattering, and I pray that the Lord Jesus may ever exercise his attracting power in this place; for he is no Divider, but “unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Has he not said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”?

Observe, that the congregation mentioned in our text is selected and assembled by skilled gatherers: “The angels are the reapers.” Ministers could not do it, for they do not know all the Lord’s wheat, and they are apt to make mistakes — some by too great leniency, and others by excessive severity. Our poor judgments occasionally shut out saints, and often shut in sinners. The angels will know their Master’s property. They know each saint, for they were present at his birthday. Angels know when sinners repent, and they never forget the persons of the penitents. They have witnessed the lives of those who have believed, and have helped them in their spiritual battles, and so they know them. Yes, angels by a holy instinct discern the Father’s children, and are not to be deceived. They will not fail to gather all the wheat and to leave out every tare.

But they are gathered under a very stringent regulation; for, first of all, according to the parable, the tares, the false wheat, have been taken out, and then the angelic reapers gather nothing but the wheat. The seed of the serpent, fathered by Satan, is thus separated from the seed of the kingdom, owned by Jesus, the promised deliverer. This is the one distinction; and no other is taken into consideration. If the most amiable unconverted persons could stand in the ranks with the saints, the angels would not bear them to heaven, for the mandate is, “Gather the wheat.” Could the most honest man be found standing in the center of the church, with all the members round about him, and with all the ministers entreating that he might be spared, yet if he were not a believer he could not be carried into the divine garner. There is no help for it. The angels have no choice in the matter: the peremptory command is, “Gather the wheat,” and they must gather none else.

It will be a gathering from very great distances. Some of the wheat ripens in the South Sea Islands, in China, and in Japan. Some flourishes in France, broad acres grow in the United States: there is scarce a land without a

portion of the good grain. Where all God's wheat grows I cannot tell. There is a remnant, according to the election of grace, among every nation and people but the angels will gather all the good grain to the same garner.

“Gather the wheat.” The saints will be found in all ranks of society. The angels will bring in a few ears from palaces, and great armfuls from cottages! Many will be collected from the lowly cottages of our villages and hamlets, and others will be upraised from the back slums of our great cities to the metropolis of God. From the darkest places angels will bring those children of sweetness and light who seldom beheld the sun, and yet were pure in heart and saw their God. The hidden and obscure shall be brought into the light; for the Lord knoweth them that are his, and his harvestmen will not miss them.

To me it is a charming thought that they will come from all the ages. Let us hope that our first father Adam will be there, and mother Eve, following in the footsteps of their dear son Abel, and trusting in the same sacrifice. We shall meet Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and all the saints made perfect. What a joy to see the apostles, martyrs, and reformers! I long to see Luther, and Calvin, and Bunyan and Whitefield. I like the rhyme of good old father Ryland:

*“They all shall be there, the great and the small,
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul.”*

I do not know how that will be, but I have not much doubt that we shall have fellowship with all the saints of every age in the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

No matter when or where the wheat grew, it shall be gathered into the one barn; gathered never to be scattered; gathered out of all divisions of the visible church, never to be divided again. They grew in different fields. Some flourished on the hillside where Episcopalians grow in all their glory, and others in the lowlier soil, where Baptists multiply, and Methodists flourish, but once the wheat is in the barn none can tell in which field the ears grew. Then, indeed, shall the Master's prayer have a glorious answer — “That they all may be one.” All our errors removed and our mistakes corrected and forgiven, the one Lord, the one faith, and the one baptism will be known of us all, and there will be more vexings and envyings. What a blessed gathering it will be! What a meeting! The elect of God, the elite

of all the centuries, of whom the world was not worthy. I should not like to be away. If there were no hell, it would be hell enough to me to be shut out of such heavenly society. If there were no weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it would be dreadful enough to miss the presence of the Lord, and the joy of praising him for ever, and the bliss of meeting with all the noblest beings that ever lived. Amid the needful controversies of the age, I, who have been doomed to seem a man of strife, sigh for the blessed rest wherein all spiritual minds shall blend in eternal accord before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh that we were all right, that we might be all happily united in one spirit!

In the text there is next A WORD OF DESIGNATION. I have already trespassed upon that domain. "Gather the wheat." Nothing but "the wheat" must be placed in the Lord's homestead. Lend me your hearts while I urge you to a searching examination for a minute or two. The wheat was sown of the Lord. Are you sown of the Lord? Friend, if you have any religion, how did you get it? Was it self-sown? If so, it is good for nothing. The true wheat was sown by the Son of man. Are you sown of the Lord? Did the Spirit of God drop eternal life into your bosom? Did it come from that dear hand which was nailed to the cross? Is Jesus your life? Does your life begin and end with him? If so, it is well.

The wheat sown of the Lord is also the object of the Lord's care. Wheat needs a deal of attention. The farmer would get nothing from it if he did not watch it carefully. Are you under the Lord's care? Does he keep you? Is that word true to your soul, — "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Do you experience such keeping? Make an honest answer, as you love your soul.

Next, wheat is a useful thing, a gift from God for the life of men. The false wheat was of no good to anybody: it could only be eaten of swine, and then it made them stagger like drunken men. Are you one of those who are wholesome in society, — who are like bread to the world, so that if men receive you and your example and your teaching they will be blessed thereby? Judge yourselves whether ye are good or evil in life and influence.

"Gather the wheat." You know that God must put the goodness, the grace, the solidity, and the usefulness into you, or else you will never be wheat fit for angelic gathering. One thing is true of the wheat — that it is the

most dependent of all plants. I have never heard of a field of wheat which sprang up, and grew, and ripened without a husbandman's care. Some ears may appear after a harvest when the corn has shaled out; but I have never heard of plains in America or elsewhere covered with unsown wheat. No, no. There is no wheat where there is no man, and there is no grace where there is no Christ. We owe our very existence to the Father, who is the husbandman.

Yet, dependent as it is, wheat stands in the front rank of honor and esteem; and so do the godly in the judgment of all who are of understanding heart. We are nothing without Christ; but with him we are full of honor. Oh, to be among those by whom the world is preserved, the excellent of the earth in whom the saints delight; God forbid we should be among the base and worthless tares!

Our last head, upon which also I will speak briefly, is A WORD OF DESTINATION. "Gather the wheat into my barn." The process of gathering in the wheat will be completed at the day of judgment, but it is going on every day. From hour to hour saints are gathered; they are going heavenward even now. I am so glad to hear as a regular thing that the departed ones from my own dear church have such joy in being harvested. Glory be to God, our people die well. The best thing is to live well, but we are greatly gladdened to hear that the brethren die well; for, full often, that is the most telling witness for vital godliness. Men of the world feel the power of triumphant deaths.

Every hour the saints are being gathered into the barn. That is where they want to be. We feel no pain at the news of ingathering, for we wish to be safely stored up by our Lord. If the wheat that is in the field could speak, every ear would say, "The ultimatum for which we are living and growing is the barn, the granary." For this the frosty night; for this the sunny day; for this the dew and the rain; and for this everything. Every process with the wheat is tending towards the granary. So is it with us; everything is working towards heaven — towards the gathering place — towards the congregation of the righteous — towards the vision of our Redeemer's face. Our death will cause no jar in our life-music; it will involve no pause or even discord; it is part of a programme, the crowning of our whole history.

To the wheat the barn is the place of security. It dreads no mildew there; it fears no frost, no heat, no drought, no wet, when once in the barn. All its growth-perils are past. It has reached its perfection. It has rewarded the labor of the husbandman, and it is housed. Oh, long-expected day, begin! Oh, brethren, what a blessing it will be when you and I shall have come to our maturity, and Christ shall see in us the travail of his soul!

I delight to think of heaven as his barn; his barn, what must that be? It is but the poverty of language that such an expression has to be used at all concerning the home of our Father, the dwelling of Jesus. Heaven is the palace of the King, but, so far, to us a barn, because it is the place of security, the place of rest for ever. It is the homestead of Christ to which we shall be carried, and for this we are ripening. It is to be thought of with ecstatic joy; for the gathering into the barn involves a harvest home, and I have never heard of men sitting down to cry over an earthly harvest home, nor of their following the sheaves with tears. Nay, they clap their hands, they dance for joy, and shout right lustily. Let us do something like that concerning those who are already housed. With grave, sweet melodies let us sing around their tombs. Let us feel that, surely, the bitterness of death is passed. When we remember their glory, we may rejoice like the travailing woman when her child is born, who "remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Another soul begins to sing in heaven: why do you weep, O heirs of immortality? Is the eternal happiness of the righteous the birth which comes of their death-pangs? Then happy are they who die. Is glory the end and outcome of that which fills our home with mourning? If so, thank God for bereavements: thank God for saddest severings. He has promoted our dear ones to the skies! He has blessed them beyond all that we could ask or even think: he has taken them out of this weary world to lie in his own bosom for ever. Blessed be his name if it were for nothing else but this. Would you keep your old father here, full of pain, and broken down with feebleness? Would you shut him out of glory? Would you detain your dear wife here with all her suffering? Would you hold back your husband from the crown immortal? Could you wish your child to descend to earth again from the bliss which now surrounds her? No, no. We wish to be going home ourselves to the heavenly Father's house and its many mansions; but concerning the

departed we rejoice before the Lord as with the joy of harvest. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

AN UNALTERABLE LAW

SERMON NO. 3418

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6TH, 1914.

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” — Hebrews 9:22.

Everywhere under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste, and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law, which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth, under the old legal

dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin, except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass offering, referred to as an alternative, in Leviticus 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given. The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead; there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come, — "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that: —

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION — that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Blood has been shed, and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be,

pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. "But is there not," saith one, "a sin which is unto death?" Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened — his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery — yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to the Scriptures, complete; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin, and have him accountable for the rest; but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed, thou art forgiven — forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, this is a present pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die, and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions — a pardon given in an instant — the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us

must be daily and hourly mortified; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once; it will be given to any of you tonight who accept it — yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven for ever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this one other remark. The man who gets this pardon may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction, and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as he gives it to me. "Oh!" saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity. "But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err; it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder, and sing, "Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and

circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away, for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is his strange work. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live.” This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission, except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that: —

II. THOUGH THERE BE PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD. That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you should be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God’s holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace; but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission. But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up, and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned, and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished, and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, ‘tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere — yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past delinquencies are not condoned by future good behaviour. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are

past in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their umblings of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh! dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions, and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet today, in Hindostan, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrapt thyself in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken my law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to my honor by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honor upon my name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our firstborn for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here for ever must it stand, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some

who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah! futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind — it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance, in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is “an unbloody sacrifice,” yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin — we fling this text in their faces, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood — without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism — that, too much it holds before the sinner’s eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” I remember one person who was united with this church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never

enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon, from Christ crucified! I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is the means of putting away our sin — this, and nothing else. Let us pass on a little further with the same truth: —

III. THIS REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares his arm, and he says, "Strike, O sword, but strike me, and let my people go." Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood, not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his being an eternal Spirit was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature

infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within himself, by reason of the majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings — the tortures he endured in his body — but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. “Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, “unknown sufferings, great griefs.” Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust — I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness — it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, he released me, and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Savior? Who shall commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it — have we all accepted it? Oh! my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting Christ; you stumble at this stumbling-stone; you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God?

Look, then, at that passage, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavoured to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labour, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions, and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples; but as the Lord liveth, there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him when your own remedy is revealed by him.

He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it, you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood be on your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! “Without shedding of blood there is no remission,” but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart: —

*“My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin.”*

Then, your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, “We would be pardoned now”? Oh! look, look, look, look to the crucified Savior, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God’s atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the center, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, “If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me.” This is the soul-

saving doctrine; grip it, and you shall have laid hold of eternal life; reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh! keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith in to the Wurtembergers' heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads, in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail, "The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood — it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to him — pardon now, complete pardon; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God, who has gone into the heavens, and who lives today to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, he poured forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation; and if you reject it, do me this favor, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, his gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved. But the rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Savior, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood to receive honor, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

FRUITLESS FAITH

SERMON NO. 3434

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“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” — James 2:17.

WHATEVER the statement of James may be, it could never have been his intention to contradict the gospel. It could never be possible that the Holy Spirit would say one thing in one place, and another in another. Statements of Paul and of James must be reconciled, and if they were not, I would be prepared sooner to throw overboard the statement of James than that of Paul. Luther did so, I think, most unjustifiably. If you ask me, then, how I dare to say I would sooner do so, my reply is, I said I would sooner throw over James than Paul for this reason, because, at any rate, we must keep to the Master himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought never to raise any questions about differences of inspiration, since they are all equally inspired, but if such questions could be raised and were allowable, it were wisdom to stick fastest to those who cling closest to Christ. Now the last words of the Lord Jesus, before he was taken up were these, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” and what was this gospel? “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” To that, then, we must always cling, but Jesus Christ has given a promise of salvation to the baptized believer, and he has said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Here it is clear he promises everlasting life to all who believe in him, to all who trust in him. Now from the Master's words we will not stir, but close to his own declaration we will stand. Be assured that the gospel of your salvation as a believer, with a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, whom

God raised from the dead, will save your soul, a simple and undiluted reliance upon the life and death, and resurrection, and merit, and person of Jesus Christ, will ensure to you everlasting life. Let nothing move you from this confidence: it hath great recompense of reward. Heaven and earth may pass away, but from this grand fundamental truth not one jot or tittle shall ever be moved. “He that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.”

The fact is, James and Paul are perfectly reconcilable, and they are viewing truth from different standpoints; but whatever James may mean, I am quite confident about what Paul means, and confident about the truth of the two.

A second remark. James never intended, for a moment, nor do any of his words lead us into such a belief, that there can be any merit whatever in any good works of ours. After we have done all, if we could do all, we should only have done what we were bound to do. Surely there is no merit in a man’s paying what he owes; no great merit in a servant who has his wages for doing what he is paid for. The question of merit between the creature and his Creator is not to be raised; he has a right to us; he has the right of creation, the right of preservation, the right of infinite sovereignty, and, whatever he should exact of us, we should require nothing from him in return, and, having sinned as we have all, for us to talk of salvation by merit, by our own works, is worse than vanity; it is an impertinence which God will never endure.

“Talk they of morals, O! thou bleeding Lamb,

The best morality is love of thee.” Talk of salvation by works, and Cowper’s reply seems apt: —

“Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,

And the fool with it, who insults his Lord.” What James does mean, however, is this, no doubt, in brief and short, that while faith saves, it is faith of a certain kind. No man is saved by persuading himself that he is saved; nobody is saved by believing Jesus Christ died for him. That may be, or may not be, true in the sense in which he understands it. In a certain sense Christ died for all men, but since it is evident that many men are

lost, Christ's dying for all men is not at all a ground upon which any man may hope to be saved. Christ died for some men in another sense, in a peculiar and special sense. No man has a right to believe that Christ peculiarly and specially died for him until he has an evidence of it in casting himself upon Christ, and trusting in Jesus, and bringing forth suitable works to evince the reality of his faith. The faith that saves is not a historical faith, not a faith that simply believes a creed and certain facts: I have no doubt devils are very orthodox; I do not know which church they belong to, though there are some in all churches; there was one in Christ's Church when he was on earth, for he said one was filled with devils; and there are some in all churches. Devils believe all the facts of revelation. I do not believe they have a doubt; they have suffered too much from the hand of God to doubt his existence! They have felt too much the terror of his wrath to doubt the righteousness of his government. They are stern believers, but they are not saved; and such a faith, if it be in us, will not, cannot, save us, but will remain to all intents and purposes a dead, inoperative faith. It is a faith which produces works which saves us; the works do not save us; but a faith which does not produce works is a faith that will only deceive, and cannot lead us into heaven. Now this evening we shall first speak a few words upon: —

I. WHAT KIND OF WORKS THEY ARE WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO PROVE OUR FAITH IF IT BE A SAVING FAITH.

The works which are absolutely necessary are, in brief, these: First, there must be fruits meet for repentance, works of repentance. It is wrong to tell a man he must repent before he may trust Christ, but it is right to tell him that, having trusted Christ, it is not possible for him to remain impenitent. There never was in this world such a thing as an impenitent believer in Jesus Christ, and there never can be. Faith and repentance are born in a spiritual life together, and they grow up together. The moment a man believes he repents, and while he believes he both believes and repents, and until he shall have done with faith he will not have done with repenting. If thou hast believed, but hast never repented of thy sins, then beware of thy believing. If thou pretendest now to be a child of God, and if thou hast never clothed thyself in dust and ashes; if thou hast never hated the sins which once thou didst love: if thou dost not now hate them, and endeavour to be rid of them, if thou dost not humble thyself before

God on account of them, as the Lord liveth, thou knowest nothing about saving faith, for faith puts a distance between us and sin; in a moment it leads us away from the distance between us and Christ; nearer to Christ, we are now far off from sin. But he that loves his sin, thinks little of his sin, goes into it with levity, talks of it sportively, speaks of sin as though it were a trifle, hath the faith of devils, but the faith of God's elect he never knew. True faith purges the soul, since the man now hunts after sin that he might find out the traitor that lurks within his nature; and though a believer is not perfect, yet the drift of faith is to make him perfect; and if it is faith to be perfected, the believer shall be perfected, and then shall he be caught up to dwell before the throne. Judge yourselves, my hearers. Have you brought forth the fruits of repentance? If not, your faith without them is dead.

Works of secret piety are also essential to true faith. Does a man say I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eye in secret with "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God, and does he hold no communion with Christ his Savior, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate, as to say that a man is a believer with living faith who does not draw near to God in prayer, that does not live indeed under the awe and fear of the Most High God as ever present, and seeing him in all places. Judge yourselves, ye professors. Are ye neglecting prayer; have ye no secret spiritual life? If so, away with your notion about saving faith. You are not justified by such a faith as that; there is no life in it; it is not a faith that leads to the Lamb and brings salvation; if it were, it would show itself by driving you to your knees, and making you lift up your heart to the Most High.

Another set of works are those which I may call works of obedience. When a man trusts in Jesus, he accepts Jesus as his Master. He says, "Show me what thou wouldst have me to do." The Father shows what Christ would have him to do. He does not set up his own will and judgment, but he is obedient to his Master's will. I will not tonight speak of those who know not their Lord's will, who shall be beaten with few

stripes, but I do fear me there are some professors who are living in wilful neglect of known Christian duties, and yet suppose themselves to be the partakers of saving faith. Now a duty may be neglected, and yet a man may be saved; but a duty persistently and wilfully neglected, may be the leak that will sink the ship, or the neglect of any one of such duties for the surrender of a true heart to Christ does not go such and such a length and then stop. Christ will save no heart upon terms and conditions; it must be an unconditional surrender to his government if thou wouldest be saved by him. Now some will draw a line here, and some will draw a line there up to this, and say, "I will be Christ's servant"; that is to say, sir, you will be your own master, for that is the English of it; but the true heart that hath really believed saith, "I will make haste, and delay not to keep thy commandments; make straight the path before my feet, for thy commandments are not grievous." "I have delighted in thy commandments more than in fine gold." Now, sons and daughters of sin, professedly, what say you to this? Have you an eye to the Master, as servants keep their eye to their mistress? Do you ever ask yourselves what would Christ have you to do? or do you live habitually in the neglect of Christ's law and will? Do you go to places where Christ would not meet you, and where you would not like to meet with him? Are some of you in the habit of professing maxims and customs, upon which you know your Lord would never set his seal? You say you believe, you have faith in him? Ah! sirs, if it be a living faith, it will be an obedient faith.

Living faith produces what I shall call separating works. When a man believes in Jesus, he is not what he was nor will he consort with those who were once his familiars. Our Lord has said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Now Christ was not an ascetic; he ate and drank as other men do so that they even said of him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because he mingled with the rest of mankind; but was there ever a more unearthly life than the life of Christ? He seems to go through all the world a complete man in all that is necessary to manliness, but his presence is like the presence of a seraph amongst sinners. You can discover at once that he is not of their mould, nor of their spirit, only harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Now such will the believer be if his faith be genuine, but this is a sharp cut to some professors, but not a whit more sharp than the Scripture warrants. If we are of the world,

what can we expect but the world's doom in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? If ye find your pleasure with the world, you shall meet your condemnation with the world; if with the world you live, with the world you shall die, and with the world you shall live again for ever, lost. Where there is no separation there is no grace. If we are conformed to this world, how dare we talk about grace being in our souls; and if there be no distinguishing difference between us and worldlings, what vanity it is, what trifling, what hypocrisy, what a delusion for us to come to the Lord's table, talking about being the Lord's sons, when we are none of his? Faith without the works which denote the difference between a believer and a worldling is a dead, unsaving faith.

Now I have not said that any believer is perfect. I have never thought so, but I have said that if a believer could be a believer altogether, and faith could have her perfect work, he would be perfect, and that in proportion as he is truly a believer, in that proportion he will bring forth fruit that shall magnify God and prove the sincerity of his faith.

One other set of works will be necessary to prove the vitality of his faith, namely, works of love. He that loves Christ feels that the love of Christ constraineth him; he endeavours to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ; he longs to win jewels for Christ's crown; he endeavours to extend the boundaries of Christ's and Messiah's kingdom, and I will not give a farthing for the loftiest profession coupled with the most flowing words, that never shows itself in direct deeds of Christian service. If thou lovest Christ, thou canst not help serving him. If thou believest in him, there is such potency in what thou believest, such power in the grace which comes with believing, that thou must serve Christ; and if thou servest him not, thou art not his.

This proof, before we leave it, might be illustrated in various ways. We will just give one. A tree has been planted out into the ground. Now the source of life to that tree is at the root, whether it hath apples on it or not; the apples would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root. But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there is no bud, and when the summer comes there is no leafing, and no fruit-bearing, but the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is dead, and you

are correct; it is dead. It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the absence of the leaves is a proof that it is dead. So, too, is it with the professor. If he hath life, that life must give fruits; if not fruits, works; if his faith has a root, but if there be no works, then depend upon it the inference that he is spiritually dead is certainly a correct one. When the telegraph cable flashed no message across to America, when they tried to telegraph again and again, but the only result following was dead earth, they felt persuaded that there was a fracture, and well they might; and when there is nothing produced in the life by the supposed grace which we have, and nothing is telegraphed to the world but “dead earth,” we may rest assured that the link of connection between the soul and Christ does not exist.

I need not enlarge. We should just put it into that one sentence: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Bring forth, therefore, works meet for repentance.” And now we turn to the second point with more brevity: —

II. SOME FACTS THAT BACK UP THE DOCTRINE THAT “FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.”

These facts show that it is evident to all observers that many professors of faith without works are not saved. It would be very ludicrous, if it were not very miserable, to think of some who wrap themselves in the conceit that they are saved about whose salvation nobody but themselves can have any question. I remember a professor who used to talk of being justified by faith who was most assured about it, when he contained most beer. Such professors are not at all uncommon, sad is it to say so. They seem at the moment when their condemnation seems written on their very brow to all who know them, to be most confident that they themselves are saved. Now, brethren, if such cases are convincing and you entertain no doubt, but decide in their case, apply the same rule to yourselves, for although you may not plunge into the grosser vices, yet if you make your homes wretched by your selfishness, if you fall into constant habits of vicious temper, if you never strive against these sins, and the grace of God never leads you out of them; if you can live in private sin, and yet pacify your conscience, and remain just as you were before your pretended conversion; when you sit in judgment and pronounce the verdict on others, feel that you pronounce it upon yourself, for surely for one sin that is

openly indulged in, which is manifested to you in the dissipation of your fellow-creatures, it is not hard for you to believe that any other sin, if it be constantly indulged and be loved, will do the same to you as it does to him. You know men who have not faith, but have a sort of faith, are not saved. It must be true, or else where were the Savior's words, "Straight is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that find it"? For this is no straight gate and no narrow way, merely to be orthodox and hold a creed, and say, "I believe Jesus died for me"; but it is a very narrow gate so to believe as to become practically Christ's servants, so to trust as to give up that which Christ hates. Truths which Jesus bids us believe are all truths, which, if believed, must have an effect upon the daily life. A man cannot really believe that Jesus Christ has taken away his sin by such sufferings as those of the cross, and yet trifle with sin. A man is a liar who says, "I believe that yonder bleeding Savior suffered on account of my sins," and yet holds good fellowship with the very sins that put Christ to death. Oh! sirs, a faith in the bleeding Savior is a faith that craves for vengeance upon every form of sin. The Christian religion makes us believe that we are the sons of God when we trust in Christ. Will a man believe that he is really the Son of God, and then daily and wilfully go and live like a child of the devil? Do you expect to see members of the royal court playing with beggars in the street? When a man believes himself to possess a certain station of life, that belief leads him to a certain carriage and conversation, and when I am led to believe I am elected of God, that I am redeemed by blood, that heaven is secured to me by the covenant of grace, that I am God's priest, made a king in Christ Jesus, I cannot, if I believe, unless I am more monstrous than human nature itself seems capable of being, go back to live after just the same fashion, to run in the same course as others, and live as the sons of Belial live. We see constantly in Scripture, and all the saints affirm it, that faith is linked with grace, and that where faith is the grace of God is; but how can there be the gift of God reigning in the soul, and yet a love of sin and a neglect of holiness? I cannot understand grace which abideth for ever to the inner man; and for this man to give himself up to be a slave of Satan is a thing impossible.

Faith, again, is always in connection with regeneration. Now regeneration is making of the old thing new; it is infusing a new nature into a man. The new birth is not a mere reformation, but an entire renovation and

revolution: it is making the man a new creation in Christ Jesus. But how a new creature, if he has no repentance, if he has no good works, no private prayer, no charity, no holiness of any kind, regeneration will be a football for scorn. The new birth would be a thing to be ridiculed, if it did not really produce a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness. That kind of new birth which is dispensed by the Church of Rome, and also by some in the Church of England, is a kind of new birth which ought to excite the derision of all mankind, for children are said to be born again, certified to be born again, made members of Christ and children of God, and afterwards they grow up, in many cases, in most cases, let me say, to forget their baptismal vows, and live in sin as others do. Evidently it has had no effect upon them, but regeneration such as we read of in the Bible changes the nature of man, makes him hate the things he loved, and love the things he hated. This is regeneration: this is regeneration which is worth the seeking: it always comes with faith, and consequently good works must go with faith too. But we pass on to the last matter, which is this: —

III. WHAT OF THOSE MEN THAT HAVE FAITH, AND THAT HAVE NO GOOD WORKS?

Then what about them? Why, this about them, that their supposed faith generally makes them very careless and indifferent, and ultimately hardened and depraved men. I dread beyond measure that any one of us should have a name to live when we are dead; for an ordinary sinner who makes no profession may be converted, but it is extremely rare that a sinner who makes a profession of being what he is not is ever converted. It is a miserable thing to find a person discovering that his profession has been a lie. A man sits down, and he says, “Why, I believe,” and as he walks he is careful, because he is afraid of what others might say. By and bye, he begins to indulge a little. He says, “This is not of works; I may do this, and yet get forgiveness.” Then he goes a little further away. I do not say that perhaps at first he goes to the theatre, but he goes next door to it. He does not get drunk, but he likes jovial company. A little further and he gets confirmed in the belief that he is a saved one, and he gets to much confirmed in that idea that he thinks he can do just as he likes. Having sported on the brink without falling over, he thinks he will try to say, if Satan wants raw material of which to make the worst of men, he generally

takes those who profess to be the best, and I have questioned whether such a valuable servant of Satan as Judas was could ever have been made of any other material than an apostate apostle. If he had not lived near to Christ, he never could have become such a traitor as he was. You must have a good knowledge of religion to be a thorough-faced hypocrite, and you must become high in Christ's Church before you can become fit tools for Satan's worst works. Oh! but why do men do this? Oh! what is the use of maintaining such a faith? I think if we do not care to get the vitality of religion, I would never burden myself with the husks of it, for such people get the chains of godliness without getting the comforts of godliness. They dare not do this, they dare not do that; if they do they feel hampered. Why don't they give up professing? and they would be at least free; they would have the sin without the millstone about their neck. Surely there can be no excuse for men who mean to perish coming to cover themselves with a mask of godliness! Why cannot they perish as they are? Why add sin to sin by insulting the Church through the cross of Christ?

When men make a profession of religion, and yet their works do not follow their faith, what about them? Why, this about them. They have dishonored the Church, and, of all others, these are the people that make the world point to the Church and say, "Where is your religion? That is your religion, is it?" So it is when they find a man who professes to be in Christ, and yet walks not as Christ walked. These give the Church her wounds; she receives them in the house of her friends; these make the true ministers of God go to their closets with broken heart, crying out, "Oh! Lord, wherefore hast thou sent us to this people to speak and minister amongst them, that they should play the hypocrite before thee?" These are they that prevent the coming in of others, for others take knowledge of them, as they think religion is hypocrisy, and they are hindered, and, if not seriously, they get, at any rate, comfort in their sin from the iniquity of these professors. What their judgment will be when Christ appeareth it is not for my tongue to tell; in that day when, with tongue of fire, Christ shall search every heart, and call on all men to receive their judgment, what must be the lot of the base-born professor, who prostituted his profession to his own honor and gain? He sought not the glory of God. What shall be the thunder-bolt that shall pursue his guilty soul in its timorous flight to hell, and what the chains that are reserved in blackness and darkness for

ever for those who are wells without water and clouds without rain? I cannot tell, and may God grant that you may never know. Oh! may we all tonight go to Christ to be our complete Savior in very deed and truth. Then shall we be saved, and then, being saved, we shall seek to serve Christ with heart, and soul, and strength.

Lest I have missed my mark, this one illustration shall suffice, and I have done. There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot is come on board; he is standing on the deck, and he says to the captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that, if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save thy vessel. Do you promise it; do you believe in me?" They believe in him; they say they believe the pilot can save the vessel, and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," says he, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well, but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh! yes. Oh! yes, I have faith in him," he says; "he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says have faith in him, and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast. "Now then, some of you; look alive, and reef that sail!" But he does not stir! "Why, captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." But "Oh!" says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh! no," says he; "I have great confidence in you. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you, had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued, and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot that had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works. Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.

I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him. I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized. "He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved." The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised

ordinance of believers' baptism, and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh! I charge you by your soul's salvation neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason. Whatever he saith unto you, do it, for only by a child-like obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, "They that trust in him shall be saved." The Lord bless these words, for His name's sake. Amen.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

SERMON NO. 3438

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“He was moved with compassion.” — Matthew 9:36.

This is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose, and therefore they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion; a striving of the bowels — a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us — *Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Savior looked upon certain sights, those who watched him closely perceived that his internal agitation was very great, his emotions were very deep, and then his face betrayed it, his eyes gushed like fountains with tears, and you saw that his big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which his eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Savior's whole life, and I intend thus to apply it to him. If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, “He was moved with compassion.” Upon this one point we shall try to insist now, and may God grant that good practical result may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations to the great transactions of our Savior's life; secondly, to the special instances in which this expression is used by the evangelists; thirdly, to the forethought which he took on our behalf; and fourthly to the personal testimony which one's own recollections can furnish. Let us take a rapid survey of: —

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow's wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed; before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid, when as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that his creature man would sin; that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the covenant head as well as the common parent of the entire human family; and that in consequence of that one man's disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become a sinner too. Then, as the Creator knew that his creatures would rebel against him, he saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge his injured law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, ere the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an interposer — one ordained to come and re-head the race, to be a second Adam, a federal Chief; to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam; to be a Surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God's love did light; that their sins should be laid upon him, and that he should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that new covenant. Yet there was one — and he none other than Jehovah's self — of whom he said, Let all the angels of God worship him, the Son, the well beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, "When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he set a compass upon the face of the depth, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountain of the deep"; then, "I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Word who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was he not moved with compassion when he entered into a covenant with his father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all his chosen — a covenant in which he was to be the sufferer, and they the gainers — in which he was to bear the shame that he might bring them into his own glory? Yes, verily, he was even then moved with compassion, for his delights even then were with the sons of men. Nor did his compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He

continued still to pity men. He saw the fall of man; he marked the subtle serpent's mortal sting; he watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden; he observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God's patience had been tried to the uttermost; and then, according as it was written in the volume of the Book that he must appear, Jesus Christ came himself into this stricken world. Came how? O, be astonished, ye angels, that ye were witnesses of it, and ye men that ye beheld it. The Infinite came down to earth in the form of an infant; he who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, condescended to hang upon a woman's breast — the King eternal became a little child. Let Bethlehem tell that he had compassion. There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us. To bring earth up to heaven, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he had compassion, for he took upon himself our infirmities, and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while he tarried in the world, a man among men, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, he was constantly moved with compassion; for he felt all the griefs of mankind in himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows: he proved himself a true brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into his eye; a cry made him pause to ask what help he could render. So generous was his soul, that he gave all he had for the help of those that had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but he had no dwelling-place. Stripped even of his garments, he hung upon the cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as he, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find him. He gave up all the comforts of life — he gave his life itself; he gave his very self to prove that he was moved with compassion. Most of all do we see how he was moved with compassion in his terrible death. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb ere they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else he would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of his administration. Therefore, the law must be honored, justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be

expiated by suffering. Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the scepter? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No; Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, he takes upon himself the uplifted lash, and his shoulders run with gore; he bares his bosom to the furbished sword, and it smites the Shepherd that the sheep may escape. "He looked, and there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation." He trod the wine-press alone, and "bore, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Are ye asked what means the crucifixion of a perfect man upon a felon's cross, ye may reply, "He was moved with compassion." "He saved others; himself he could not save." He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat him up. He could save nothing from the general conflagration: he was utterly consumed with love, and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men. And after he had died and slept a little while in the grave, he rose again. He has gone into his glory; he is living at the right hand of the Father; but this is just as true of him, "He is moved with compassion." Is proof wanted? Let faith pass within the veil, and let your spirits for a moment stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where stand the harpers tuning their never-ceasing melodies. What see you there conspicuous in the very midst of heaven but One who looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still? What is his occupation there in heaven? He has no bloody sacrifice to offer, for he has perfected for ever those that were set apart. That work is done, but what is he doing now? He is pleading for his people; he is their perpetual Advocate, their continual Intercessor; he never rests until they come to their rest; he never holds his peace for them, but pleads the merit of his blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave him shall be with him where he is. Well indeed does our hymn express it: —

*"Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor will his saints forget."*

His tender heart pities all the griefs of his dear people. There is not a pang they have but the head feels it, feels it for all the members. Still doth he look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, “He is moved with compassion.” Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to: —

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Matthew 20:31: “Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, ‘O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.’” Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them, and they seem to have had full conviction that he both could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight.

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction. Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that he is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between him and you, for he is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear him command you to come to him. He is ready to heal you now. The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men — I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance — touched the Savior’s sensibility. And when he heard them say that they did believe he could heal them, he seemed to perceive that they had inward sight, and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too. So at once he put his fingers upon their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O soul, if thou believest Christ can save thee, and if you wilt now trust in him to save thee, be of good cheer, thou art saved; that faith of thine hath saved thee. The very fact that thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and doth rely upon him, may stand as evidence to thee that thou art forgiven, that thou art saved. There is no let or bar to thy full redemption. Go thy way and rejoice in thy Lord. He hath compassion on thee.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mark 1:41. This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease, when he said to Jesus, “Lord, if

thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” He had full faith in Christ’s ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ’s willingness. Our Savior looked at him, and though he might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt his willingness, he merely said, “I will, be thou clean,” and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague. If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, seest thou the leprosy upon thyself, and dost thou say, “I believe he could save me if he would”? Hast thou some lingering doubt about the Savior’s willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, “Lord, I believe, I believe thy power. Help thou mine unbelief which lingers round thy willingness.” Then little as thy faith is, it shall save thee. Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even thine unbelief, and accept what is faith, and forgive what is unbelief. There is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mark 5:19. It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad, and instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, “Wilt thou torment us before the time?” — and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it; but Christ was moved with compassion, and he bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh! I am so glad of this instance of his being moved with compassion. I do not so much wonder that he has pity on those that believe in him, neither do I so much marvel that he has pity even on weak faith; but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord’s sympathy. Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted — not you. You almost shun the thought. Yet it is written, “He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.” Well we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon unprepared souls. They have been smitten down with repentance, renewed in heart, and saved from their sins. Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he should ever be an apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor, and changed him into a preacher; so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed. May the Lord have compassion on you tonight. Well may we offer that prayer; for what will

be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your doom eternally if you pass out of this world, as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come. He describes the torments of hell. He sees your danger; he warns you; he pities you; he sends his messengers to counsel you; he bids me say to the very chief of sinners, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "Only return unto me and confess thine iniquity, and I will have mercy upon thee," saith the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in thy case.

As I turned over the Greek Concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luke 7:13. It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out — her only son. He was dead, and she was desolate. The widow's only son was to her her sole stay; the succor as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, he was moved with compassion, and he restored her son. Oh! is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys; you that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears. You weep alone sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, "Oh! that my Absalom were renewed; oh! that Ishmael might live before thee." Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to his own mother, and he will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, he sympathises with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. "He was moved with compassion."

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the Evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because that they were hungry and faint, and in the fulness of his sympathy he multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed them. At the same time he showed his disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. He would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance, and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed: the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds. Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when he saw the number of sick

people in the throng, for they made a hospital of his preaching place. Wherever he paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets; he could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow his feelings. And he healed their impotent folk, as if to show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick — that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord, and following his example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious gospel. All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christlike, and they ought to be carried out in his name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital: he is the president of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited his compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them as a guide that showed the path by leading the way; and he looked after their welfare as a Shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls. Surely, brethren and sisters, if you love him, and wish to be like him, you cannot look on this congregation without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without saying, "Whither away these souls? Which road are they travelling? Will they all meet in heaven?" What! live ye in London, move ye about in this great metropolis, and do ye never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame upon you! Ask yourself whether ye have the spirit of Christ at all. In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out here in want of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper. Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with enquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them. I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have any bowels of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good. Oh! never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm. You know the balm. It has

healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul. Enough; I must leave this point; I have given you, I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let me notice: —

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as he knew what would happen while he was away, he has, with blessed forethought, provided for our wants. Well he knew that we should never be able to preserve the truth pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So in tender forethought he has given us the consolidated testimony, the unchangeable truth in his own Book; for he was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the gospel; he knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound doctrine from generation to generation; he knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay; while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell out plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, he has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the gospel, you have the old Book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the Book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed Book can reach the heart. Because he knew the people would require this sacred teaching, and could not have it otherwise, he was moved with compassion towards us all, and gave us the blessed Book of inspired God-breathed Scripture.

But then, since he knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, he has sent his ministers forth to do the work of evangelists. He raises up men, saved themselves from great sin, trophies of redeeming grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow-men who are revelling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of his the Lord enables to preach his truth, some with more, some with less ability than others; still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm, and in other favored lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them, and intreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This cometh of

Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion, and therefore he sent his servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though he may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has sent his Spirit. The Holy Ghost is here. We have not to say: —

“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove.”

He is here. He dwells in his Church, and he moves over the congregation, and he touches men's hearts, and he subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh! this is great mercy when a Prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation. That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, “Go and fetch them one by one till they do come,” that is more gracious still. But if he goes himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in — oh! this is more than we could have thought he would have done; but he is moved with compassion, and he does that. Furthermore, brethren, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we should always be full of wants, and therefore he was moved with compassion, and he sets up the throne of grace, the mercy-seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain grace to help in time of need. Helped by his Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard. And then, since he knew we could not pray as we ought, he was moved with compassion when he sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray. Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian brother, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it, and has provided for it. He has not left one single weak point of which we have to say, “There I shall fail, because he will not help there”; but he has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, “You will have an infirmity there: I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there: I will provide for it.” And oh! how his promises meet every case! Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about his being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick bed without a promise like this, “I will make thy bed in thy sickness?” In the midst of pestilence have not you found a promise that “he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust?” The Lord's

great compassion has met the wants of all his servants to the end. If our children should ever need much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities, and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh! we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children — ay, and of our brethren and sisters, and neighbours — for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such untoward children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and he knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet still he never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but he still continues to show us abounding mercies. Oh! what a guardian Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless his name at all times, and how his praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here: he knew that we should be very forgetful; and he was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when he instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of him. Surely this is another instance of how he is moved with compassion, and not with indignation, towards our weaknesses. And now let me close with: — -

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, my brethren and sisters. I do well remember when I was under conviction of sin, and smarted bitterly under the rod of God, that when I was most heavy and depressed there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, “My soul chooseth strangling rather than life,” yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God’s prisoner, and he might yet set me free. I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was at that moment when Jesus revealed himself to me. Had he waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of his. On swift wings of love he came and manifested his dear wounded self to my heart. I

looked to him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river. I rejoiced in him. Yes, he was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe; neither would he suffer them to be protracted too long for the spirit of man to fail before him. It is not his wont to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. "He will not quench the smoking flax." Yea, and I do remember since I first saw him and began to love him many sharp and severe troubles, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at the last moment; for he was moved with compassion. If he withdrew his face, it was only till my heart broke for him, and then he showed me the light of his countenance again. If he laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under his chastening he could not bear it, but he put back the rod, and he said, "My child, I will comfort thee." Oh! the comforts that he gives on a sick bed! Oh! the consolations of Christ! when you are very low. If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then; if there be any bowels of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations; for he is moved with compassion. How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to his praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves his compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach, that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat me down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he found the Lord through that very sermon, the shortcoming of which I had deplored. Glory be to Jesus; it was his gentleness that did it. He did not want his servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so he had compassion on him and comforted him. Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half- inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to

Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah! how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, he has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of his voice, and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude. When we have been misrepresented, traduced, and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse — I cannot help quoting it now, though I have often quoted it before: —

*"If on my face for thy dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since thou rememberest me."*

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of his enemies. And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and broken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He hath compassion on you. Nay, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream — he has compassion. He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches thee is thy friend. He yet can help thee. Though thou hast gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not thyself away in blank despair, for he hath compassion. And thou, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoe to thy feet, thou art welcome in the house of God, welcome as the most honored guest in the assembly of the saints. Let not the weighty grief that overhangs thy soul tempt thee to think that hopeless darkness has settled thy fate and foreclosed thy doom. Though thy sin may have beggared thee, Christ can enrich thee with better riches. He hath compassion. "Ah!" say you, "they will pass me on the stairs; they will give me a broad pathway, and if they see me in the street they will not speak to me — even his disciples will not." Be it so; but better than his disciples, tenderer by far, is Jesus. Is there a man here, whom to associate with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink?; the holy, harmless, undefiled one will not disdain even him — for

this man receiveth sinners — he is a friend of publicans and sinners. He is never happier than when he is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject, and the outcast. He despises not any that confess their sins and seek his mercy. No pride nestles in his dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off his gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from his blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to him now. Now let the silent prayer go up, “My Savior, have pity upon me; be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery be any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for thy compassion. Oh! save me for thy mercy’s sake!” Amen.

STRONG FAITH IN A FAITHFUL GOD

SERMON NO. 3445

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.”
— Psalm 57:2.*

DAVID was in the cave of Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe; and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this psalm he rings the alarm-bell, and very loud is the sound of it. “Be merciful unto me,” and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. “Be merciful unto me.” He utters his misery again and again. “My soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is ever an active grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. “I will cry,” says he, “unto God most high.” You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Amongst the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this, which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save his servant’s life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah, and he saith, “I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.” It is

delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so doth it seem as if the child of God brought forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant, and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. “Unto God who performeth all things for me,.” First, there is infinite providence. As it stands, the words, “all things,” you perceive, have been added by the translators; not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, “God that performeth for me,” allows them to supply the ellipsis without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is inviolable faithfulness, as we know that David here referred to God’s working out the fulfillment of the promises he had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of his grace as the performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this verse. Thirdly, there is a certainty of ultimate completeness. The original has for its root the word “finishing,” and now working it out, it means a God that performeth or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in his promise or covenant that I may need, he will perfect for me. To begin with: —

I. THE MARVELLOUS PROVIDENCE.

The text, as it stands, speaks of a service — “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” “All things,” that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in his hand; it is God that doeth it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God’s help. Nay, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work, and to leave the care of it with the God who careth for him. Any work in which he cannot ask divine cooperation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God, is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, “God performeth all things for me,” there is sin somewhere, evil lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on his providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask him

to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself. Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life, and apply the text to it. Should we not each morning cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach; though we are not going up to the assembly for worship; though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing. Opportunities for God's service should be sought in our common avocations; we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer — to continue all through the day in the same spirit, and to close the day by commending whatsoever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it be real success, is of God who gives it to us. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life. It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. If there be any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, "Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed," it must come from the God of heaven; it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God, say continually I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for you.

Peradventure at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume under a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much arise from our forgetting that God performeth all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutinae of life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon his blessing? Know ye not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the murrain, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblest — if unattended with the divine favor, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God then. And

little blessings as you think them, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God then for the little. Put the little into his hand; it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to him. There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the infinite mind of our glorious God. Cast all on him who numbers the hairs of your head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his decree. Unto God cry about the little things, for he performeth all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my brother, without much careful waiting upon God; but if thou be persuaded that the change is one that hath the Master's approbation, fear not, for he performeth all things for thee. At this moment, thou hast many perplexities; thou mayest chafe thyself with anxiety, and make thyself foolish with shilly-shallying if thou dost sport with fancy, conjuring up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie, which were better cut with the sword of faith. We should end our difficulties by leaving them with him who knows the end from the beginning. Up to this moment you have been rightly led: you have the same guide. To this hour, he who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious track-ways of the wilderness; follow still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If ye keep close to him, he performeth all things for you. Take your guidance from his Word, and, waiting upon him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, mayhap, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry unto God most high, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show himself again to you a God all-sufficient to his people in their times of need. He is always near. I do not know that he has said, "When thou walkest through the green pastures, I will be with thee, and when thy way lies hard by the river of the water of life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen thee." I believe he will do so, but I do not remember such a promise; but "When thou goest through the rivers, I will be with thee," is a well-known word of his. If ever he is present, it shall be in trial: if he can be absent, it will certainly not be when his servants most want his aid. Rest ye in him then. But you say, "I can do so little in this time of difficulty." Do what thou canst, but leave the rest to him. If thou seest no way of escape, doth it follow that there is none? If thou seest no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Thy Lord and Savior found no friend

among the whole family of man, “Yet,” said he, “could I not presently pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels?” Were it needful for thy help, the squadrons of heaven would leave the glory-land to come to thy rescue — the least and poorest of the children of God as thou mayest be. He will perform for thee: be thou obedient, trustful, patient. ‘Tis thine to obey, ‘tis his to command, ‘tis thine to perceive, ‘tis his to perform. He will perform all things for you. Very likely amongst this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigor shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Of all self-torture, that of importing future trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane. Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds. On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious word of promise, and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith. Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry this. He rules and he overrules: he will make all things work together for good; he will surely bring you through. Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh! strange infatuation! You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you, and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all. This is no business of yours. Leave it in his hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you; be of good confidence and rest in peace. So shall it be even at life’s close. He performeth all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the perspective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp, and yield my soul to him who gave it. Well, fear not; he helped me to live: he will help me to die. He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task; yea, he has performed it for me, giving me his grace and working his providence with me. Shall I fear that he will desert me at the last? He performeth not some things, but all things, and he cannot omit this most important thing, which often makes me tremble. No; that must

be included, for all things are mine — death as well as life. I leave my dying hour, then, with him, and never boding ill of it, I cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me. I want, dear brethren, just to leave this impression in your mind, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly; if anything be done aright, successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give him the glory. I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of his grace through you by himself, to his own honor and praise, world without end. The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of: —

II. INVIOLEABLE FAITHFULNESS.

“Unto God that performeth all things for me.” The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfill them. It is God who is the actual worker of all that he declared in the covenant of grace should be wrought in and for his people.

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer’s merits. “Unto God that performeth all things for me.” Meritoriously our Savior-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away; he bore it all — every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete; he has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God’s infinite, unflinching justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight; my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins; as a believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me. Don’t forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you; do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you. There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The temple he has builded wants not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom he has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done. O soul, if Christ has completely redeemed thee and saved thee, rest thou on him, and cry to him, and if sin rebels within thee at this present moment, fly — though thy spirit be shut up as in the Cave Adullam — fly to him by faith — to

him who hath done all things for thee as thy Representative and Substitute. After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been wrought there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has wrought every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from his Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they came; no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit. It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work: he led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the cross; he helped us when we followed him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed were opened by him. Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit. We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from him; he performed all for us. As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Savior, I am wonderfully struck with the way in which God performed everything for me; for if he had not, I do remember well when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of his grace. Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken, and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's law. He did not suffer the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on him if he had not taught me to believe. To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the cross itself, and it appeared impossible to believe. But the Spirit wrought faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony only, but the testimony of all my brethren and sisters — in that hour of sore trouble it was God that performed all things for us. Since then and up to this moment, my brethren, if there has been any virtue; if there has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or

can you attribute it? Must you not say, “Of him all my fruit was found”? You could not have done without him. If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you think you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from him. There is no wealth for us but that which is digged in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One himself. “Thou who performest all things for me,” must be our cry up to this hour.

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What he was yesterday he is today. What we find him today we shall find him for ever. Are you struggling against sin? Don’t struggle in your own strength: it is God who performeth all things for you. Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of divine grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid still of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the grey hairs to appear here and there; but it is worse still for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we have really what we think we have — no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, wrought in us from God — yea, every good spiritual thing from him, who performeth all things for us; and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunder-clouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed. In spiritual things it is God who performeth all things for you. Rest in him then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul; Christ is the Savior. If he cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself, and never look in that direction again. But if the preservation be of God, where is the cause for perturbation with you? In him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on him who performeth all things for you. Lastly, the text in its moral, literal acceptation refers to: —

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN.

It really means, "I will cry unto God most high — unto God who perfecteth all things concerning me." David's career was charged with a great work; it was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, "I have provided me a king among the sons of Jesse." And Samuel had taken "the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren." He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of banditti, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country's enemies, the Philistines — being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel's anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while he is making of him a houseless wanderer, he is perfecting that which concerns him, and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that he who promises that I shall be with him where he is, that I may behold his glory — he who gives the certainty to every believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness — can I believe tonight that he is perfecting that for me — that the way by which he is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to heaven? that he is tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O faith! here is something for thee to do; and if thou canst perform it, thou shalt bring glory to God. The pith of it is this: that if God hath the keeping of us, he will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ. In the hand of Jesus all his people are, and in that hand they shall be for ever and ever. "None shall pluck them out of my hand," saith he. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification. Every child of God is set apart by Christ, and in Christ, and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin, and extirpate the very roots of corruption; and this work shall be perfected; nay, is being perfected at this very moment. The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The seed of the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent's head, and shall

clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul. He is perfecting us in all things for himself. He has promised to bring us to glory. We have the earnest of that great glory in us now. The new life is there; all the elements of heaven are within us. Now he will perfect all these. He will not suffer one good thing that he has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking us no one trait of loveliness that is needful for the courtiers of the skies; no one virtue that is necessary in us. What a marvellous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to hell; how close to heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things; because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God, and he performeth all things for us. God, give us grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves, and to depend entirely upon him.

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try — the thing is simple — try. Look to him: he performeth all things for you. Everything that is wanted to save your soul, your heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Savior, has wrought out all the sinner's wants. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished, and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," say you. You need not: there is One who performeth all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the fall," saith one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought; there is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! it is not what thou canst do, but what God can do — what Christ has done — that must be the ground of thy hope. Give thyself up unto God, most high — unto God, who performeth all things for thee, and thou shalt be blessed indeed. God send you away with his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

CHRIST IS ALL

SERMON NO. 3446

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Christ is all” — Colossians 3:11.

MY text is so very short that you cannot forget it; and, I am quite certain, if you are Christians at all, you will be sure to agree with it. What a multitude of religions there is in this poor wicked world of ours! Men have taken it into their heads to invent various systems of religion and if you look round the world, you will see scores of different sects; but it is a great fact that, while there is a multitude of false religions, there is but one that is true. While there are many falsehoods, there can be but one truth; real religion is, therefore, one. There is but one gospel — the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should be born of humble parents, and live as a poor man in this world, for the purpose of our salvation! He lived a life of suffering and trial, and at length, through the malignity of his enemies, was crucified on Calvary as an outcast of society. “Now,” said they, “there is an end of his religion; now it will be such a contemptible thing, that nobody will ever call himself a Christian; it will be discreditable to have anything to do with the name of the man Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.” But it is a wonderful fact that this religion has not only lived, but is at this hour as strong as ever. Yes! the religion he founded still exists, and is still powerful, and constantly extending. While other religions have sunk into the darkness of the past, and the idols have been cast to the moles and to the bats, the name of Jesus is still mighty; and it shall continue to be a blessed power so long as the universe shall endure.

The religion of Jesus is the religion of God; hence, notwithstanding all the obloquy and persecution which it has had to encounter, it still exists, and still flourishes. It is this religion which I shall attempt to preach to you —

the one gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ — and the text embraces it all in the most comprehensive manner, “Christ is all.”

I shall use it, first as a test to try you, and, afterwards, as a motive to encourage you. I want, first, to sift you, to see how many of you are the people of God, and how many are not. I shall make my text a great sieve, and put you in it to see which is wheat and which is chaff. We must consider this passage in two or three senses in order, first, to use it as: —

I. A TEST TO TRY YOU.

Christ must be all, as your Great Master and Teacher. There are some who set up a certain man as their authority; they regard him as their master, they look up to him as their teacher, and whatever he says is right; it is the truth, and is not to be disputed. Or, perhaps, they have taken a certain book, other than the Bible, and say, “We will judge all things by this book”; and if the preacher does not teach exactly the creed written in that book, he is set down as not sound in the faith, and this they do not hesitate to say at once, because he does not come up to the standard of their little book! We meet with many people in this world who make their creed, their one little narrow creed, everything, and they measure everything and everybody by that. But, my friends, I must have you say that “Christ is all,” and not any man, however good or great, before I can allow that you are Christians. We have not to follow men. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. We are to follow no man, except so far as he follows Christ, who alone is our Master. Be not deceived; submit not yourselves to creeds, to books, or to men; give yourselves to the study of God’s Word, derive your creed and the doctrines of your faith from it alone, and then you will be able to say: —

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

Let Christ be your only Master, and say, in the words of our text, “Christ is all.” Now can you say this, or are you boasting, “The Baptists are all” — “The Wesleyans are all” — “The Church of England is all”? As the Lord lives, if you are saying that, you do not know his truth; because you are not testifying that “Christ is all,” but simply uttering the Shibboleth of

your little party. I should like to see the word party blotted out from the vocabulary of the Christian Church. I thank God that I have no sympathy whatever with that which is merely sectarian, and have grace given me to protest against it, and to exclaim: —

*“Let party names no more
The Christian world o’erspread”;*

since: —

*“Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
Are one in Christ, their Head.”*

If “Christ is all” to you, you are Christians; and I, for one, am ready to give you the right hand of brotherhood. I do not mind what place of worship you attend, or by what distinctive name you may call yourselves, we are brethren; and I think, therefore, that we should love one another. If, my friends, you cannot embrace all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter to what denomination they may belong, and as belonging to the universal Church, you have not hearts large enough to go to heaven; because, if such be your contracted views, you cannot possibly say, “Christ is all.”

Next, Christ must be all, as your principal object in life — your chief good. Your great aim must be to glorify Christ on the earth, in the hope and expectation of enjoying him for ever above. But as it regards some of you, Christ is not your all. You think more of your shop than you do of him. You are up early in the morning looking at your ledgers, and all day long toiling at your business. Do not mistake me: I dislike lazy people, who let the grass grow over their shoes; and God disapproves of them too. We want no lazy gospellers. The true Christian will say, “I know that I am bound to be diligent in business; but I want to work for eternity as well as for time. I need something besides earthly riches; I want an inheritance not made with hands, a mansion not built by man, a possession in the skies.” Are you making this world you all? Poor souls, if you are, the world and the fashion thereof are passing away; your all will soon be gone. I fancy I see a rich man, one whose gold is his all, when he gets into the next world, looking for his gold, and wondering where it is, and being at length compelled to exclaim, in despair, “Oh! my all is gone!” But if you can say that Christ is your all, then your treasure will never be gone; for he

will never leave you, nor forsake you. Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, you shall be happy and blessed, for you shall be crowned with glory, and made to sit with Christ on his throne for ever.

“Well,” says some easy-going gentleman, “I do not make business my all, I assure you; not I: my maxim is, let us enjoy this life, let us fill the glass to the brim, and live in pleasure while we may.” I have a word also for you Do you think that such a course of conduct will fit you for heaven, for the enjoyments of eternity? Do you imagine that, when you come to die, it will be any pleasure for you to think of your drunkenness? When you are lying on a sick bed, will your oaths bring you any peace, as they reverberate upon your conscience, just as I hear my voice, at this moment, echoing back to my ears the words I am saying? I think I see you starting up as you hear your blasphemies against God thus returning upon you, while, with a mind oppressed with anguish, and eyes starting from their sockets, you exclaim in your terror, “I hear my own oaths again! God is coming to call me to judgment; to demand of me why I dare blaspheme his name!” and the Judge will say, “You, with oaths and curses, profaned my holy name; you asked me to curse your soul, and now I will do it; you prayed in your profane moments that you might be lost, and now you shall be.” How horrible that would be! You who say pleasure is all, let me warn you that you will have to drink the bitter dregs of the cup of pleasure to all eternity, no matter how sweet the draught may now be to your taste.

But there are some more moderate people, who are by no means extravagant in their pleasures, and are great sticklers for religion; they go to church or chapel every Sunday, and believe themselves to be very good sort of people, and such as will be accepted at the last day, and placed on the right hand of the throne. Again I put the question, can you say, “Christ is all”? No; you cannot say that. Many of you make the externals of religion your all, resting in the letter, but knowing or caring nothing for the spirit. This will not do; and you are not such Christians as Christ will own if you are making anything your all but himself. Religion is not to be stowed away in the dark garret of the brain. Christianity is a heart religion, and if you cannot say, from the very depths of your being, “Christ is all,” you have neither part nor lot in the blessings and privileges of the gospel, and your end will be destruction, everlasting banishment from the presence

of the Lord. God grant it may not be so; but that in both your lives and mine we may each be enabled to say of a truth, “Christ is all”; and that we may meet again around the eternal throne!

Next, Christ will be all, as the source of your joy. Some people seem to think that Christians are a very melancholy sort of folk, that they have no real happiness. I know something about religion, and I will not admit that I stand second to any man in respect of being happy. So far as I know religion, I have found it to be a very happy thing.

*“I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great.”*

I used to think that a religious man must never smile; but, on the contrary, I find that religion will make a man’s eye bright, and cover his face with smiles, and impart comfort and consolation to his soul, even in the deepest of his earthly tribulations. In illustration of this, I might tell you the story of a poor man who lives in one of the courts in Holborn, who experiences great joy in religion, even in the midst of the deepest poverty. A Christian visitor, going up into the poor man’s room at the top of the house, said, “My friend, how long have you been in this place?”

“I have not been downstairs, nor walked across the room, these twelve months.”

“Have you anything to depend upon?”

“Nothing,” he replied; but recollecting himself, he added, “I have a good Father up in heaven, and I depend upon him entirely, and he never lets me want. Some kind Christian friends are sure to call, and they never go away without leaving me something; and I get enough to live on and pay my rent, and I am very happy. I would not change places with anybody in the world, for I have Jesus Christ with me, and my heavenly Father will take me home by-and-bye, and then I shall be as rich as any of them — shall I not, sir? Sometimes I get very low, and Satan tells me that I am not a child of God, and that I had better give up all as lost; but I tell him that he is a great coward to come and meddle with a poor weak creature like me; and I show him the blood, sir; and I tell him the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and when I show Satan the precious blood, sir, he leaves off

tempting me, and flees directly, for he cannot bear the sight of the Savior's blood."

Thus we see that true religion can cheer the sick man's couch, can make the poor man feel that he is rich, and bid him be joyful in the Lord. Well did the old man say that the devil cannot bear the sight of the Savior's blood; and if, beloved friends, you can take Christ's blood, and put it on your conscience, however sinful you may have been, you will be able to sing of Christ as all your hope, all your joy, and all your support. I ask you who love Jesus, does religion ever make you unhappy? Does love to Jesus distress you, and make you miserable? It may bring you into trouble sometimes, and cause you to endure persecution for his name's sake. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer tribulation; but all the afflictions which you may be called upon to endure for him will work for your good, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed hereafter.

Now, then, let me ask, could you go with me while I have been speaking? Can you now say that Christ is your only Master, your chief good, your only joy? "Oh! yes; I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." Then, welcome, brother; you are one with Jesus, and we are one with each other. But if you cannot say it, how terrible it shall be with some of you, when you shall find your gourds wither, the props whereon you now lean struck down at a blow, your false refuges swept away, and, deprived of all your feathers and finery, your soul will appear before God in its true character! May it not be so with any of you, but may you be united to Christ by living faith, which works by love, and purifies the heart! Secondly, I shall now consider the text as: —

II. A MOTIVE TO ENCOURAGE YOU.

"Christ is all." My beloved friends, in what is he all? Christ is all in the entire work of salvation. Let me just take you back to the period before this world was made. There was a time when this great world, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all which now exist throughout the whole of the vast universe, lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup. There was a time when the Great Creator lived alone, and yet he could foresee that he would make a world, and that men would be born to people it; and in that vast eternity a great scheme was devised, whereby he might

save a fallen race. Do you know who devised it? God planned it from first to last. Neither Gabriel nor any of the holy angels had anything to do with it. I question whether they were even told how God might be just, and yet save the transgressors. God was all in the drawing up of the scheme, and Christ was all in carrying it out. There was a dark and doleful night! Jesus was in the garden, sweating great drops of blood, which fell to the ground; nobody then came to bear the load that had been laid upon him. An angel stood there to strengthen him, but not to bear the sentence. The cup was put into his hands, and Jesus said, "Father, must I drink it?" and his Father replied, "If thou dost not drink, sinners cannot be saved"; and he took the cup and drained it to its very dregs. No man helped him. And when he hung upon that accursed tree of Calvary, when his precious hands were pierced, when: —

*“From his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down,”*

there was nobody to help him. He was “all” in the work of salvation.

And, my friends, if any of you shall be saved, it must be by Christ alone. There must be no patchwork; Christ did it all, and will not be helped in the matter. Christ will not allow you, as some say, to do what you can, and leave him to make up the rest. What can you do that is not sinful? Christ has done all for us; the work of redemption is all finished. Christ planned it all, and worked out all; and we, therefore, preach a full salvation through Jesus Christ.

What could we poor mortals do towards saving ourselves? Our best works are but mean and worthless to that great end; I am sure I could not do it. My preaching — I am ashamed of that, and there are a thousand faults in my prayers. God wants nothing of us by way of “making up” Christ’s work; but he cancels all the sins, and blots out all the transgressions of everyone who trusts to his Son’s death.

If I have found Christ, I have found all. “I have not strong faith,” say you. Never mind; Christ is all. “I do not feel my sins sufficiently”; but Christ is all. Many people think they must feel a load of repentance before they may hope Christ will receive them. I know every child of God will repent; but we are not all brought to the cross by the terrors of the law. It is not your feelings, my friends, that will save you; but Christ only, Christ

standing in your stead, Christ being your Substitute. If, feeling your need of his grace to pardon you, and his righteousness to justify you before God, you can but just look to Christ, though you have nothing good about you, you will have done all that is necessary to carry you to heaven; because it is not your act that can save you, but the act of Christ alone. A little while ago, I had a conversation with an Irishman, who had been to hear me preach. He had come to ask me, he said, the way of salvation. "What troubles me," said he, "is this: God says that he will condemn the sinner, and punish him; then how can God forgive, because he must punish if he would keep his word?" I placed before him the Scriptural view of the atonement, in the substitution of Christ for the sinner; and the poor man was astonished and delighted beyond measure, never having understood the beauty and simplicity of the gospel way of salvation before. "Is it really so?" said he. "It is in the Bible," I replied. "Then the Bible must be true," said he, "for nobody but God could have thought it."

If Jesus Christ is our Surety, friends, we are safe from the demands of the law. If Christ is our Substitute, we shall not suffer the penalty due to sin; for God will never punish the same sin twice. If I have nothing but Christ, I do not want anything else, for Christ is all. If Christ is your all, you will not want anything to help you, either in living or in dying. Now for two thoughts before I close.

1. If a man has Christ, then what does he want else? If a man has Christ, he has everything. If I want perfection, and I have Christ, I have absolute perfection in him. If I want righteousness, I shall find in him my beauty and my glorious dress. I want pardon, and if I have Christ, I am pardoned. I want heaven, and if I have Christ, I have the Prince of heaven, and shall be there by-and-bye, to live with Christ, and to dwell in his blessed embrace for ever. If you have Christ, you have all. Do not be desponding, do not give ear to the whisperings of Satan that you are not the children of God; for if you have Christ, you are his people, and other things will come by-and-bye. Christ makes you complete in himself; as the apostle says, "Ye are complete in him." I think of poor Mary Magdalene; she would have nothing to bring of her own; she would remember that she had been a harlot; but when she comes to heaven's gates, she will say, "I have Christ," and the command will go forth, "Let her in, Gabriel; let her in." Here comes a poor squalid wretch, what has he been doing? He has never

learned to write, he scarcely went even to a Ragged- school, but he has Christ in his heart. "Gabriel, let him in." Next comes a rich bad man, with rings on his fingers, and fine clothes upon his person; but the command is, "Shut the gates, Gabriel; he has no business here." Then comes a fine flaming professor of the gospel; but he never knew Christ in his heart. "Shut the gate, Gabriel." If a man has Christ, he has all for eternity; and if he has not Christ, he is poor, and blind, and naked, and will be miserable for ever. Will not you, then, who are listening to me now, resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to seek him at once, and make him your Friend? No matter what may be your state or condition, you are invited to come to him.

Ye blind, ye lame, who are far from Christ, come to him, and receive your sight, and obtain strength! He is made your all; you need bring nothing in your hand to come to him. "Ah!" says one, "I am not good enough yet." Beggars do not talk thus: they consider that, the more needy they are, the more likely are they to obtain that for which they ask. The worse the dress, the better for begging. It is the same with respect to the gospel; and you are invited to come to Christ just as you are, naked and miserable, that he may clothe and comfort you.

2. My last thought is this: How poor is that man who is destitute of Christ! If I were to say to some one of you that you are poor, you would reply, "I am not poor; I have 250 pounds a year coming in, a decent house, and an excellent situation." And yet, if you have not Christ, you are a poor man indeed. Look at that poor worldling with a load of 10,000 pounds upon his back, a quantity of stocks and annuities in one hand, policies and railway scrip in the other; but he is wretched with all his wealth, though he can hardly carry it. There is a poor beggar-woman, who says to him, "Let me take a part of your burden"; but the miserable man refuses all assistance, and resolves to carry all his load himself. But by-and-bye he comes to a great gulf, and, instead of finding these riches help him, they hang around his neck like millstones, and weigh him down. Yet there are some who would do anything for gold. If there be one man more miserable than another in hell, it must be the man who robbed his neighbors to feather his own nest; such feathers will help the flight of the arrows which shall pierce his soul to all eternity. No matter what your wealth, if you

have not Christ, you are miserably poor; but with Christ, you are rich to all eternity.

Methinks I see one of you ungodly ones in your last moments; someone stands by your bedside, and watches your face; the death-sweat comes over you, and the big drops stand on your brow; the strong man is bowed down, and the mighty one falls; and now the eye closes, and the hand falls powerless — life is fled. Ah! but the soul never dies! Up it flies to appear at God's bar. How will it appear there? Oh! the poor soul without Christ! It will be a naked soul; it will have no garment to cover it — it will be a perishing soul, no salvation for it. Mercy cannot be secured then; it will be in vain to pray then, because the lamp will be put out in eternal darkness. And the Judge will say, in tones that will pierce you to the quick, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

May God give all of you grace to repent, and to embrace the salvation which is revealed in the gospel! Every sin-sick soul may have Christ; but as for you who are Pharisees, and trusting in yourselves that you are righteous, if you know nothing about sin, you can know nothing about Christ. The way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "But what is it to believe?" you say. I have heard of a captain who had a little son, and this little boy was very fond of climbing aloft. One day he climbed to the mast-head, and the father saw that, if the boy attempted to return, he would be dashed to pieces; he, therefore, shouted to him not to look down, but to drop into the sea. The poor boy kept fast hold of the mast; but the father saw it was his only chance of safety, and he shouted once more, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop, or I will shoot you." The boy is gone; he drops into the sea, and is saved. Had he not dropped, he must have perished. This is just your condition: so long as you cling to works and ceremonies, you are in the utmost peril; but when you give yourselves up entirely to the mercy of Christ, you are safe. Try it, sinner; try it, that is all. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is Christ's promise, and it shall never fail you. The invitation is to all who thirst. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, and take the water of life freely." I have heard that, in the deserts where they can only get water at long intervals, they send a man on a camel in search of it; when he sees a pool, he springs off his beast, and before he himself drinks he calls out,

“Come,” and there is another man at a little distance, and he shouts, “Come,” and one further away still repeats the word, “Come,” until the whole desert resounds with the cry, “Come,” and they come rushing to the water to drink. Now I do not make the gospel invitation wider than the declaration of the Word of God, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Whosoever you are, and whatsoever you may have been, if you feel your need of Christ, “Come,” and he will receive you, and give you to drink of the water of life freely.