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**SERMONS BY**

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## **The Christian Contrast, or the Bearing About of the Death and the Life of the Lord Jesus**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 6, 1863

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4:8, 9, 10

The words which I have just read immediately follow a passage from which I have lately preached;— and as they stand in very close and intimate connection with it, they may form to that discourse, if the Lord be pleased to open up the subject to my mind, a not inappropriate sequel.

It is very desirable, in reading the Scriptures, and especially the epistles of Paul, to attend to the connection of thought and argument which links verse with verse and chapter with chapter; for these divine epistles are not a collection of mere loose, disjointed texts without order or arrangement; but, on the contrary, are built up, from the first stone to the last, into a compact and harmonious edifice, every part of which mutually strengthens the other. Many good people, I freely admit, read the epistles with both profit and power, who do not see, or even lack the mental ability required to understand the logical connection in which so much of their force lies; but still, unless we carefully attend to the dependence that one passage has on another, we shall often lose much of its peculiar strength and beauty. I fully allow also that this beautiful order in Paul's writings is not always immediately discernible; but the more that we are favoured with divine light upon the meaning of the apostle, and the more that we drink into his spirit, the more clearly shall we see and feel that almost every word he wrote has a connection with the main subject of his thoughts when, under divine inspiration; he poured out his heart with his pen.

You may not perhaps at this moment recollect the connection to which I have alluded as much determining the meaning of our text. I will therefore read the verses which immediately precede it, and which I lately attempted to unfold in your hearing: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." If you look at these words, and especially if you remember the way in which on a late occasion I handled them, you will see in them three, if not more, distinguishing features. The first is *the treasure* that makes the soul rich for eternity; which is nothing less than the shining in of God himself into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The second prominent idea of the passage is *the casket*, the unseemly and unsuitable casket, as it appears to us, in which this precious treasure is deposited: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." And the third prominent feature of the passage is, *the reason* why the treasure is deposited in this seemingly unsuitable casket, "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

Now if, carrying those three ideas in our mind, we look at the words of our text, we shall see that there is in them a very close and intimate connection with the passage I have just quoted: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." In these words we see before us a series of two striking contrasts. But these two striking contrasts are intimately connected with what the apostle had been laying down in the preceding passage with respect to the treasure, and the earthen vessel in which it is lodged. Why are we "troubled on every side?" On account of the casket. Yet why are we "not distressed?" On account of the treasure. Why are we "perplexed?" On account of the earthen vessel. But why "not in despair?" Because of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Why are we "cast down?" On account of the

troubles and sorrows connected with a body of sin and death. But why "not destroyed?" On account of the merciful shining of God into the soul. So you see that the beautiful contrast which he draws between the weakness and the strength, between the sorrows and the support, between the death and the life of the child of grace derives all its force and significance from the two conflicting circumstances which he had so prominently brought forward in the preceding passage.

But if we look still more closely into the passage before us, we shall find the same contrast and the same connection in the last verse of our text: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Why do "we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus?" Because the body in its present state is but an earthen vessel, in which the dying of the Lord Jesus is continually manifested. But why should "the life of Jesus be made manifest in our body?" By reason of the treasure, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" which is lodged in it. Thus we see that there is a close connection between the two passages—a golden thread of union that runs between them; and that one harmonious ray of divine light illuminates both, shining into their inmost recesses with a holy splendour. In this point of view, then, as the Lord may enable, I shall this morning endeavour to consider the words before us; and in so doing shall bring before you,

I.—*First, the four pairs of Christian contrast:* "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

II.—*Secondly, a consequence* that rises out of the first point of each contrast, a "*bearing about* in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

III.—*Thirdly, a result* that springs out of this dying of the Lord Jesus, as borne about in our mortal flesh, which is the second

point of the Christian contrast—a *manifestation* of the *life* of Jesus in our body.

As I open these points of Christian contrast, may the Lord the Spirit cast a gracious light upon them, directing me to speak of them in sweet harmony with the word of his grace and the experience of his saints, and give you not only to see their spiritual meaning, but also to feel their heavenly power, and seal upon your breast a comfortable persuasion of you personal knowledge of, and abiding interest in these divine realities.

I.—"*We are troubled on every side.*"

i. Trouble is the lot of man, of every man, since the fall; for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." If there never had been sin, there never would have been sorrow. But when, "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin," through the breach that sin made sorrow entered as sin's inseparable companion. The Lord, therefore, pronounced the doom of sorrow both on fallen man and fallen woman. To man he said: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;" and to the woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." (Gen. 3:16, 17.) There is, therefore, nothing strange or peculiar that the saints of God should be troubled; for that they have in common with their fellow sinners and fellow mortals. Poverty, bereavements, sickness, vexation, disappointment, misery, wretchedness, death itself are the common lot of all, from the wailing child to the aged sire. Thus look where you will, let your eye range through every class of society, from the prince's palace to the pauper's hovel, you cannot find any one of the sons of men who can claim exemption from troubles. Why, then, should the apostle speak of trouble as anything distinguishing and peculiar to the saints of God, when it is the lot of all their fellow men? For this reason, that though all men have their troubles and afflictions as well as we, they are not troubled as Paul was, and those who walk in Paul's footsteps—"on every side." Their troubles are all on one side: our troubles are on every side; their

troubles therefore are but partial, whilst ours are general. Their troubles are only from one quarter; but ours are from many, if not from all. Thus, if the Christian look before, there is trouble on that side, for darkness often hangs over the future; if he look behind, there is trouble on that, for he has many painful recollections of the past; at the right hand trouble meets him in grace; on the left hand trouble compasses him in providence; nay, if I may use the expression, he has troubles *inside* as well as outside, for he has troubles on every side. Thus, not only has he a common portion in those afflictions and troubles which are the lot of all, but he has those spiritual troubles which are the lot only of some. What, for instance, in the midst of all its troubles does the world know of a guilty conscience, the hidings of God's face, the temptations of Satan, the strong pressure of inward grief on account of backslidings, slips and falls; of doubts and fears about its state; or distressing apprehensions of coming short of salvation? Or what does the world know of persecution for Christ's sake, of keen and cutting reproaches from clear relations and friends, and the loss of all things from walking in the path in which an afflicted Saviour walked before us, and has left us an example to follow his steps? Or what does it know of the daily conflict between flesh and spirit, nature and grace, or of that inward crucifixion whereby the old man is mortified and put off with his evil deeds and the world crucified unto us and we unto the world? Or what acquaintance has it with any of those various and complicated spiritual troubles whereby we obtain what the apostle speaks of—a fellowship with the sufferings of Christ? Thus the saint of God is "troubled on every side," because he has an every side on which he may be troubled—a spiritual side as well as a temporal side—a side in his soul as well as a side in his body, a side in his supernatural as well as in his natural life, a side in his new man of grace as well as a side in his old man of sin. And as it is necessary for him to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, trouble comes upon him on every side and from every quarter, to make him like his blessed Lord. Nay, his troubles are multiplied in proportion to his grace, for the more the afflictions abound the more abundant are the consolations; and an abundance of consolation is but an abundance of grace.

Thus, the more grace he has the greater will be his sufferings; and the more he walks in a path agreeable to the Lord, and in conformity to his will and word, the more will he be baptised with the baptism of sorrow and tribulation wherewith his great Head was baptised before him.

But the apostle adds—and here we have the second point of that beautiful contrast of which I have before spoken—“*yet not distressed.*” I am always sorry to make the slightest alteration in, or objection to our truly excellent translation, for the more that I compare it with the original, which I do almost daily, the more I admire the wisdom and grace bestowed on the translators, and the spiritual discernment with which they have almost always chosen the very best word to give the very best meaning. Still no translation can be perfect in all points, and I have, therefore, often thought that our translators have not given the exact meaning of the word which they have here rendered “*distressed.*” Without understanding the original, even our natural apprehension shows us that there is but little difference between being troubled and distressed. Can you find any very strong degree of contrast between trouble and distress? I fully admit that the latter has somewhat a stronger meaning; but speaking generally, if you are distressed, you are troubled; if you are troubled, you are distressed. You want then some word that will give you a larger, fuller, and more marked contrast between the pair of opposing circumstances, in order plainly to show that, though a Christian is troubled on every side, yet he has that which distinguishes him from others who have no such resources as is his blessed portion. Now this is just the very thing which is intimated in the word rendered by our translators “*distressed.*” It rather means, then, being *placed in a position from which there is no escape*, shut up into a narrow corner out of which there is no outlet; as if the idea were this—of a wild beast say, tracked to its lair, and having now no further chance of escape. Hunters and hounds surround the cave where it lies wounded and exhausted, but without power to flee or strength to fight. Sullenly it surrenders itself to its fate, and without further effort yields and dies. Thus it is with the man who has his portion in this life.



Sooner or later he succeeds to the Adam inheritance of trouble and sorrow. They gather round his head, like clouds on a mountain top, under some form of disappointed hopes, blighted expectations, family trouble, painful bereavements, or bodily afflictions. Now when his troubles come thick and fast upon his head, and especially his last trouble, he is like a wild beast tracked to his lair: death has long been hounding his steps, and it finds him at last, as the hunter finds the wolf in his den. How is he to meet this terrific foe? How do worldly men for the most part meet him? What a melancholy sight it is to see a worldly man upon the bed of death, with the appalling consciousness fastened upon him that he is already in the grasp of a mortal foe who never yet relaxed his hold till he had done the fatal deed. Some die sullenly; some die self-righteously; some die rebelliously; and some die resignedly, because they find and feel that there is no help for it. But however they die, they die without hope, because they have lived up to the very time of their death, no change being then made, without God in the world.

Now, by way of contrast, to illuminate more clearly the apostle's meaning, set side by side with this melancholy and the death-bed of a Christian. He may be troubled on every side; he may be racked by pain, tortured by disease; consumption may be wasting the flesh off his bones; fever may parch his tongue; inflammation make him pant for breath; cancer be eating away his mouth; the most agonising sufferings may seem to be rending body and soul asunder. The martyrs suffered more than all this. But put him at the very worst, is he like the worldly man, dying like a beast in his den? Is there not some escape provided for him? Is he, to use a familiar expression, dying like a rat in a corner? No; though troubled on every side he is not in that spot from which there is no outlet.

By this illustration, I have given you the meaning of the word rendered by our translators, "*distressed!*" The word literally signifies that we are not shut up in a narrow spot from which there is no outlet whatever. It corresponds, therefore, to an expression of the apostle's in another place, where he says, "God

will with the temptation, also make a *way to escape* that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13), and tallies well with the words of David: "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." There is the trouble on every side. But he adds: "And has not shut me up into the hands of the enemy; thou hast set my feet in a large room." (Psalm 31:8.) There is the exact counterpart of the contrast in our text. "Not being shut up into the hand of the enemy" is not being abandoned of God to the foeman's death-stroke; and having "the feet set in a large room," is to have a place to move about in, one which affords an escape from death and destruction. Thus, the dying Christian has a God to go to; a Saviour into whose arms he may cast his weary soul; a blessed Spirit who from time to time relieves his doubts and fears, applies a sweet promise to his burdened spirit, gives him resignation and submission to the afflicting hand of God, and illuminates the dark valley of the shadow of death, which he has to tread, with a blessed ray of gospel light. The two dying men may be equally racked with pain; the death-sweat may stand equally with its cold, chilling damps upon their forehead; life with both is ebbing fast; the great change is drawing nigh; and to the practised medical eye, as far as all dying symptoms are concerned, the sinner and the saint present much the same appearance. But O, could we penetrate through the veil that hangs over the breast of each, and see the sullen indifference, the gloomy despair, or the self-righteous complacency, almost worse than despair as being more delusive, in which the one yields up his breath, and view the solid peace, the holy joy, the calm resignation with which the other lays down his mortal clay,—should we not see a difference between them as vast as between a devouring hell and an opening heaven? I have brought this picture before you to present with more vivid contrast the words of the apostle, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;" for if in the last trouble there be this heavenly escape, this divine outlet, will there not be the same help and hope in other troubles also? He would thus assure us, that so far as we possess the heavenly treasure, whatever be our troubles, though they be on every side, we shall never be brought into that spot from which there is no escape and no outlet; for when the worst comes to the worst, in

nature's direst extremity, when heart and flesh fail, heaven will open to us its gracious doors to receive the soul as it issues forth from the dying body. Here, then, is the distinguishing blessing of those into whose hearts God has shone, that though trouble may be on every side, yet it never will be with them as with those who have no Father to bless them with his Fatherly love, no Saviour to bedew them with his atoning blood, and no blessed Spirit to comfort them with his choice consolations.

ii. "*We are perplexed, but not in despair.*" I hinted that the foundation of each of these pairs of Christian contrast was the possession of the treasure in the earthen vessel. It is so with the contrast which I now mean to consider. If it were all an earthen vessel, there would be despair, or at least good ground for it; if it were all treasure, there would be no perplexity, for its cause would disappear. But this is what produces the perplexity, that there should be such a casket in which the jewel is lodged—such a vessel in which the treasure is deposited. And yet that which keeps the soul from despair is the blessed assurance which it enjoys, that it is in possession of the treasure—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But let us examine these points a little more closely; and first why we are "*perplexed.*"

How many things are continually arising on every side to perplex the mind of a Christian, so that, as the word literally means, he knows not what course to take, or what to think, say, or do! He looks abroad into the world; how many things perplex him there, in what I may call the *moral government* of God. The rise of some, the fall of others, the prosperity of the ungodly, the manifold afflictions of the saints of the Most High, the prevalence of wickedness, the paucity of the righteous, the way in which a mere outside profession abounds and flourishes, and the way in which real vital godliness is almost everywhere trampled under foot, are often matters of great perplexity to the Christian breast. It seems to him at times as if this world had, so to speak, lost its governing God, and as if all events were driving on as a ship at sea by the winds, when its crew had forsaken it or been swept

overboard. But besides this cause of general perplexity, he is often also as regards *himself* much perplexed in *providence*; for many of the Lord's dear people have to tread very trying paths in providential matters. How he shall come off honourably, or even escape shipwreck in his circumstances; how he shall so conduct himself in the various relationships of life, in his profession, business, or trade, as to bring no reproach on the cause he holds so dear; what provision he shall be able to make for his beloved family; or how the Lord will take care of them when his head is laid low,—such and similar causes of perplexity often try a Christian. But after all, though these outward matters often sorely try his mind, yet the main cause of perplexity lies in a smaller compass and comes home more pointedly to his own bosom. As the concerns of the soul are far beyond those of the body, as eternity exceeds time, as grace excels nature, so does spiritual far outweigh all natural perplexity. "If I am the Lord's, why am I thus?" will often be a question that he asks himself in his sore perplexity. "If I be a child of God, as I hope I am, why this coldness of affection, why this deadness of heart, why this barrenness of frame, why so few answers to prayer, why so little life, liberty, and love in the precious things of God? If my soul has once been favoured with the Lord's manifested mercy and goodness, why does he suffer me to go on, it may be for weeks or months, without one cheering ray of his presence or one visitation of his love?" Or again he asks himself, "Why should sin work in me at so fearful a rate? Why should pride, unbelief, infidelity, worldly-mindedness, and a host of evils be so rife in my carnal mind, and seem as if at times they would altogether take possession of my very being? If the Lord Jesus Christ be what I believe him to be, exceedingly precious to those that believe; if he is their light, their life, and their all, and I believe in his name, why am I not more indulged with sweet manifestations of his love to my soul? If this world is nothing and I am passing away from it, and if my life at best is but a dream, a vapour, why should I be so anxious about these earthly toys which I ought to hold with a loose grasp? Why should trifles, things of no importance, occupy my mind, engage my thoughts, ruffle my temper, distract me upon my knees, interfere with my solemn worship of God, and

bring a cloud of darkness upon my soul?" These are matters of perplexity to a conscience made tender in the fear of God. Then again at other times the Christian looks out of himself, and as he sees even in those who he hopes are children of God such manifest inconsistencies, such little living to the glory and praise of God, so many infirmities, to say the least of them, and so many things continually taking place in the church and congregation which seem so little like the manifested fear of God, he asks himself, "Is this religion? Do we expect conduct like this from those who profess to know anything of the fear and love of God? Where, O where, is there any vital godliness? Where, O where, anything like the religion of the Bible, and such a one as is commended to my conscience as having the stamp of the word and work of God?" Thus, what with himself and what with others, the Christian sometimes is so perplexed that he scarcely knows what to say, think, or do, or in what light to view his own case or the case of those around him.

And yet look at the contrast which the apostle so beautifully draws; for remember that I am now setting before you the distinguishing features of the Christian contrast: though he is perplexed, he is *"not in despair."* O what a mercy, amidst every degree of inward or outward perplexity, to be out of the reach of Giant Despair; not to be shut up in the iron cage; not to be abandoned, as Judas or Ahithophel, to utter desperation and suicide, and, after a long life of profession, concerning faith to make awful shipwreck! Now the child of God, with all his doubts, fears, sinkings, misgivings, and trying perplexities is never really and truly in despair. He may tread so near the borders of that black country that it may almost be debateable land whether he is walking in despair or upon the borders of it; for I believe many children of God have at times come to the solemn conclusion that there is no hope for them, for they cannot see how they can be saved or have their aggravated sins pardoned. And though this be not black despair, nor such utter, irremediable desperation as seized Saul and Judas; for there still is a "Who can tell?" yet it certainly is walking very near the borders of that dark and terrible land. I cannot tell, nor do I believe any can, how low a child of

God may sink, or how long he may continue under the terrors of the Almighty; but we have the warrant of God's word to believe that he is never given up to utter despair, for the Lord holds up his feet from falling into that terrible pit, and being cast into that sea to which there is neither bottom nor shore.

But the words admit of another meaning, as given in the margin, "*Not altogether without help, or means,*" in other words, that though the Christian is often perplexed, and yet he is not altogether without resources that help him from time to time out of his perplexity. By this peculiar feature he is distinguished from all others, that he has resources in himself, or rather out of himself, which are made his by a divine communication. How we see this exemplified all through the history of David! Though hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and though often, according to his fears or feelings, there was but a step between him and death, yet he always found help and strength in the Lord. How beautifully was this shown when he came to Ziklag, and found it burned with fire; when he was "greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him." How then "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Sam. 30:6.)

1. Thus the Christian who has ever known what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth has a *God to help him* in his direst extremities; for as long as the spirit of prayer abides in his bosom—and that spirit once given is never taken away—he can at times and seasons pour out his heart before God, and find help and strength in him. This, then, is one of his blessed resources, that he has a God to go to, the Lord of Sabaoth, into whose ears his cries may enter.

2. But he is also not without resource in having a *Mediator* between God and his soul, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, an Intercessor whose plea is ever prevalent.

3. He has also a *blessed Spirit* to help his infirmities and make intercession for him with groanings which cannot be uttered.

4. But, besides this, all the *promises* are on his side, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Nor is he without sword or shield, or the *whole armour* of God. Nor is he without faith and hope, or secret supplies of strength made perfect in weakness. Nor is he without a knowledge of the truth, nor destitute of evidences of an interest in it. Thus, let a Christian be involved in the greatest perplexity, there is still the voice of prayer in his bosom, and still the goings up and actings of a living faith upon the Son of God who has been manifested to his soul, still the firm anchorings of hope within the veil. He is not like a sailor cast upon a wide ocean without rudder, chart, or compass. He knows what to do; he knows what course to steer; he knows the land to which his eyes are ever directed. Let him sink into the greatest perplexity, he still knows there is at the right hand of the Father a Jesus, upon whom help is laid as one that is mighty. Still, still the solemn fact is recorded deep in his mind—an ineffaceable impression has been left upon his soul from former discoveries of the King in his beauty, that this Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Thus he is not left without resource, help, or hope.

5. The *word of God*, full of sweet promises, precious invitations, and most comforting declarations to the oppressed and afflicted, is another resource open to the child of grace. It is true he cannot always nor often mix faith with what he hears and reads; still the Bible is to him a most precious book, and out of that he will sometimes gather sweet comforts, blessed props, or gracious intimations of coming deliverance, all of which afford timely support.

6. The *preached* word is also a help to him; for he may come sometimes into the assembly of the saints sadly perplexed about his state and case, scarcely able to find a spark of grace in his own bosom, or to form any judgment what the Lord means to do with him; and yet, under all this perplexity, the preached word may cast a light upon his dark path, discovering to him where he is on the road Zionward, or dart a ray of blessed light upon his soul's experience, enabling him to believe it is the Lord who is

secretly leading him, though he can scarcely trace his kind conducting hand.

7. He has also from time to time *intimations* that the Lord will be gracious, *expectations* of better days, promises applied to his soul, words of blessedness and power dropping into his heart; and by all these various helps and resources, though he is perplexed, he is held up and held on in the strait and narrow path, that leads to life eternal.

iii. But the apostle adds, as another pair in the series of Christian contrasts, "*Persecuted, but not forsaken.*" He had said previously of himself, "We are troubled on every side;" and a part of his troubles arose from the bitter persecution which he had to endure wherever he went, and of which the Acts of the Apostles gives us so clear an account. Now in our days persecution does not manifest itself in those cruel forms which it took under the Roman emperors, and even in our own country, 300 years ago; so that we can scarcely enter into the sufferings and sorrows of the blessed martyrs and the persecuted saints of God, when their blood was poured out like water. Our persecutions are light compared with theirs; but then our grace is less and our consolation much smaller. If the fires of persecution have in good measure burned out, we have lost the benefit that sprang out of it to those dear saints of God, who had to prove the truth of their religion in the very face of fire and fagot. If we have not the same hot furnaces into which they were cast, we have more dross and tin than they had; and if we have not to walk through the deep waters in which they were so often plunged, we have lost also the sweet supports they enjoyed and the comforting smiles of the Lord their God. Still we have, or may have had our measure of persecution, for I believe few escape it in some form or other. A good measure of it from various quarters has fallen to my lot, nor do I expect to be free from it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

But this is the blessing, that if we have been or are now in any way persecuted we are "*not forsaken.*" Whatever ill persecutors



may do or attempt to do to a Christian, they cannot rob him of his God. They may destroy his body; they cannot destroy his soul. They may wound his reputation; but they cannot wound his conscience. They may strip him of all his earthly goods; but they cannot lay their unhallowed hands upon the treasure which God has lodged in his breast. Yea, all may forsake him as they forsook his divine Master; but God has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Why then need we dread persecution for righteousness' sake? If the Lord be on our side, whom need we fear? And who can harm us if we be followers of that which is good? But bear in mind that it must be persecution for righteousness' sake. Do not call it persecution if you are buffeted for your faults. Do not think yourselves persecuted, if by your inconsistencies you have brought upon yourselves the reproach of men, or the just censure of those who fear God. But if your persecutions are brought upon you from doing the will of God from the heart, you will find the approbation of God in your conscience; nay, you will find that your very persecutions will draw down more into your soul a blessed sense of the sympathy of your great High Priest, so that as your afflictions abound, so will your consolation. Sad indeed it would be for the Church of God, if, amidst her persecutions, the Lord added to the weight of her trouble by withdrawing from her the light of his countenance and the consolations of his sensible presence. But she never more sensibly reclines on his bosom than when he gives her to drink of his cup, and thus conforms her to his suffering image.

iv. One more contrast before I pass on: "*Cast down, but not destroyed.*"

The expression, "cast down," you may take in two senses: first, as cast down from our standing; and secondly, as cast down in our soul. We will consider both.

1. Satan envies the Christian's standing. It moves the spleen of the arch-fiend to see the saints of God elevated into the enjoyment of that happiness which he has for ever forfeited. To see man, by creation so inferior to angels, raised up by the

incarnation of the Son of God to those mansions of heavenly bliss from which he has been for ever thrust into the blackness of darkness for ever, galls Satan to the very quick, and torments him as with the very agonies of hell. And above all things, that after he had so easily foiled him in paradise, man should be fixed in a standing far surer and safer than before; this vexes him with impotent rage. He therefore summons all his arts and arms to cast the Christian down from his standing; for though he cannot destroy, he can distress him; and sometimes, by the permission of God, he is allowed to succeed. It was so with Job; it was so with David; it was so with Hezekiah; it was so with Peter; and it has been so with many of the saints of God. Often, too often, does he make use of some sin in its allurements, for he well knows our weak side, and when once he has spread the net for his silly victim's feet and entangled them in it, he will not spare to cast him down. His object is first to allure, and then betray; first entangle, and then accuse. But his one main object, whether by the allurements of sin or by the accusations of his thundering voice, is to cast down the soul from the steadfastness of its faith in Christ; to get it off that footing on which it stands as a believer in the Son of God, receiving communications out of his fulness, and to hurl it into some miserable slough of despondency, or some pit of darkness and confusion.

2. But the word has another sense, and the more usual one in our general apprehension of its meaning: *cast down in one's spirit* by a gloomy melancholy coming over the soul, like a mist or fog gathering over the lower grounds of some deep valley. Many of God's children are sadly prone to a depression of spirit; easily cast down by the trying circumstances which come upon them in providence or in grace. I have thought sometimes, from the observation I have had during a long course of years of the Church of Christ, that many of the Lord's people are naturally of a very desponding temperament. Sometimes their nerves have been seriously shattered, by the powerful work of grace upon their conscience in their first convictions, when they were brought under the curse and condemnation of the law. Sometimes a long and lingering illness, without bringing the body altogether to the grave, has had the effect of weakening that natural strength of

mind and elasticity or firmness of spirit, whereby worldly people often seem able to rise above their troubles. Thus the latter seem like lightly laden ships which rise over every wave, whilst the former, like heavily burdened vessels, are ready to sink under them. Many, too, of the Lord's people meet their troubles half way; or are pressed down with continual fears of future trials, many of which will never be fulfilled. Thus, many of the apprehensions of God's people are not real; and yet though imaginary, they are as keenly felt as though real they were, for a gloomy mind can give a substance to a shadow. But besides these castings down that spring out of a naturally desponding, melancholy mind, there are many solid reasons why many of the saints of God should be cast down who are very free from forecasting trouble, or being pressed down with imaginary fears. The hidings of God's face; the reproofs and rebukes that issue from his lips; the temptations of Satan; the painful misgivings and exercises of mind from contracted guilt; their continual conflict with a body of sin and death; their inability to do the things that they would; the deep sense which they have of their own barrenness and unfruitfulness, and living so little to the honour and glory of God—all these things under which they suffer are enough to cast them down, without their being naturally of a melancholy temperament or possessing their minds with imaginary troubles. Those who are walking in the strait and narrow path also have many other real troubles to cast them down. Painful bereavements of beloved relatives and friends; family trials, pressing very painfully upon their mind and filling them with perplexity how to act; church troubles, which, next to our own spiritual sorrows, are perhaps the most trying and heart-gnawing of all others; the low condition of the Church of God; the removal or the laying aside by sickness and infirmity of the dear servants of God; the present gloomy prospect which hangs over our spiritual Zion—for look where we will, where do we see men being raised up to be pastors after God's own heart? these and many other circumstances which I cannot now mention, may well cast down a man's mind who has any real zeal for Zion, or any desire for the glory of God and the good of his people.

But though "*cast down*" still we have the same blessed contrast to give us the relief which we have before seen—"but *not destroyed*." What is the meaning of this striking expression "not destroyed?" If the earthen vessel be broken, as it will be at death, the treasure is not spilt, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not lost. We see dear friends with whom we have walked in sweet communion taken from our midst; members of our churches removed from before our eyes by the strong arm of death; the treasure is gone, but not spilt. It was not water, but gold, precious gold, and therefore never can be lost; yea even now it is gathered up into the bosom of God. He that makes up the jewels in the great day of his appearing will not leave one sapphire or diamond behind him, but will gather all of them up to form a crown to adorn his mediatorial brow. Even now the believer's treasure is in heaven; for the Lord said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You may be cast down by many doubts and fears, and lose the sense of the Lord's love to your soul, but you cannot lose the reality. Nor is your faith destroyed by the hottest flame. It is like gold; the fire melts away and separates the dross and tin, but never touches the gold. In your hottest trials your faith will not have lost a particle. Neither will your hope be destroyed, however you may be cast down about your state or standing; for not a particle of hope, or of any one Christian grace can ever be lost. They may seem to suffer diminution, as the Apostle speaks, "If a man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," (1 Cor. 3:15); but it is no real loss,—it is merely the dross taken away, that he may come forth a vessel for the finer. The work of the Holy Spirit is as indestructible as the work of Christ; and thus every grace which he implants in the soul remains there untouched, unharmed, in all its divine integrity. Love, patience, submission, and humility all remain unhurt in the flame, though the dross which is mixed with them is taken from them, that they may shine all the brighter. Thus though you may be plunged into the hottest fires, you will not be destroyed, any more than the three children were destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, or Jonah in the belly of the whale.

Time summons me to go on with the remaining portion of our text, on which however I shall be but brief, as, though it is too weighty to be passed lightly over, I intend, with God's help and blessing, to speak on a similar subject at some other opportunity. I shall, therefore, in concluding this discourse, just simply touch upon the two remaining points to be spoken of, to show you their connection with the text, rather than attempt to enter into the fulness of their meaning.

II.—"*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.*"

Our blessed Lord is presented to the faith of a Christian under two leading aspects; his death, and his resurrection, or, as its necessary and immediate consequence, his present life.

But as faith in Christ crucified precedes faith in Christ risen, and such also is the order of our text, I shall consider first—*the dying of the Lord Jesus.*

But what a field of divine truth is couched in these simple words! Though we may despair of opening up the treasures of grace which are deposited in it, yet we may attempt to point out a little of that vein of heavenly truth which rises more immediately to the surface. What special idea, then, does "*the dying of the Lord Jesus*" convey to our mind as connected with our bearing it about in our body?

1. The first idea is of *suffering*. The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ in body and soul were a part of his atoning sacrifice. We therefore read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9); and again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins" (1 Pet. 3:18); and so our gracious Lord said to his disciples after his resurrection, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) We bear then about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus by *suffering* with him, and thus having a fellowship with him in his

sufferings and sorrows.

2. But our blessed Lord died in *weakness*, for "he was crucified through weakness." (2 Cor. 13:4.) This weakness of Christ was the weakness of his human nature, in its submission to the will of God; that weakness of which the prophet speaks: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isai. 53:7.) When, therefore, we feel our own weakness, and in that weakness are made submissive to the will of God, we "bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This sense of dying weakness necessarily springs out of being "troubled on every side," being "perplexed," being "persecuted," and being "cast down;" for by this experience of suffering we are conformed to the dying of the Lord Jesus. And as he in his dying unresistingly was an example of weakness, so when we submit through weakness to afflictions and trials as to the will of God, we are conformed to his death. Now we are to bear about in our body, as if from place to place wherever we go, this dying of the Lord Jesus; to carry it about with us as our daily companion, and thus make it manifest to ourselves and others, that, as Christ suffered for us, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. (1 Pet. 2:21.) But how little is known by the Church of God of this dying of the Lord Jesus, as dying in weakness!

"The strength of God is own'd by all,  
But who his weakness knows?"

The holy submission of the Lord Jesus Christ to the will of God; that weakness which made him cry, "I am a worm and no man;" "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws" (Psa. 22:6, 14, 15)—how little is this spiritually known and experimentally felt and entered into by his professed followers! But look at our blessed Lord as taken to the cross. Was there any resistance, any display of strength? A word, a look would have driven his enemies before him like chaff before the wind. Did the holy angels surrounding the throne rush to the

rescue, though at one word from his lips the Father would have sent more than twelve legions of angels? No. All was still in heaven and earth whilst the Son of God was accomplishing his Father's will, and finishing the work which he had given him to do. When then we submit as he submitted, even were our sufferings to kill us, we should be but bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

3. Look again at the *ignominy and shame* with which he was covered when he died upon the cross. If then we are to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, we must be content to bear his reproach.

4. See, too, the nature of his death in being *crucified*. How this represents the crucifixion of the flesh and of the world which we are to bear about with us daily, that we may have some union with the sufferings and death of our most gracious Lord. I wish that time and opportunity would allow me to enter more fully upon these important points, but I pass over them thus hastily with less regret as hoping, if the Lord will, I may be enabled at another time to enter upon them more fully.

III.—But now comes our third point, "*that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*" The two aspects, if I may use the expression, of our gracious Lord, in which are wrapped up all our faith, and hope, and love, are a dying Jesus and a risen Jesus; Christ in his sufferings and death, Christ in his resurrection and life. This is the Christ of God, this is the Son of God in whom we believe unto life eternal, as he is presented to our view in the Scriptures of truth, and by the inward teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. If, then, you do not believe in a dying Christ and in a risen Christ, your faith is not the faith of a Christian. Now just see how this bears upon our text. Why do we bear about the *dying* of the Lord Jesus? It is that the *life* of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; as we suffer with Christ, die with Christ, and enter by faith into the mystery of his crucifixion so as to be mystically and spiritually crucified with him, we rise, so to speak,

out of this death into union with the risen, living Christ, so as to derive life and strength, grace and power out of his glorious fulness. For he is risen from the dead: he is no more in the tomb, into which he sank in all the weakness of death; but is risen again, and was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power." Yes, he has gone up on high, and now sits at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. He is gone within the veil, to be the high Priest over the house of God: there, too, he rules and reigns as King in Zion; and there he ever lives as our glorified and risen Head. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as crucified with him and conformed to his death, so as "risen with him," there is even now in our body a manifestation of his risen life.

It is then in this earthen vessel, our poor mortal body, that both the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus are manifested. In the trouble, the perplexity, the being cast down, is the dying of Jesus; in not being distressed, as I have explained the word, in not being in despair, in not being forsaken, in not being destroyed, is the life of Jesus. Thus in the same body there is a dying Christ and a living Christ—Christ in his cross in his weakness; and Christ at the right hand of God in his power. To know these two things is to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings—those two divine blessings which the soul of Paul so longed to realise and experience. In the knowledge then—the experimental knowledge, I mean, for all other is of no avail—of Christ crucified and Christ risen, consists the spiritual life of a child of God. So to live is to live a life of faith in the Son of God. So to live is to be baptised with that Spirit wherewith Paul was baptised when he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) The present life of Christ at the right hand of God the Father, is the source and foundation of all our present life. "Because I live ye shall live also," was his gracious promise when here below; and he is gone up on high, to fulfil that promise and make it effectual. He is "our life," and this life must be made



manifest in our mortal flesh—manifest to ourselves, and manifest to others; manifest to ourselves by the communication of light, life, liberty, and love, manifest to others by the fruits of a life and conversation adorning the gospel, and by walking in all holy obedience to its precepts.

I wish that time and opportunity enabled me to enter more fully into this gracious and glorious subject. It opens up such a field for faith to walk in, for hope to anchor in, and love to embrace; it so brings down the Lord in his past weakness to adapt himself to our present weakness; it so reveals the Lord in his risen strength to make it perfect in all our infirmity, that O if we could but walk in this field under the sweet leading and teaching of the blessed Spirit; could we but have our eyes anointed with divine eye-salve to see its beauty, our souls softened and melted by its superabounding grace, and ravished and delighted by its heavenly glory, we should see what scope was given thereby for every grace and fruit of the Spirit, to flourish, expand, and grow. But alas! alas! we only seem at times just to catch a passing view of these glorious realities, and for a few moments to taste their sweetness and power, and then all is gone, and the glorious prospect hidden from our eyes by a cloud of darkness, or withdrawn from our sight.

But before you can enter, even in any measure, into an experimental knowledge of these divine realities, you must have been put into possession of "the treasure:" you must have been favoured with some shinings in of God into your soul to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and you must carry about with you a deep and daily conviction that this heavenly treasure is lodged in an earthen vessel. Now just in proportion as you are able to realise these two things—the treasure and the vessel—will you be able to enter into the Christian contrasts which I have endeavoured to lay before you, and find day by day that, though troubled on every side, you will not be distressed; though perplexed, you will not be in despair; though persecuted, you will not be forsaken; though cast down, you will not be destroyed; for as thus taught and led, you will

always be bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,  
that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in your body.

## THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 28, 1844

"Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Philippians 1:30

A partaker of grace carries with him the most undeniable evidence that he is a partaker of grace. It is as much stamped upon him, as the coin that comes from the Mint is stamped with the Queen's image. And though there are counterfeits under a profession of grace, as there are forged coins in the marts of trade, yet, sooner or later, in each case, the base metal will have a nail struck through it, and be fastened to the counter. But as there is no rule so general which does not admit of some exception, so there may be grace in the heart of one who wears at present but a doubtful appearance.

I have sometimes in my own mind divided the professing church into three classes. First, there are those of whom we have no doubt that they are partakers of the grace of God; secondly, there are those of whom we have as little doubt that they are entirely destitute of grace; and thirdly, there are those of whom we at present stand in doubt whether they have or have not the grace of God in their hearts. But, as really and truly there are but two classes in the sight of God, the elect and the reprobate; so, sooner or later, such persons, however doubtful they may at present appear, will be made manifest and brought to the light; and it will be made plain to the heart and conscience of God's children whether light and life have been communicated to their souls, or whether they have a name to live whilst dead. If the doubtfuls in the camp have been enlisted by the Lord of hosts, they will be made manifest in God's own time and way "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." They will be brought into closer and severer conflict; their bow will abide in strength, and the arms of their hands will be made strong by the hands of the mighty God

of Jacob; whilst the renegades and deserters, though armed and carrying bows, will turn back in the day of battle.

The Apostle Paul, after an absence of three or four years from his last visit, wrote this epistle to the church of God at Philippi. Through the whole epistle the greatest tenderness and affection run; but particularly in the first chapter does he tell them what were the feelings of his heart toward them; and endeavouring to comfort them under their afflictions by assuring them that the very hatred of their adversaries was "an evident token of their salvation, and that of God," and that this high privilege "was given them, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake,"—he adds, as one engaged with them in the same battle, "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

There are some men who appear at first to run well in a profession of religion. They start as Calvinists, but after a time become thorough Arminians; and even ministers professing truth have been known to commence with free grace and end with free will. So that you can never depend on such persons for one year after another. But it was not so with this man of God, the Apostle Paul; he says, "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." He came to them from the very first with an experimental knowledge of the truth; he kept nothing back in doctrine, experience, or practice that was profitable for them. He did not come as a tried and tempted man at one time, and then all lightness and frivolity at another. He was the same man in private that he was in public.

Nor did he exalt himself as having attained to so high a standing in faith as to be wholly free from conflicts, and so superior to all others of the Lord's family. But he speaks of himself and them, as "having **the same** conflict;" as in the same circumstances, passing through the same trials, temptations, and difficulties, and obtaining the same deliverances, as they once saw in him at hand, and now heard to be in him when afar. There was no mistake about it. It was not drawing a long hypocritical face in the pulpit, like a tragic actor, and there squeezing out a tear;

while full of mirth and carnality in the vestry and the parlour. But they saw that this man of God had a conflict in his bosom. He carried about with him from place to place in his own person a most undeniable testimony that he was a possessor of that grace of God, which is opposed to and opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil. So that all who knew him were eye and ear witnesses of that conflict which was perpetually going on within him.

With God's blessing, then, let us attempt to trace out what this conflict is. And may the Lord graciously enable me to take up this evening a few of the "stumbling blocks" out of the way; and point out some of the blessed leadings and teachings of the Spirit of God in the consciences of the Lord's people.

The elect people of God, while in a state of nature know nothing of an inward spiritual conflict with sin. The strong man armed keepeth his palace in the heart, and his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he, in the hour of regenerating grace, comes upon him and overcomes him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted; and from that moment the conflict begins.

But what kind of conflict is it? It is a conflict between nature and grace, between the flesh and the spirit. When we are in a state of nature, there is no spiritual conflict; there may occasionally be powerful workings of natural conscience; but there cannot be any spiritual conflict, such as the Holy Ghost sets forth in Gal. 5:17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." This conflict, peculiar to the quickened elect, commences with the first communication of spiritual life, and never ceases till body and soul part company. The leading feature of this conflict is—that it is **a conflict with sin;** but not necessarily nor in every case with **outward** sin. Those who have no experience of the inward warfare, or of the conflict which the people of God are engaged in, have no idea of sin beyond those open acts into which its bewitching allurements

are continually drawing Adam's fallen children. When therefore they hear a minister trace out the work of grace upon the conscience, and describe the almost unceasing conflict which the child of God passes through, they cannot understand his meaning, or discover his aim. Many mistakes are made in this matter; but one of the greatest is, to mistake the opposition made by the natural conscience against sin, for the spiritual conflict between grace and nature.

Many persons have been brought up **as it is called** religiously; and having been trained up in a profession from childhood they have been kept from running riot into open evil by the restraints and examples of parents or guardians. Their conscience, therefore, not being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they experience an inward opposition to outward acts of sin before commission, and a measure of remorse after. This accusing conscience they mistake for the inward striving of the Spirit. But they deceive themselves. They mistake the shadow for the substance. There is no painful struggle in them between nature and grace. Such persons may have a certain degree of tenderness in their natural consciences, but they are utter strangers to spiritual conflict. Their case is accurately described by the Apostle, Rom. 2:15: "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another."

There is one feature which distinguishes the conflict of nature against nature from the conflict of grace against nature—which is—that those who are engaged in the spiritual conflict are fighting a winning battle; whilst those who have but the natural conflict are fighting a losing battle. Where nature opposes nature the principle of the opposition daily becomes weaker and weaker; and sin eventually, sooner or later, gains complete mastery over them. Sin, that unwearied General, is continually either thundering at their gate by storm, or undermining their wall by sap; and every unsuccessful resistance provokes and paves the way for another assault. Thus gradually, and almost insensibly,

their hearts become hardened; their consciences get seared, and sin gains in the end a complete victory over them: if not vessels of mercy, so they will live and so they will die, and perish in their sins.

But whoever is made a partaker of grace has a heavenly principle implanted, a spiritual life communicated, and a divine faith breathed into his soul, which is ever kept alive and strengthened by the power of God the Spirit. The Lord himself fights his battles. It is with such, as Jahaziel said to the children of Judah (2 Chron. 20:15, 17) "The battle is not yours, but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord." God's family therefore always fight a winning battle; though they may meet with many reverses, yet at every successive defeat they get fresh strength; and thus resemble the fabled heathen giant, who every time he was thrown to the earth, rose up with renewed power to wrestle with his antagonist. By defeats and falls, I do not mean open, flagitious acts of sin. There is the lusting eye and wandering heart, the proud thought and covetous desire, the filthy imagination and perverse temper, the carnal mind and backsliding nature. All these are inward enemies, and entangle and cast down where outward sin does not prevail.

Inward falls are very different from outward falls, and the lusting after sin from living or wallowing in it; for those who through grace are raised up from a death in sin cannot live any longer therein. While engaged in this conflict, the soul will frequently be overcome by its enemies, yet it will be raised up again by grace from every defeat. Sorrow and shame will fill the bosom; tears and prayers will plead at the footstool of mercy for pardon for the past, and for divine keeping for the future. The more watchful and the more inveterate will the soul be against the sin that has cast it down, and more determined in its opposition against its attacks; and its own weakness having been so painfully and practically learnt, the more simply will it look to and lean on the Lord of life and glory that His strength may be made perfect in weakness. Thus, fighting a winning battle, the believer comes off

victorious at last through Christ's strength. "Thanks be unto God," says the Apostle, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14). "Blessed be the Lord, my strength," cries David, "which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Ps. 144:1). "Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

Now you that have no experience of this inward conflict between grace and nature, are fighting a losing and not a winning battle. Do the various falls and slips of the child of God harden his heart, sear his conscience, make him careless and indifferent about sin, and render him more willing to fall at the next temptation that presents itself? Do they not rather give him fresh cause for godly sorrow, contrition of spirit, brokenness of heart, and genuine repentance; cause him to trust less to self, and look more simply to the Lord to strengthen him by his grace and power in the inner man?

But, with God's blessing, let us look a little more closely and deeply into this conflict. When I was a boy, during the stirring period of the Peninsular war, I had frequently to read the Gazette to an old gentleman who had been in the Navy. I did not then comprehend the anxiety he evinced that I should read to him the various evolutions and manoeuvres, the attack, defence, and all the dry details of the battles and sieges as they then appeared to me. So spiritually; to a man dead in sin, it can be no gratification to hear detailed the various matchings and counter-marchings of the soul in the spiritual conflict; he has no ear to hear it, nor any real sympathy with it. It is more dry and wearisome to him than the Gazette used to be to me. But how different is it to one who has had to fight hand to hand, and foot to foot in the spiritual battle! He wants to hear of the combined force and the movements of the enemy; he wants clear details of the various defeats and victories, fleings and pursuings, sinkings and risings, fears and hopes, reverses and successes; and thus to discover, under the blessed Spirit's teaching, whether he is



enlisted in that army of saints which, however frequently overcome, is yet marching on to assured victory.

The great conflict between **nature and grace,—nature** in strict and close alliance with an ungodly world, and backed by all the secret plottings and open assaults of Satan, and grace, secretly strengthened, upheld, and carried through by the invisible and yet invincible power of God. So that, though nature and grace appear to be the only combatants, the battle spreads its array far beyond the present scene. Invisible combatants, and each far more mighty than the soul, are engaged in this battle. The soul is, so to speak, but the battle-field, where heaven and hell, Christ and Belial, are engaged. When Peter fell, it was because Satan sifted him as wheat; when Peter's faith still failed not, it was because Jesus sustained it. The victories of Christ are victories over Satan: and the heart of his people is the palace out of which the strong man armed is cast out, and kept out by one stronger than he. The Apostle says, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9). Angels are looking down as spectators of the battle scene, to behold with admiring wonder the manifested glory of the Son of God displayed in managing the conflict and gaining fresh victories here below.

1. If the conflict be between nature and grace it will be carried on between the opposing powers of these two principles. Is not **spiritual light** one of the branches of grace in the soul? "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Ps. 36:9) "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). "To turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But no sooner does light shine out of the fulness of him that filleth all in all, than a conflict immediately commences with that darkness which is in our carnal mind.

Nature and grace can never form an alliance; nor can the quickened soul mingle light with darkness. And yet the light that is in him is like the first breakings of the light of day; it is so

apparently intermingled with darkness, that you can scarcely tell where the darkness ends or the light begins. But wherever the true light is implanted, though it has to struggle against the power of darkness, yet it will be as sure ultimately to conquer it, as the light of day to triumph over the shades of night. But whilst light and day are struggling together, there is no stumbling then upon the dark mountains of unbelief and infidelity. Every part of the Scripture shines with clear demonstration that it is the truth of God: and a sweet light is reflected from the Scriptures upon the soul. The people of God have to cry out and groan under the conflict between the two opposite principles. Sometimes, for instance, how solemnly and sweetly we are brought to see and feel the power and reality of spiritual things; at such times, how plain the truths of God appear! and how clearly the way of salvation is opened up to us through the Person, blood, and justifying righteousness of the Son of God. But alas, at other times, what darkness have we to grapple with! How all our evidences are beclouded; and all traces of what was once felt, tasted, and handled of the word of life seem swept away! How all landmarks appear removed, and the whole soul seems enveloped in, and overwhelmed by the mist and fogs of unbelief and fear! Darkness and light are opposing principles. So that darkness struggles against light, as error against truth, nature against grace, and sin against a conscience made tender in God's fear.

The two opposite principles will work. For they are not two inert principles. They are not like stones in a road, that might lie there motionless to all eternity but for outward displacement; nor are they like the corpses of two once opposed armies, buried in the battle-plain beside their rusty swords, with hand and blade alike in the dust. But, on the contrary, these two principles are ever in opposition in the heart of a child of God; they are perpetually fighting and struggling; each aiming to give the death-blow to the other, each determined never to be conquered, but to gain the victory.

2. But is not **spiritual life** also an inward fruit of union with Christ. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might

have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). As then spiritual light conflicts with natural darkness, so does spiritual life struggle with natural deadness. Darkness and deadness become manifested by light and life. And that is the reason why the Lord's people feel so much deadness. Is not all religion at times felt to be a burden? Sometimes in London when I am about to go into the pulpit, and see the people flocking to hear, I wonder, when I feel it such a burden to preach, and would rather take a walk, what can cause them to crowd into a hot chapel to sit and hear on a summer's evening like this. But whence springs this burdensomeness? Does it not arise from our carnal minds, which can never do anything but fight against the life of God in the soul? Does not all experience prove this? A gracious man cannot collect his divine thoughts on divine things for five minutes together. Perhaps scarcely sixty minutes will pass away before some carnal thought, some inward roving of the mind carry the heart to the ends of the earth. If he take up his Bible, sometimes he can scarcely keep his attention alive through half a dozen verses; under preaching, his mind will often be as careless and carnal as if all religion were a fable; and if he attempts to pray, his heart will be full of worldliness and wandering. It is not so in other things. The man of the world can attend to his business; he can sit down, and scheme and calculate without confusion. Some here can read through a newspaper without one roving thought, who could not get through the first chapter of John's Gospel without wandering. But why is this? Because of the deadness of the carnal mind, which struggles against the inward life of God, and only manifests itself when opposed by this life. But there will also be a struggle on the opposite side.

Life will strive against death, as well as death against life. A dead soul does not and cannot feel this; the living soul alone can be engaged in this strife. Next to the guilt of sin on the conscience, and the temptations of Satan, is this deadness in God's way a grief and burden to God's family. O how painful is it to them to feel these wandering desires; and this indifference to read, meditate, hear, and pray! But the very existence of the burden

shows the existence of life. You might tie a ton weight round the neck of a dead man, and he would not feel it. A loaded wagon might go over his chest, but it would not make him feel, though it broke every bone of the body. And so it is spiritually. A man dead in sin feels no burdens, knows no weights, utters no groans, heaves no sighs. And, if a professor, he can sing and talk, preach and pray, enjoy what he calls his cheerful piety, and never know anything of the burdens which a living man feels in the things of God.

3. But again. Whenever the Lord works with power on the conscience, he plants his **fear in the heart**. It is "the beginning of wisdom," and "a fountain of life," whereby the soul "departs from the snares of death." This blessed grace of God, godly fear, is the inseparable companion of divine life. But this grace of the Spirit will always have an antagonist. What is that? Why the love of sin in the carnal mind. Some people tell us, "they do not love sin." If I were disposed to use rough language, which I am not naturally or spiritually, I should say "they were liars." I am sure the carnal mind can never do anything but love sin. The carnal mind can no more live out of the element of sin, than a fish can live out of the element of water in which it swims, or the bird out of the air in which it flies. Every, thought of the carnal mind is sin, and every movement of man's depraved nature is toward sin; and it never can be otherwise. Sin it loves, and in sin it wallows as its element. Sin was not originally in our nature, for that would make God the author of sin; but, since the fall, every thought of the carnal mind is a departure from the will and word of God. Such is the Lord's own testimony. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

Now, the fear of the Lord in a tender conscience is the grand antagonist to this love of sin in the carnal mind. For where would not the love of sin drag us—into what filthy puddles would it not plunge us—into what awful depths of evil would not our depraved nature carry us headlong, unless we had this fountain of life, the

fear of the Lord, implanted in a tender conscience? But how these two principles should be in constant collision and perpetual conflict, is what we cannot always understand; why we should love sin, and yet hate it—feel the bare lustings of carnal nature after everything that is vile and filthy, and yet be crying and groaning to the Lord to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us. It is because the fear of the Lord, as a living principle, makes a man spiritually hate that which he naturally loves, and thus keeps him from those evils which his base nature would hurry him into.

This is a subject which a man cannot understand nor enter into but from experience. We can hardly therefore wonder that many persons misunderstand or misrepresent what gracious men deliver on this point. Hence, without directly stabbing their moral character, they use certain words and phrases, which they bandy backwards and forwards, and hurl as a kind of stigma upon men of truth. They deal with them as slanderers with a virtuous and modest woman; who dare not charge her with any immodest word or act, but throw out insinuations against her character which they do not and cannot prove. For instance; there is that common phrase, aimed at all who enter into the inward conflict, that by so doing, they "gloat over corruption." What does that insinuation mean? Those who make use of it intend to convey, that the Lord's servants, who preach the truth experimentally, so describe the base workings of depraved nature as to dress it out in an attractive garb, to catch the lusting of an idolatrous heart and eye. But I say, those are the men who do this, that speak of sin in a light and presumptuous way. If they are base persons under an experimental ministry, we cannot help it; there will always be ungodly characters in visible churches, as in the Apostle's days, whose glory is in their shame.

But no man or minister, who knows by divine teaching anything of his own heart, will ever speak of sin in any other way but as that horrible thing which is hateful to God, and grievous to his own conscience. Nay, instead of delighting in describing the workings of sin, a man of God will rather show the actings of

godly fear against it; how sin is kept under; how it is mortified and crucified, and how by the grace of God the soul is delivered from its guilt and power. It is not naked sin that the man of God loves to describe, sin apart from the workings of **grace—that** he leaves to those ungodly characters who are pandering to the lusts and passions of men; but what he describes is the conflict against sin, and the pantings, breathings, hungerings and thirstings of the living soul oppressed by this cruel enemy. His desire is to trace out the work of grace in the heart and conscience of God's people, and to show the reality of its operation upon them by cleansing them from all evil. If this be "a gloating over corruption," or a dressing up of sin in a pleasing form, I am greatly mistaken; nor do I believe that any man, who knows himself, his own heart, or anything of sin as causing his conscience to bleed; still less, who knows anything of the fear of God, or the life of God in the soul, will ever deck out sin or corruption in any other garb but in that which God has described it in his holy Word. It is the fear of God in blessed exercise that fights against these base lustings and workings of a depraved nature; and the power of God is made manifest in delivering the soul from being entangled in its snares.

Hence there must be a conflict. If I have never known anything of the workings of sin, I have never known what it is to have the fear of God as a fountain of life to depart from it. There must be two antagonistic parties to a conflict. One army may march one way, and another army may march another, but there will be no conflict till they meet; it is when both come upon one plain that the battle follows. So spiritually; if all is corrupt nature, there is no conflict; if all were grace, there would be no conflict; but having a nature which is sinful, which loves sin, and can do nothing else but sin, and yet having a living principle of grace which wages war and fights against sin, there is an experimental, inward, and spiritual conflict perpetually going on between these two principles. And this it is which so tries the people of God who know this conflict. "O," say they, "if I had not these base workings, filthy imaginations, and vile thoughts; if I could be but spiritually-minded; if I could be but holy; if I could but enjoy

uninterrupted communion with, and if my heart were a copy of the image of Jesus, O what sweet testimonies then I should have, and what clear victories I should gain over this enemy, sin! But these base workings and filthy desires of my corrupt heart bring me into such bondage, cause me such misery, so distress my soul, and so darken all my evidences." Why, you know, there would be no conflict, if you had not a base nature. It is the company of the two armies that you carry in your bosom that produces this spiritual conflict. If you had no such exercises, burdens, and sorrows, you would be dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

Carnal professors know nothing of this conflict; their inbred iniquity is never opened up to them by the Spirit of God; they know nothing of the awful nature of sin, with its abominable and deceitful workings; nor have they ever felt their consciences wounded by it, causing them to groan and sigh out in their trouble, as is the case with God's people. They are totally ignorant of the depth of this mystery; and therefore they throw aside all experimental statements of truth, as preaching up and "a gloating over corruption." This is to act like a drunken scavenger, who, perceiving a well-dressed lady in the street, takes up a shovel-full of filth and throws it all over her, and then calls her a filthy creature, when his own drunken insult has made her so. So to speak against men who preach experimental truth, and say, they gloat over corruption, what is it but to play the part of the drunken scavenger—first, to throw the filth over them, and then say, "What filthy wretches!" Some men seem to cut off ministers' heads as remorselessly as Henry VIII those of his Queens: but God is the judge; he will shew who is right, and who is wrong: he will make manifest who know the truth by divine teaching, and who profess it only to pervert it.

4. But again. Wherever the grace of God is in the heart there will be **living faith**. "True faith's the life of God," Hart says, if the life of God be in a man's soul, he must have faith; though it may be weak; as the Lord said to his disciples; "O ye of little faith;" and Paul, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful

disputations" (Rom. 14:1). Feeble faith, little faith, weak faith, if it be true genuine faith, it is the work of God in the heart. This true faith will be proved, and more or less brought into exercise by the operation of the Spirit of God. So that living faith will soon find an antagonist. Is it not so in a natural battle? Every soldier has to meet his man, and is brought more or less into the engagement. And so it is with respect to every grace implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God; it will find an opponent; it will have an enemy to grapple with, hand to hand, and foot to foot.

What battles with faith but unbelief? What feel we of unbelief, except by the actings of faith against it? and what know we of faith except by the opposition that it meets with from the actings of unbelief? As some one has justly said, "A man that never doubted never believed." Unbelief in the carnal mind is constantly struggling against that living faith which God the Spirit raises up and keeps alive by his own mysterious power. But we are not grieved and distressed by the workings of unbelief till the Holy Spirit communicates a measure of saving faith; and then immediately the conflict begins. Not but that a man dead in sin may be unbelieving, doubtful, and sceptical. Nay, he cannot be otherwise. Unbelief and infidelity are the strongholds of Satan in the heart. They are born with us, grow up with our growth, and are strengthened with our strength. But we do not sigh and groan under the secret power that unbelief exerts over us, nor do we feel the subtlety of this antagonist, till the light and life of God are felt in our hearts. Nor can we ever see its crooks and corners, and how it interlaces and intertwines itself through and around all the fibres of our carnal mind, till we begin to feel the strugglings of a living faith. Light alone manifests its various hues, as the sun shining upon a piece of shot silk discovers colours not seen in the shade.

Now the more that faith acts in the soul, the more will unbelief work against it. Faith, if I may use the expression, puts life into unbelief; as the Apostle said of the law that it put life into sin. "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). "The strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56). Sin lived and worked



there before, but the spirituality of the holy law put fresh life into it, gave it new strength, and stirred up its secret enmity. Unbelief in a dead man's soul is like the patience of many so-called patient men or women; they are wonderfully patient and good-tempered, so long as nothing rises up to thwart them; but only let any circumstance arise to vex them, immediately they are in a rage, and then it is soon evident that their evil tempers are not dead and buried. And so, with unbelief, how quietly it will lie in a professor's bosom! But when living faith comes into the conscience, when the new tenant makes an entry into the house, how the old inhabitant of the tenement, unbelief, begins to rage and storm! Immediately that grace lays claim to the possession of the heart, the unbelief of our carnal mind is manifested and brought to light, and unfolds its baneful principle by "bringing forth fruit unto death."

If you watch **and it is good to watch** the movements of your mind, you will find there never was a single acting of living faith in your conscience which did not rouse up, and was not attacked by unbelief, either at the time, before the time, or after the time. Every acting of living faith in your soul has had to fight hand to hand with unbelief. Did faith ever receive any testimony from God that unbelief was quiet under? Did not that envious wretch, that quarrelsome inhabitant of the old tabernacle, grudge you the morsel? Was not his growling temper stirred up, like a sullen dog in a kennel, when, by the secret actings of living faith in the heart, you received at any time a token for good? Did not this wretch, unbelief, growl and snarl, whose den and kennel is in our carnal mind, and who can no more bear to see a morsel given to living faith, than the ill-tempered cur can bear to see a morsel of meat given to any other but himself without being filled with envy and spite. Thus sooner or later, at, before, or after the time, not a single testimony, not a single truth, not a single evidence, not a single act of divine teaching will pass by unsuspected or undoubted, but the envious growling wretch will bristle up like the dog in a kennel, and bark at the actings of living faith in a man's soul. Now, what a conflict is this to living faith to have to carry about with him such an ugly cur as this, one that he can neither

hang, drown, or starve, **for he will neither hang, drown, nor starve**, one who has nine lives, yea, may I not say nine thousand lives, and one whom faith can never get rid of till life ceases, and the body drops into the grave. What a plague to the living soul to have these continual barkings of unbelief to annoy it! When at times it would read or hear, to have this dog incessantly barking; when it would draw nigh the throne of grace to enjoy a little of the Lord's presence, and feel a little of the unction and power of his truth, to have this cur in the carnal mind from time to time discovering his enmity and wrath against what God mercifully gives us.

Those who have not a living faith know none of these exercises; they can go and hear ministers who preach them into presumption and vain confidence, who discuss some knotty point of divinity, explain some mysterious text, or unfold some intricate passage; and they can go away pleased, smiling, and flattered. They think how strong they are in faith: they never call in question whether they have received any tokens or testimonies from God; they have no secret groans and sighs before the Lord, nor any rolling about on their beds at night on account of condemnation felt in their souls: but they can lay their heads quietly on the pillow, and go to sleep with all the ease imaginable. But the living soul finds the conflict perpetually going on in his bosom, and he cannot live a single day without knowing, more or less, something of the inward struggling of these two armies.

5. So also with **hope and despondency**. Will not these two principles battle with each other, and produce much suffering to the soul in this mysterious conflict? Yes, surely: for no sooner has the Lord raised up some sweet testimony, and dropped into his heart that blessed hope which enters within the veil, than in a little time despondency and doubt begin to work within. "How do you know," asks despondency, "that the blessing is real? Is there not such a thing as excitement and delusion in religion arising out of a deceitful heart? Look at So-and-so! See what a profession they once made; the work seemed deeply rooted in them, and

yet they have turned away. And how do you know that will not be your case?" Thus the gloom of despondency often pervades the mind, and the soul is unable to rejoice in hope till God is pleased to communicate it again to the conscience.

Now a gracious man cannot deal with his hope as a wealthy man deals with his money, who goes to his banker, and draws a cheque for as much as he wants. The graces and fruits of the Spirit are not thus at our disposal. The conflict would then cease. There would be none of those gloomy doubts, desponding feelings, sinkings of soul through the hidings of God's face, and the coming forth of the beasts of prey, all which are perpetually fighting against every testimony that God gives to the soul. It is surprising how, in dark seasons, every circumstance, however trivial, will give life to this despondency. Perhaps, some friend whom we esteem highly may look coldly upon us, and does not now speak as cordially or shake us by the hand as warmly as he formerly did—how soon despondency begins to draw out a long brief, and file a bill of charges! Or, perhaps, he hears of one who has a deeper and clearer experience and a brighter testimony than his own—how soon he begins to fear that he has not a good hope through grace, that it has not been wrought in his heart by the power of the Spirit, or that he has not had sufficient testimonies from God in his conscience. But as Bunyan sweetly describes it in his Pilgrim, the oil of grace is continually poured on the work begun in the heart, to maintain and keep up the life of God. A good hope through grace will again spring up through the Spirit's witness.

6. And so with **love and enmity**. Are you never tried with enmity against the people of God? Do not all sorts of envious workings rise up at times in your carnal mind against them? Do you not at times feel as though you had no love or affection to the people of God, and would sooner go a mile out of the way than meet with one of them? But, at other times, when the Lord drops some sweet testimony into your heart, how you want to speak with them, and what long letters you write to your spiritual friends in your mind, which pen, perhaps, never commits to paper. When,

at such seasons, we sit on our chair or lie on our bed, what long conversations do we in spirit hold with those whom we love among the Lord's family. How you can then love the servants of God, who have traced out your experience, and gone into the secret workings of your heart—how you think you could tell them the very deepest and most secret of your feelings! But at other times, when the heart is filled with suspicion and enmity, and jealousy and envy work, this affection and love to the Lord's people are well-nigh swallowed up and buried in the waves of this troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Now what is all this but the conflict going on in the soul between love and enmity?

7. Again. **Prayerfulness and prayerlessness** are two other combatants perpetually struggling in the living soul. Sometimes the heart is full of prayer and spiritual desires; and at other times it is unable to bring forth a single prayer or a single desire Godward. What struggles are thus continually going on! Prayerlessness, recklessness, and a sort of hardened determination not to seek the Lord's face, sometimes seek to get the mastery; and then again, softness, tenderness, and contrition, flowing forth in breathings and supplications, win the day.

8. And is it not so with **carefulness and carelessness**? Who at times so careful, who at times apparently so careless as the Lord's family? Now, watching every movement of the heart, eye, tongue, and hand; now heedless of paths that should most alarm a tender conscience. And yet, strange to say, careful in the midst of carelessness—careless in the midst of carefulness; so fluctuating moment by moment, as nature or grace prevails, that a man will do in an instant what he has been crying out in his soul against for half an hour, and then tear himself away from the very sin that his heart had longed after for weeks.

I might thus trace out, did time permit, a conflict between every grace in the new nature and every corruption in the old. But I would observe, that the Lord's people are more tried with this

inward conflict than with anything else, more especially when first brought into it. The work of grace is at times so obscured by it, that you will not be able clearly to see the Lord's dealings with your soul. So that under these feelings you may have resolved many times not to hear the preached word of God, or read the Bible, or go to prayer, or make any profession at all. Nay, perhaps you may have tried to keep your resolutions; and when the busy toils of the week are over, and the Lord's day morning has come, in your extremity, you may have almost determined to take a walk in the Park, or enjoy the beautiful prospect from Hampstead Heath, and not go to the chapel any more. But you could not be long in this mind. Park enjoyments and Hampstead prospects soon fell to nothing, for you were sure they would bring you into deeper despondency and wretchedness; and you were glad to get among the Lord's people again. And then, perhaps, when under such feelings, you have come to hear the word, you have received a sweet testimony from the Holy Ghost, so that your soul has been dissolved into contrition, and you have said, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in thy house, than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10).

Now there was a conflict to be seen in the Apostle Paul. It could be seen in his ministry, in his life, and in his conversation. He carried it about with him in every place to which he travelled. When the Christians who came to Philippi brought tidings of his preaching at Ephesus they saw that he was the same man there. He was the same at Rome, as he was at Colosse. He did not go to Ephesus with one tale, and to Corinth with another; but he was universally the same. And what is a man worth, who is not the same; but who sometimes gets into a pulpit, or endeavours to do so, by hiding and trimming a little of God's truth? But it was not so with Paul, nor is it so with any true servant of God. What would you think of me, if I were one thing at Stamford, and another at Oakham; one thing at Zoar, and another thing at Eden Street? So that, if a man does not stand up and preach the same thing at different places, bringing out of the treasury of an honest

and good heart things new and old; but is merely striving to please men, and fill the chapel, he is not a sent servant of God.

Now, Paul says, "having **the same conflict.**" Ministers, then, that preach have the same conflicts, the same trials, the same experience as the Lord's living family.

They all have the same conflict, though it may differ in degree, time, and quantity. And this it is that makes a man an experimental preacher. And you, my friends at Eden Street, let me charge you never to depart from experimental preaching, for nothing else would do your souls good. If the place will not stand upon that foundation the sooner the roof and the walls fall in, and the Cause comes to nought, the better. Let an experimental ministry be continually kept up in this pulpit, and then there will be no room for any other. For when a man once finds the sweetness and power of it, he will say, "By this I can live, and by this I can die." For myself, I would sooner stay at home, and read the Bible and Hart's Hymns, than hear any other than experimental preaching from the lips of men. It is not having a large chapel well filled; but it is experimental preaching, conveying light, life, and power, by the blessed teachings of the Spirit of God, that will bind heart and heart together. And when God's people are thus knit in heart and judgment, by feeling and knowing the power of truth in the heart; and when men, taught of God, come into this place, and preach under the teaching and unction of the Spirit, they will each have the solemn approbation of God in their conscience.

But you must not expect that things will go on smoothly; there must be a conflict. You leading men will have a conflict. Do not think you will be able to come and take your seats comfortably without inward and outward opposition. The devil will stir up enemies; things will arise to disturb your peace; and at times clouds and darkness will so rest upon you that you will scarcely know what to think of the Cause or yourselves. But if your eye be single to God's glory, he will bring you through all triumphantly; like a ship, which at sea may be tossed on the waves, and yet

comes into the harbour of safety at last. Depend upon it, the nearer it lies to your heart, the more you will have a conflict. We do not naturally care about people we know nothing of they may live or die; they may be married or buried: but it is those that lie near our hearts for whom we care, and feel an interest. And so, the more love you have to God, his truth, and his servants, the more you will know of this conflict; but the more conflict and trouble you have had, the more joy and praise you feel to the Lord when he has safely brought you through all.

Now, do look, you that profess religion, at what is going on in the chambers of your heart! Look and see if any inward work is going on. Or, are you satisfied with merely a knowledge in the judgment, whilst you know nothing of the inward work of the Spirit in the heart; are satisfied with a name to live, with being members of a church, having a sound creed, and hearing certain ministers? Have you any inward exercises, difficulties, sorrows; a conflict perpetually more or less going on? If you have, you are the Lord's people, and he has engaged to bring you triumphantly through. You are fighting a winning battle, and shall come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved you; to whom be all the glory, honour, and praise both now and ever.

## **Christ Dwelling in the Heart by Faith**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening, September 26, 1867

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be 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, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:17-19

There are no blessings like spiritual blessings; no mercies like heavenly mercies; and no favours like the good will of him that dwelt in the bush. We desire to be thankful to God for providential favours; we desire to feel gratitude for the daily bread we eat, the daily raiment we wear, the measure of health and strength given to us to perform our daily duties, the bed on which we nightly lie, the kind friends by whom we are surrounded, the many lifts and helps, under trying circumstances, which we have received, and the various ways in which the Lord from time to time has conspicuously, and often unexpectedly, appeared to deliver us out of difficulties, or to grant us timely aid when every other door seemed shut and every other hand closed. For these instances of God's providential kindness, we desire to thank him; and most ungrateful should we be if we were so unmindful of his many mercies towards us, as a God of providence, as to let them lie altogether buried in oblivion. Indeed, humanly speaking, no surer way could we take of closing for the future the Lord's hand against us, than to pass by, with cold unthankfulness and unbelieving neglect, the tender care which he has shown to us in providing for every needful want, and never suffering us to be in circumstances in which we have not seen more or less of his outstretched hand as displayed on our behalf. It is in this point especially, that the children of God differ from the children of the world; that the one through faith see, or desire to see, God in every thing, and the others through unbelief see God in nothing.



But giving all their value to, and acknowledging the hand of God in the gifts of his providence, we may still say, What are all these temporal favours, these providential blessings, compared with spiritual favours and heavenly blessings? The highest favours in providence for the most part perish in the using. The food is soon eaten; the raiment soon worn out; the money is soon spent; and we are ready for a fresh supply to perish in the same way. At least they are for time, not for eternity; they are meant to take us happily and honourably through life, but when life closes they close too. We may indeed look forward to the same kind hand to provide for our children when we ourselves shall no more want the bread that perisheth; but as regards ourselves, we shall want no further help when we have been brought safely to the end of our journey. Not so, however, with spiritual blessings. They, from their very nature, far exceed all providential mercies; for as the soul is greater than the body, as eternity is greater than time, as heaven is greater than earth, and as the life to come is greater than the life that now is, so do spiritual blessings exceed all temporal; so does the favour of God in grace excel all the favour of God in providence.

It is chiefly in this point that the blessings promised in the New Testament so far excel the blessings promised in the Old. Under the Old Testament dispensation, temporal blessings were mostly spoken of and promised. We have striking examples of this in the blessings pronounced upon their children by the ancient patriarchs. For instance, where good old Isaac blesses Jacob, thinking he was Esau, he says: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and the nations bow down to thee." (Gen. 27:28, 29.) I do not mean to imply that spiritual blessings were not couched under temporal, and that there is not a gracious and experimental meaning in "the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine;" but their primary and literal meaning is certainly a promise of temporal blessings. Even when the ancient patriarch sends Jacob to Padan-aram, and again blesses him as Jacob, he says: "And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee,

that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." (Gen. 28:3, 4) So when Jacob on his expiring bed blesses the twelve patriarchs, we find that very many, if not the greater part of those blessings, are of a temporal nature. Speaking even to Joseph, his beloved son, he says: "Who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb." (Gen. 49:25.)

But let not this circumstance either surprise or stumble us. Let us bear in mind that it was the very character and genius of the old dispensation to deal much in temporal blessings. The grand and glorious truths of the gospel were not then brought to light. The law was a system of obedience; and this obedience was secured by setting before the people both temporal blessings and temporal curses. To those who hearkened unto the voice of the Lord it was said, "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket, and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (Deut. 28:3-6.) But to those who did not hearken unto his voice it was said, "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (Deut. 28:16-19.)

But when we come to the New Testament dispensation and the blessings held out under the new covenant to believers, little or no mention is made of temporal blessings. The first, highest, and most eminent place is given there to spiritual blessings, and temporal blessings occupy only a second place. This is in accordance with the words of our Lord, "Seek ye first the

kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33.) So that whilst under the old dispensation, temporal blessings held the foremost; under the New Testament dispensation, temporal blessings hold only a second place. This suits the genius, character, and spirit of the new dispensation, of the gospel of the grace of God which hath brought life and immortality to light, and by setting forth and revealing the Son of God in his grace and glory, blood-shedding, sufferings, death, resurrection, and present intercession as the great Object of faith, sinks as it were into insignificance of all those temporal blessings, which compared with what he has in himself and has to bestow upon us, are but the trifles of a day. We find, therefore, very few temporal blessings promised in the New Testament. The path there traced out for the redeemed to walk in, is not to be blessed in their basket and in their store, but rather through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God. No special blessings are promised on their kine and their flocks for doing the will of God, nor any temporal prosperity declared to be the reward of obedience. On the contrary, persecution, poverty, contempt, loss of all things for Christ's sake, a rough and thorny path in providence and abundance of trials and afflictions are held out as the appointed portion of the followers of the Lamb. Nor are they to desire or seek worldly prosperity. The language of the Apostle is, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;" and he declares, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. 6:9.)

While, then, we desire to be grateful to God for his providential mercies, let us bear in mind that as believers in the Son of God we should look for the fulfilment of spiritual promises rather than temporal; and if, indeed, God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, we should fix our eyes and heart upon them, and beg of God to fulfil them in us, rather than desire or expect any larger amount of temporal blessings than shall take us honourably to our journey's end.

These thoughts seem connected with the prayers of the apostle Paul, put up by him for the saints to whom he writes. You will find in none of them any allusion to temporal blessings. The whole desire of his heart is for spiritual mercies to be granted them. Take for instance the prayer of the apostle for the church of God at Ephesus, which we have in the chapter before us, and observe how, when he was upon his bended knees before the Lord, and his heart went out in supplication for the church to which he was writing, he makes no request for any temporal favour, or any providential blessing; but he says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you"—what? health, strength, worldly prosperity, a large measure of temporal blessings? No. But what? "to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be 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, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." These are the blessings prayed for by the man of God. Let me seek this evening, then, with God's help and blessing, to unfold the blessings spoken of in our text. I think we shall find that for the most part they are three.

I.—The *first* is, that Christ might *dwell in their hearts by faith*.

II.—The *second* is, that they might be *rooted and grounded in love*.

III.—The *third* is, that they might "*comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.*"

These three blessings I shall endeavour to open up, to the best of my ability, and lay before you this evening, for indeed they are most sweet and suitable, and if they are fulfilled in our happy experience, we shall hold providential blessings with a loose

hand, as seeing and feeling how inferior they are to them, both for time and eternity.

I.—The first is, "that Christ *may dwell in your hearts by faith.*"

When God bade Moses speak unto the children of Israel that they should bring him an offering of gold and silver, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and other similar offerings for the construction of the tabernacle which was to be erected in the wilderness, he said, "And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." God wished, so to speak, to dwell visibly among the people of his choice; and therefore he bade Moses erect a tabernacle according to the pattern shown him upon the mount, that in that tabernacle, he might come and manifest his visible glory. Every part, therefore, of that tabernacle was designed and constructed that it might be visibly inhabited by God. Its very materials were choice and precious, and they were put together with exquisite skill by Bezaleel and Aholiab, whom God himself specially taught and "filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." (Exod. 31:3.) But it was especially in the most holy place, on the mercy seat, between the cherubims, that God visibly dwelt in the shekinah or cloud of glory. This beautiful tabernacle represented the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and was thus a representation, in type and figure, of the pure humanity of our gracious Lord, in which all the fulness of Deity dwells, as shadowed by the dwelling of God in the temple in the shekinah or cloud of glory upon the mercy seat.

But what was thus represented in type and figure to the children of Israel, we now have in its divine and blessed reality. The human nature of our gracious Lord is therefore said to be, "a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands"—"the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man." (Heb. 7:2, 9:11.) And it is because our gracious Lord took our nature into union with his own divine Person, and by his precious bloodshedding and death put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,

that God can dwell with man. That God could dwell with man, astonished Solomon, the wisest of men. To unravel this mystery surpassed all that wisdom which God had given him, and all that largeness of heart which was even as the sand that is on the sea shore. (1 Kings 4:29) His wisdom was too little, his understanding too small, his largeness of heart too narrow, to comprehend that mystery, when he cried out, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27.) But this mystery is solved by the incarnation of our blessed Lord. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

But, O, what a depth of wisdom and grace is couched in this mystery of godliness—nothing less than the meeting together of God and man; for if our blessed Lord had not come forth from the presence of his heavenly Father, to take our nature into union with his own divine Person, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, God and man could never have met. But they can, and do now meet in the Person and work of Jesus. God, therefore, can now say, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." When, then, the apostle prays, in our text, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, it is upon this ground, that God having promised to dwell with his people, there is a place provided in which Christ may dwell, and that is the regenerated heart.

But what is the meaning of Christ's dwelling in the heart? Does it mean that Christ dwells there locally; that he leaves his glorious habitation on high, his Father's presence, and comes in his bodily presence into the breast of the sinner? Not so. The heavens have received him until the time of the restitution of all things. He never leaves the place of his glory. He sat down for ever at the right hand of God; and therefore Christ no more comes locally and bodily into a sinner's heart, than he comes locally and bodily into a consecrated wafer. This is very plain from the language of the apostle, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*"—not by his bodily, but by his spiritual presence. It is in this way that

he dwells in the heart by faith,—not by coming from heaven in his bodily substance, but by coming into the soul by the power of his spiritual presence; and this as received by, and made known unto living faith.

i. But how does he dwell by faith? This I hope to explain in a manner consistent with the word of God and the experience of the saints.

1. He dwells first in the *understanding*, to which he is an illuminating light. When we are in nature's darkness and death, there is a veil of unbelief over our heart. Christ is not seen nor known; the gospel of his grace and glory is veiled from our eyes. Though Christ is the same in himself, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, we see him not, know him not, believe in him not. But when the Lord quickens the soul into divine life, then the veil is taken away; and though for a long time we may be very ignorant of Christ, struggle in the mud and mire of legal conviction, scarcely know anything of the gospel or our interest in it, yet after a time there is sure to be a breaking in of divine light upon the mind to show us the way of salvation through the blood and obedience of God's dear Son. As this light comes from God himself, for in his light do we see light, it is a fulfilment of the words of the apostle, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Jesus Christ is the true and proper Son of God, and as such, is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person." Now it is only in the gospel that we can see or know the glory of God in the face, (or, as the word might be rendered, in the Person) of Jesus Christ. When, then, a sacred light beams upon the gospel; when you receive the truth and with it the love of the truth, into your heart; when you see, as with new eyes, and hear, as with new ears, what a blessed message the gospel brings to you, even to you; when you believe its sweet tidings as addressed to, and suitable to your case and state; when you receive it in unction and power as a word of God to your soul, then a holy, warm, and blessed light is cast into the

understanding. It then becomes an enlightened understanding; and in that enlightened understanding, Christ, as the only true light, dwells by faith. The apostle, therefore, prays for the Ephesians, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:18,) and for the Colossians, "that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," yea, even "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col. 1:9, 2:2.) When the Lord sent Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles it was "to open their eyes, (that is instrumentally,) and to turn them from darkness to light." (Acts 26:18.) "He that received the seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it." (Matt. 13:23.) When such prayers are made for it, and such blessings attached to it, it is nothing but ignorance and want of experience which can make us despise an understanding heart. How blessedly does John speak of it, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.) To have this understanding heart, then, is to have the veil taken away, and know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true; and the effect of the veil being taken away is, that "we with open (or, as the word should be rendered, "unveiled,") face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

God bade Moses receive from the people oil for the light, and to set up a candlestick with seven lamps, ever burning with this oil, to illuminate the holy place. This light was typical no doubt of the Holy Spirit, but as it is only by his own gracious light that the Lord Jesus is made known, we may still say, that as Christ dwells in the heart by faith, faith giving him a place in the bosom, he dwells in the enlightened understanding of his saints, in the gracious light of his own manifestations. Have you not seen at times wondrous beauty in the gospel? Has not a sacred light shone, from time to time, upon the holy page, when it testified of Christ? Have you not seen wondrous glory in a free gospel,—a gospel that saves the sinner, and yet magnifies and glorifies the



justice of God; a gospel that reconciles every apparently jarring attribute, brings justice and mercy to kiss each other, and makes God to be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus? Now that light whereby you saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ was gospel light; and as Christ came into the heart in the glory of that light, he may be said to dwell in the shining light of his own grace.

You may complain, and often bitterly complain, of the darkness of your mind, and it may seem at times as if you never had any true light to shine into your soul. But I would have you carefully observe these two things, 1. first, that the very cause of the darkness which you feel is, the presence of light. The apostle, therefore, says: "But all things that are reprov'd, (margin, "discovered,") are made manifest by light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.) Apply these words to your case. Is there not something in you that discovers to you your darkness, and not only discovers, but reprov's it, and makes it manifest as a thing to be condemn'd? This secret something is light, for "whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And as you not only see it, but feel and mourn under it, it is the light of life which the Lord promised those should have who follow him. 2. But observe, secondly, that whenever a little light dawns in again upon your soul, in that light you again see the same grace and glory in Christ which you saw in him before. Now, what a proof this is that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and that the light in which we see him, is the light wherewith he hath enlighten'd our understanding and himself dwells in it.

2. But Christ dwells not only in the enlighten'd understanding: he dwells also in *the living conscience*. He makes the conscience tender in his fear; he, when he has convinc'd it of the evil of sin, purges and cleanses it from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God. He moves in it, and acts upon it, reveals to it his precious blood, bids it open to receive his word, and bids it close itself against all error. He makes it move in accordance with his precepts, softens it into contrition and godly sorrow for sin; heals it when wounded, binds it up when broken, comforts it when cast

down, and soothes it when, like a crying child, it would lie weeping in his arms, or upon his lap. Thus by making the conscience tender, and applying his precious blood to remove guilt and filth from it, he softens and conforms it to his own suffering image. As it is in the conscience that the life of God seems chiefly to dwell, we may say of Christ's indwelling presence, that, as he dwells in the understanding by his own divine light, so he dwells in the conscience by his own divine life.

3. He dwells, also, in the *renewed will*. The *will* is an eminent and important part of the new man of grace; and it is one of the first parts of our renewed mind on which the Lord acts with divine power; for the ancient promise was, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Psa. 110:3.) In fact, until thus made willing, we have neither will nor power to believe in Christ, or to receive him into the heart as our Lord and God. As, then, he dwells in the heart by faith, he bows our will to the will of God; he makes us choose the things of which God approves, and hate the things which God abhors. He makes us willing to suffer affliction, persecution, and shame for his namesake, and gives a desire to know the will of God and do it. Thus, as he dwells in the understanding by divine light, and in the conscience by divine life, so he dwells in the will by a divine power.

4. But he dwells chiefly, or at least most sensibly, in the *affections*; for it is to them, and in them that he specially reveals his love; and by the word "heart" we generally mean the affections as distinguished from the intellect. Faith worketh by love. When, therefore, the hand of faith stretches itself forth to take hold of Christ, as brought near by the revelation of the Spirit, it gives him a place in the breast, for it seats him on the throne of the heart, and thus he dwells in the affections by the power of his love.

If you have followed me in my explanation of this heavenly mystery, you will see how Christ dwells in the heart by faith; that he dwells in the enlightened understanding by the power of his light, in the tender conscience by the power of his life, in the

renewed will by the power of his grace, and in the affections by the power of his love. Thus where there is light in the understanding, life in the conscience, strength to do and suffer in the will, and love in the heart, there you have the best and clearest of all evidences that Christ dwells in the heart by faith.

But I want you to observe particularly those two words "*by faith.*" The expression shows so clearly and beautifully what this indwelling of Christ is; that there is nothing in it visionary, fanatical, enthusiastic, wild, or delusive; but that it is a sober, solid, though a divine reality; a mystery, and yet not mystical, above reason, yet not contrary to reason, but, as the word means, a heavenly secret made known to the soul by the power of God, and revealed to faith. Our blessed Lord, therefore, said to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11.)

Now may I not ask you, if these things be true, What do you know of Christ as the Son of the Father in truth and love? What do you know of any discoveries of his Person and work, blood and righteousness? Have you ever seen him by the eye of faith as the risen and glorious Mediator between God and man? Has the Lord the Spirit ever wrought a living faith in your soul to receive him as God has testified of him in the word? Bear this in mind, that all that we know of Christ is by the word of truth, and that all revelation of Christ is through the word and in harmony with it. It is not by visionary appearances that we see Christ, or by wild delusive words sounding in the sky that we hear Christ. But we see and hear him when we believe that he is all that God has said of him, and receive what God has testified concerning him. Did not God testify of him, when he said from heaven itself, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?" Where do we read this testimony but in the word? It is thus that we set to our seal that God is true, as John the Baptist said, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." (John 3:33.) It is in the word that God has testified of his death, of his resurrection, of his exaltation, of his present mediation as the great high Priest over the house of God. We have no other means

of knowing these divine verities. Faith, then, receives God's testimony in the inspired word; and as faith receives God's testimony, the eye of faith is enlightened to see, the ear of faith is opened to hear, the hand of faith is strengthened to embrace, and the foot of faith enabled to draw near to the Son of God; and thus by a believing eye, a believing ear, a believing hand, and a believing foot, all engaged in receiving the Christ of God, Jesus makes himself known, and comes to dwell in the heart by faith.

Now, if he dwell in the heart by faith, he will often be in our thoughts, in our meditations, in our affections, in our desires, in the movements of our soul Godward. We shall find that without him we can do nothing; without his precious blood we must perish in our sins; without his glorious righteousness we must die in our transgressions; without his strength made perfect in our weakness, we have no strength to fight, nor power to walk. We thus find sometimes by his presence, and sometimes by his absence, that he ever is and ever must be to us what he is held forth in the Scriptures, as our all in all. When, then, Christ makes himself known and precious; when he reveals himself in his glorious gospel, and faith is given to us so to look unto him, so to believe in him, so to hang upon him, and so to cleave to him with purpose of heart, then he may be said to dwell in the heart by faith; for we can do nothing, see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing without faith. Without faith the word of God is a barren wilderness to us; without faith no doctrine is sweet, no promise has power, no precept force or application. Faith must be in operation in the soul upon the testimony of God in order that Christ may be made known and precious. As then faith receives the testimony, believes what God hath said of Christ, feels the power of truth concerning Jesus, as revealed in the Scriptures, in proportion to our faith is Christ made precious. Take Christ out of our religion, and what is it worth? A religion without Christ, without faith in Christ, without hope in Christ, without a knowledge of Christ, what must we say of it? Tekel, weighed in the balance and found wanting; Ichabod, there is no glory in it. But faith that has Christ for its object, subject, end, and all—a faith which deals with the blood of Christ as putting away sin,

with Christ's righteousness as justifying a naked soul, with his dying love shed abroad in the heart,—this is the faith of the elect of God: this is the faith which overcomes the world, triumphs over death and hell, and the end of which is the salvation of the soul. This is the faith of which the apostle speaks, when he prayed that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith.

II.—But let me now pass on to the next point which I proposed to consider, as the second blessing prayed for by the Apostle: "*Being rooted and grounded in love.*" What is a Christian without love? And yet how many so-called Christians do we find, who are as unloving as they are unlovely. How many do we find professing to be children of God who, if they be judged by their actions, know nothing really of love to Christ, or to the people of Christ; how many to whom, if we weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, Jesus was never precious, who have never loved the brethren, nor shown any proof of that love by their conduct toward them. But a Christian without love is like a Christian without faith; he is an anomaly in the church of God; God will not own him, though he may profess to love him. What is God's own testimony upon this point? "If a man say, he loveth God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" O that we knew more of this precious grace of love! O that the love of God were more shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and that we might know more what it was to love the brethren with a pure heart fervently.

Our text speaks of "being rooted and grounded in love." Let me endeavour to open the mind of the Spirit here. He employs two figures, both of them highly significant.

i. "*Rooted* in love." The idea is of a tree planted in a rich and fertile soil, and taking a strong and deep root in it. Look at the figure. View a tree, a shrub, or a fruit tree, in a gardener's nursery. How strong, how green, how healthy it looks. What is the reason? It is because it has a good, deep taproot, and is planted in a rich, fertile, and suitable soil. What an affinity there

is between the root of a tree, and the soil in which it buries itself. How the soil seems to love the root, and the root seems to love the soil, and how the root seems to penetrate and spread itself into every part of the soil, so as to get out of the ground all the juice, sap, moisture, and fertility, which it can possibly draw into the stem and branches. But now, look at a tree, of the same natural species, planted in an unkindly soil, a gravelly, sandy spot, with no depth of earth. How that tree will dwindle; how sickly it will soon become; how stunted the branches, how faded the leaf; how starved and wizened the fruit. Why is all this? It is not the fault of the tree, but the fault of the soil. But now let that tree be removed from this poor and gravelly ground and be transplanted into a deep, rich, and suitable soil, how soon a change will come over it. How strong soon will be the stem, how vigorous the branches, how clean the bark, how green the leaf, how full the blossom, how rich the fruit. Why? Because the tree has found a soil into which it can burrow and penetrate, and suck up all that richness of the ground which, entering into it through the root, gives it health, and strength, and fruitfulness. Now love is that deep, rich, and fertile soil, and the Christian is the tree planted in it. Job says: "The root of the matter is found in me." By this we may understand that his religion, which he calls "the matter," for it is the most important matter with which we can have to do, had a root to it. Thus there will be a root to your religion if you have a right religion; and if the root of your religion is planted in the rich and fertile soil of love, there is the same affinity between the root of your religion and the soil, as there is between the root of a healthy tree and the fertile ground in which it grows. O how, when the Lord is pleased in any way to favour the soul with his presence and power, and thus makes himself known and precious, it finds love to be a blessed soil in which to root; how deep that soil is now found to be, how rich, and how every fibre of the soul finds, so to speak, room in which it can spread itself, and draw up into its own substance that grace which makes it fruitful in every good word and work.

It may seem at first sight, perhaps, a little doubtful whether the apostle means here by love, the love which we have to Christ, or

the love which we have to the people of Christ. It may, indeed, include both, for they are the same love, and ebb and flow, wax and wane together. But looking at the context, I understand him chiefly to mean the love which we have toward the Lord himself; for that is a deeper, richer, and more fertile soil than love to his people. Now, as a tree when firmly and deeply rooted resists every storm, and is not blown down, so it is with a Christian who is rooted in love. He may have many inward storms of unbelief, infidelity, doubt, and fear, and many outward storms, such as persecution, loss, reproach, and shame for Christ's sake. But as the very storms make the tree take deeper and stronger root in the soil, so the very storms that blow upon him will make him take deeper root in the love of Christ.

ii. But I must pass on to consider the other figure, "*grounded*." The figure is changed here. The apostle now takes the idea of a building, which needs a strong and solid foundation on which to rest, if it is to stand; and the stronger and heavier the building, the more solid must be the foundation to support it. We are building for eternity, not for time. Whether we shall be happy for ever, or miserable for ever, in heaven for ever, or in hell for ever, *that* is the ground on which we are building. Now, we want a rock, not sand, for our support; we want a foundation so firm and solid, that the building erected upon it may stand every storm. But where shall we find such a foundation? God himself shall tell us: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isai. 28:16.) Christ, then, is this foundation, this rock, as he himself said to Peter, "On this rock will I build my church." But when we build upon Christ, as the rock, we build on him as having loved us, and given himself for us, and as this love is the foundation of our hope when we rest firmly upon it, we may be said to be "grounded in love."

But there is something more than this in the word "grounded." It seems to signify what is meant by the expression "settled," as applied to a building, and thus to correspond with the word

"rooted." We therefore find the apostle elsewhere speaking, "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." (Col. 1:23.) Every new building has to settle upon its foundation that it may rest more fully and firmly upon it. Thus, as there is a being rooted in love, so there is a being grounded and settled in love; and they resemble each other in this point, that as the root lays hold of the soil, so the building by settling down upon it lays hold of, and becomes more firmly united with the foundation. In newly built houses we often see rents and cracks in the walls or ceiling. This often arises from the weakness of the foundation, which, giving way in some part, lets down and thus dislocates as it were the building. But where the foundation is solid rock and the house well built, though every house must settle down on the foundation, it will do so without rents and cracks, and settle down as a firm, compact whole. So in grace. The soul that is built up in Christ will settle on Christ, but without rent, crack, flaw, or fissure. The meaning therefore of both the figures is much the same, each pointing out that union of the soul with the love of Christ, by which it grows in him as with a root, and by which it is strengthened and settled, as cleaving more and more closely to him as the foundation.

III.—But we now come to that last and grand blessing which the apostle unfolds in such majestic language: "That ye may be 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."

How he seems to labour for words to set forth the love of Christ; and how he prays the Ephesian saints, and not they only, but all to whom the epistle comes, should be able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this love.

i. The word "comprehend" here means rather to apprehend, and I almost wonder that our translators did not so render it, for it is precisely the same word which is so translated, and rightly translated, in the Epistle to the Philippians. "Not as though I had



already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12.) The distinction between the two words is simple enough, for we may apprehend what we cannot comprehend.

"To comprehend the great Three-One,  
Is more than highest angels can."

But we can apprehend it, believe it, and receive it, though we never can comprehend it. A finite intelligence like man never can comprehend the infinite love of Jesus, but he may apprehend it by faith. By "apprehend" we mean simply take hold of. Thus, when a criminal is arrested by the strong hand of the law, he is said to be apprehended, that is, taken hold of by the officer. So when we say "a person is of quick or dull apprehension," we mean that he takes hold of an idea with greater or less readiness. In this sense we may apprehend, that is, take hold of, embrace, realise, and enjoy what we could never comprehend with our finite understanding. And it is this taking hold of and embracing what is beyond all comprehension, that the apostle meant when he prayed that the Ephesian believers might "apprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." That very last expression shows that he did not mean comprehension, but apprehension; for if this love surpass all knowledge, how can it be comprehended?

1. But what is the *breadth* of Christ's love? Look at all the saints of God; view them scattered over all the face of the earth, and see how the love of Christ spreads itself over them all. Or look at ourselves; look at the sins, backslidings, and many grievous transgressions in thought, word, or deed of which we have been all guilty, and the remembrance of which often pains and distresses our conscience. Now we want something that shall spread itself over all these backslidings and sins, so as to cover and hide them from the eyes of infinite justice. We know, indeed, that it must be Christ's righteousness which alone can do this;

but there is a covering of love as well as a robe of righteousness. So Ruth, when she lay at Boaz' feet, begged of him to spread the skirt of his raiment over his handmaid, for he was the Goel or "near kinsman," and to spread the skirt of his raiment over her was a token that he would redeem the mortgaged estate, and marry her, that there might be an heir to it. Similarly in the case of the child cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day when it was born, we read: "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." (Ezek. 16:8.) Is not this outcast child a representation of our state by nature? and when we see and feel it, do we not desire that the love of Christ should spread itself over us, that he would enter into covenant with us, and call us his? Viewed, therefore, spiritually and experimentally, the breadth of Christ's love not only means its vast extent, broad as the sea, spreading itself like a mighty wave over all the elect of God, but also personally spreading itself over our souls and all that is in them.

2. But this love has *length* as well as breadth. And what is the length of this love? It reaches from eternity to eternity. It knew no beginning; it can know no end; for it is, like its divine Author, eternal; so that it stretches itself out, not only over all the things of time, and over all those who are born in time, but it stretches itself over all the saints of God unto a never ending eternity. This is the length. You will remember that when David smote Moab, "he measured them with a line, even with two lines measured he, with one to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive." (2 Sam. 8:2.) Taking this act of David as typical and emblematic, we may view the line of life as the line of love; and O, if this line of light and love has been stretched over us, it will remain so stretched through all eternity. It will therefore continue stretched over us, not only through what remains to us of time; but through the grave and after the grave; for as the line of love had no beginning, so it will have no end. This line, therefore, as stretched over the church of God from eternity to eternity, will

land safe in glory every vessel of mercy. You may fear sometimes how it may be with you in a dying hour; how you may feel in the swellings of Jordan. But you have seen saints whom you have known, blessedly supported in that trying season; you have seen how, when nature failed, the line of Christ's love was still over them, and in what sweet confidence they passed through the dark valley of the shadow of death, leaning on the bosom of eternal love.

3. But it has *depth*, as well as breadth and length. Do you ask how deep it is? I answer, that it must go as deep as the deepest sunk of God's saints, in order to reach him. Look for instance at David in the depth of his sin and crime, and of his grief and sorrow on account of it. Christ's love must go as deep as that to pardon, forgive, and blot it out. Look at Hezekiah on his bed of languishing, when all his sins stared him in the face, and God seemed about to make an end of him. See how he turned his face to the wall and wept sore. That love must be as deep as his guilty fears, and come down to him in his low and lost estate to lift him up and out of it. Look at Heman, when he said, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou has afflicted me with all thy waves." (Ps. 88:6, 7.) And again, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: when I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." (Ps. 88:15, 16.) The love of Christ must be as deep as his afflictions and distracting terrors to support him under them, and deliver him from them. Look at Jeremiah in the low dungeon, when he sank in the mud and mire, and would, but for the interposition of Ebed-Melech, have expired bodily in that cruel jail. Hear him saying, "Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon." (Lam. 3:54, 55.) But hear him also say, "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, fear not." (Lam. 3:57.) Did not the love of Christ come down to him in the low dungeon to bless and comfort him? Look at Jonah, when in the belly of the whale, and in his own fears and feelings in a deeper belly still, for he said he was in the very belly of hell; yet so deep was the love

of Christ, that it reached him down in the belly of hell. As that love touched his heart, he cried "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." By that look he was brought out, and joyfully shouted, "Salvation is of the Lord." So that, however low the saint of God may sink; however deep his trials, temptations, sorrows, and castings down may be, there is a depth in the love of Christ that can go lower than he. Do we not read "underneath are the everlasting arms?" And if the everlasting arms are "underneath," they must be lower than any sins or sorrows which the saints of God may feel or fear. Here is *depth*.

4. And this love has "*height*." But how high shall this love be? No less high than the courts of heaven; for He who has this love in his bosom, is now in heaven at the right hand of God; and, therefore, the love of Christ is as high as an exalted Jesus. As this love, then, in its depth went down to the gates of hell, so in its height it mounts to the gates of heaven; and, as in its low stooping, it plucked sinners from a deserved hell, it will bear them up to an undeserved heaven. Nay, even here, those who in conviction of sin have had a foretaste of hell, in the consolations of this love have also a foretaste of heaven.

Now this is the love of Christ, in which the apostle prays that we may be "rooted and grounded," so as to embrace it with every faculty of our soul,—a love which has breadth to spread itself over every sin; length to last to all eternity; depth to come down to the least and lowest, most tried, distressed, and afflicted of the family of God; and height to take every saint to bliss who is interested in it.

This is the love which the apostle prayed the Ephesian saints might apprehend and know.

ii. And yet, when he had exhausted language in opening up this wondrous subject, he adds, "*which passeth knowledge*." This eminent saint, who had been in the third heaven, and there saw glorious sights, and heard unspeakable words, though he exhausted human language to set forth the surpassing excellency

of the love of Christ, comes at last to this point: "It passeth knowledge." Indeed it must pass knowledge. Is it not infinite? What measure, then, can be assigned to the love of Christ? If Christ be God, and as such, the equal of the Father, his love is as infinite as Deity. Our love is the love of the creature; the love of God is as great as Deity, as infinite as the self-existent I Am; it must needs therefore pass knowledge. You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus as this can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth,—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, that this exalted Christ, in the height of his glory, can look down from heaven his dwelling place on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we, this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment. But it is the glory of Christ thus to love; it is his special glory to take his saints to heaven, that they might be witnesses of his glory and partakers of it. Therefore, it is not because we are such crawling reptiles, that we are such undeserving creatures, that we are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from him, we are to put away all this matchless love from us, and say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God from heaven his dwelling place cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me, who can scarcely at times bear with myself; who see and feel myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? O, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?" And yet, he says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." This love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown. Its breadth exceeds all human span; its length outvies all creature line; its depth surpasses all finite measurement; and its height excels even angelic computation.

Now this is the very reason why this love is so adapted to us. We want a love like this: a love to spread itself over us, to come down to our lowest depths; a love that can land us safe in heaven. A love short of this would be no love at all. We should exhaust it by our sins if this love were not what it is here

represented. Long ago we should have out-sinned this love, and drawn it dry by our ingratitude, rebellion, and misdoing. But because it is what it is, love so wondrous, so deep, so long, so broad, so high; it is because it is what it is that it is so suitable to every want and woe.

Do you want to know this love, to have it shed abroad in your heart, revealed to your soul, brought into your spirit with a divine power, that you may taste it, handle it, and enjoy it, walk in the light of it, that it may be your daily companion, that you may feed your soul with sweet meditation upon it, enjoy it as your chief blessing here, and the foretaste of your portion hereafter? Then don't put it away from you, as if because you are so undeserving it can never reach your case. The apostle not only prayed that the Ephesian believers might be able to comprehend it, lay hold of it, embrace it, and realise it, but says "with all saints," that is, in common with all saints, because this is the portion of all the saints, the experience of all the saints, what God reveals unto and makes known to all saints. If, then, we are amongst the saints of God we shall, with them, apprehend more or less of this wondrous love of Christ which passeth knowledge. And this will evidence and prove to ourselves and to others that we are truly and really saints.

iii. He then adds, "that ye might be *filled with all the fulness of God.*"

The apostle does not mean here by the fulness of God, that infinite fulness which is in God himself, for how can a poor, limited bosom, a narrow heart, receive all this fulness of God? But he means, to be filled with all that fulness of love and mercy which God can give, so as to make the heart full to overflowing. You must see yourself that it is not possible for all the fulness of God to come into a human heart. But he can so fill it with a sense of his goodness and love, as manifested in Christ, as to fill it with all that fulness, love, joy, and peace, of which it is capable in this time state.

But I must hasten to the end, though, on a subject so vast, I have only dropped feeble and scattered hints.

May I not, then, briefly ask you, Is not this prayer of Paul's a most suitable petition for us also? Is it not full of desires for the best of all possible blessings? And is the man a Christian who has not some feeling toward, longing after, and desire for, the manifestation of these blessings to his soul? What do you ground your hopes for eternity upon? Why do you expect to go to heaven? On what are you building for eternal life? Your works or Christ's works; your power to love Christ, or Christ's love to you? what you have done for God, or what God has done for you? Do you hang upon free grace or free will; on what Christ is, as revealed in the word, or what you think you can do to gain God's approbation by some works of your own? Now, when the Lord teaches his people by his Spirit and grace, he humbles them, lays them low in the dust, and then when he has brought them down, he makes them see and know more or less of the preciousness and suitability of his dear Son; and letting down a measure of his love into the heart, draws forth love toward him who is the altogether lovely, and thus seals salvation upon their conscience with a divine power.

The Lord bless the word that I have spoken this evening in your ears. It is precious truth, if you are able to receive it; and if you have received it in the love of it, you will find that the more you know of the love of Christ by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the more precious it will be. And I may add, that the more we shall make it manifest by our love to the people of God, and by walking with them in unity and affection, that we are not ignorant of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, but know something of it for ourselves in its divine and blessed reality.

## CHRIST THE FRIEND AND SURETY OF HIS POOR

A Sermon Preached on Wednesday Evening, July 8, 1840, by J. C. Philpot at Artillery Street Chapel, Bishopsgate Street, on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society

"For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul. "Psalm 109:31

The grand truths of the Gospel are revealed as with a ray of light in God's holy word. For instance, the Godhead of Jesus is revealed in the plainest and most express terms; so that they who deny it are left without excuse. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," will condemn to an eternity of misery all blasphemers against that blessed and holy name. But God has not merely revealed these great and glorious truths, in express terms, throughout his holy word, in terms so express that nothing but the most infernal sophistry can ever elude or deny them; but he has scattered up and down in various parts of his blessed word of truth these very same doctrines, and yet **(if I may use the expression)** has thrown over them a thin transparent veil, which the blessed Spirit, from time to time, lifts up, and discovers what is contained beneath it to the eyes and hearts of God's heaven-taught family. So that the grand and glorious doctrines of the Gospel are not merely revealed in express terms, for the consolation of the Church and for the condemnation of all blasphemers and opposers, but they are also incidentally scattered up and down the pages of the word; and when the blessed Spirit is pleased to cause a ray of light to shine upon a text, which at first seemed obscure, but then is opened up to the soul, he fulfils that promise, that he will "give it the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places."

"For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." Who, then, would expect in this text to find the Godhead and the manhood of Jesus blessedly



set forth? And yet this verse plainly testifies to the Godhead and the manhood in one glorious person. For who is this "He?" "**He** shall stand." What is said in the verse preceding? "I will greatly praise the LORD" (**in capital letters, signifying "Jehovah"**),—"I will greatly praise Jehovah with my month; yea, I will praise him among the multitude. For **He** shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." But can Jehovah "**stand** at the right hand of the poor?" He fills all time and all space; "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," said Solomon, "much less this house that I have built." He can only "**stand**," then, by being brought into a finite compass; God as God only cannot **stand**. He can only "stand at the right hand of the poor," therefore, by having a human body, in which that glorious Godhead is lodged. So that the expression, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor," can only be explained in this way; that while "He" signifies Jehovah (**as is clear from the preceding verse**), the circumstance of his "standing at the right hand of the poor," implies that Jehovah must be in human form.

We thus gather, then, who it is that "stands." Not Jehovah abstractedly, not Jehovah simply, as filling all time and space; but the second person of the glorious Godhead in human flesh, tabernacling in human form. It is he, that "stands at the right hand of the poor"—Jehovah Jesus—Immanuel, God with us—the God-Man, that is, at one and the same time, and in one and the same glorious person, "God over all, blessed for ever," and having a perfect human body and a perfect human soul.

But now let us look a little at the character, at whose right hand he stands; and then we shall see the occasion and circumstances, wherefore he stands there. "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

The character, then, at whose right hand he stands, is said to be "poor." The word "poor" occurs much in the Word of God, and it is almost invariably (**I might say invariably**) used with reference to God's own family. Of course, there are passages in the Proverbs, which speak of the poor temporally; but still even

these will bear a spiritual sense; and in all cases where the word is used in a spiritual sense, it betokens and points out God's own quickened family.

But how comes it to pass that they are poor? "I am poor and needy," says the Psalmist, "and my heart is wounded within me." How come they to be poor? Do they make themselves so? To say this, contradicts the Word of the Lord, for we read in the prayer **(or rather the thanksgiving)** of Hannah, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up." Therefore, they do not **make themselves** poor. There are a great many professors in the **(so-called)** religious world who make themselves poor; that is to say, they put on the appearance of poverty whereas, they have never been stripped by the hand of God; and their poverty consists for the most part, of expressions. Nothing is easier than to put on the garb, and to use the expressions of a poor man; but this is only a more crafty device of Satan. A man whose heart is full of pride, will not come before you as a proud man; he knows that stinks in your nostrils, and therefore he will come with feigned humility. A man who has never been stripped nor emptied of creature righteousness, and yet has a profession of religion will not come boasting of his own righteousness; he will come with the language of poverty in his mouth. But what matters the garb—the rough garment which he wears to deceive? What matters it, if the widow of Tekoah comes in widow's weeds?—her weeds make her no widow. The rough garment makes no prophet; and the language of poverty does not make a man poor, but may be only a covering of deceit and hypocrisy. None are really poor, but those whom the hand of God has stripped, whom he has brought down, and made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes, and to see and feel themselves destitute of everything good, holy, heavenly, and pleasing in his pure and heart-searching eyes.

Now how does the Lord strip them? He strips them by taking from them every thing which they depend upon, everything upon which they can hang, and everything to which they can look. When the Lord begins to work upon a sinner's conscience, he for

the most part, brings against him the open transgressions of his life (**from which none of us probably were exempt**), and these sink him low; he is thus made to feel, that unless his sins are pardoned, or in some way or other he is enabled to amend his life, so as no longer to go on in these reprobate ways, he must sink forever under the wrath of God. But no sooner does this work begin in the conscience, than the subject of it, being quite ignorant of the work of God upon his soul, or rather ignorant to what God means to bring him thereby, immediately sets to work to gather together some riches—something which shall stand him in good stead—as much righteousness as he can possibly amass. This conviction is deeply lodged in his heart, that he has to deal with a righteous God, a holy God, a pure God, who "requires truth in the inward parts," and hates sin with a perfect hatred; and the immediate operation of this conviction upon his conscience is to set him to amass some riches, to get together some treasure, to procure something whereby he shall please God. We have all done this—whoever of us have been convinced of sin; we have broken off old habits, old connexions, old sins, and made a thorough amendment. But this was only to substitute our righteousness for our sins; it was only to put one deceit in the room of another; it was only to prop up our souls with another buttress, when God had thrown down that on which we were previously resting and hanging—such, for instance, as a general hope in God's mercy. But when the Lord takes a soul in hand really and effectually, he strips away all this righteousness; he will not leave him a single rag, not a particle, no, not an atom. His eyes, "which are a flame of fire," look into the sinner's heart, and as they look, they burn up all the hay, and straw, and stubble, and chaff that are in it. As a burning glass, when brought to a focus, burns up the wood against which it is directed, so when he, "whose eyes" (**spoken of in the Revelation**) "are as a flame of fire," looks into the soul, searches it through and through, and directs his piercing glance into the secret corners and sinuous recesses of our hearts, he burns up and destroys the chaff, and straw, and hay, and stubble, and rubbish, which we had been amassing with infinite pains.

But there is something else yet to be burnt; a man's false religion has to be taken away from him, as well as his legal righteousness. For there is a great deal of false religion abroad, dressed up by the craft and subtlety of Satan, and imposed upon a living soul, as though it came from heaven's mint. There are many Birmingham counterfeits abroad, which may even impose upon God's children for a time, as though they were stamped in heaven's courts and bore the Kings image, though they are nothing but "potsherds covered with silver dross," as Solomon says, nothing but a little silver thinly plated over the base metal. And thus our prayers and our attainments, and our knowledge, and our reading the Scriptures, and our acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, which are in themselves good **(as the silver is good which is plated over the base metal)**, are used **(like the silver)** only to cover that which is counterfeit, and thus only add to the deceit of the counterfeit instead of giving it value. So that really all this dry Calvinism, and all these correct views of the doctrines of grace, and all this preferring a pure preached Gospel, and all this esteeming highly God's sent servants, and all this reading religious books, and those of the soundest character, unless the heart has been previously brought down into the dust of death, unless it has been emptied that the pure gold may run out of the crucible into it, so as to fill it up with sound metal, unless it has been stripped and laid bare, and a place as it were made for the gold to flow into, are only a little plating, a little silver put over it to hide the base metal within. It is like the case of a man, who has a scar or a scab that covers a deep ulcer; the ulcer must be healed from the very bottom **(for there the granulations must always commence)**, and all the pus and matter brought away; for if only the surface of the wound is healed, the original disease will work into the constitution, or break out again in the same, or some other place, with greater virulence. And so the heart must be stripped and emptied, and laid bare effectually by a work of grace that goes to the very bottom, and penetrates into the recesses of the soul, so as to detect all the corruption that lurks and festers within. Nay, many of God's children, when they have come to die, and have had the silver plating burnt off, have found they had then to seek for that

work of grace, in its height, and length, and breadth and depth, in its purity and power, that they thought they possessed. They had indeed some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, like the child of Jeroboam; but they had not that faith, that confidence, that firm hold of God, that standing in the Divine life, which they thought they had. There are many of God's children, who are much farther in doctrinal knowledge than they are in Divine teaching and experience. Now, with all that are thus partially deceived (**I will not say totally, because there is often at the bottom a real work of grace, and they are restless and uneasy at times in spite of their vain confidence**), all this must sooner or later fall to pieces, and the heart must be taken down even to its foundations, that the pure genuine work of the Holy Ghost may be carried on in power within. Mr. Hart, you will find, describes this to have been his experience; he says, "All this while the fountains of the great deep were not broken up." And that is the case with many. The wound has been partially and superficially healed; and it must break out again. Now, the really "poor" man is one who has had **everything** taken from him; who has had not merely his dim views of a merciful God (**such as natural men have**) taken from him, not merely his legal righteousness stripped away, but all that kind of notional, traditionary religion, which is so rife in the present day, taken from him also; and who has been brought in guilty before God, naked, in the dust, having nothing whereby to conciliate him, or gain his favour, and only "a step between him and death." This is a "poor" man; and none else are really poor, in the strict sense of the word, who have not had, more or less (**for there are degrees even here**), something of this stripping work in their heart and conscience.

Now, against this stripping work all professors fight; and I will tell you why. Because it condemns them. They know they have not gone through it, they know that it has not been wrought with power in their souls; and therefore all professors, whether Arminians or Calvinists, fight against the stripping hand of God. But they fight to no purpose; for "the Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up; the Lord

maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up," and if they are "vessels of mercy," they will know it to be so sooner or latter.

But this "poor" man has "those that condemn his soul." "For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

This "poor" man, you see, has a tender conscience; for he has that in him which feels condemnation. It is not a man's natural conscience that feels spiritual condemnation. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." It is a new conscience that feels condemnation; what the Apostle Paul speaks of as "a good conscience." Now that which springs from nature can never be "good," for it is infected and polluted with nature's evil; "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;" and therefore this tender conscience, that feels spiritual impressions, is the gift of God. It is the new heart, which the Holy Ghost breathes into the soul, and which he communicates, when he quickens it into eternal life. It is this new heart, this tender, this good, this pure, this spiritual conscience, that feels condemnation. Natural men feel condemnation according to those words in the Romans, "Their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." The natural conscience of the heathen felt natural condemnation; but in order to feel **spiritual** condemnation, a man must have a spiritual conscience, which is a new conscience, a tender conscience, implanted by the Holy Ghost in the soul. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This poor man has that; and from the very circumstance of his having that, he has "those that condemn his soul."

The law, then, is one of those things that "condemn his soul." The law in its righteous precepts, in its holy requirements, in its terrible sanctions, in its devouring flame, in its awful curse—this "condemns his soul," and brings him in guilty before God; according to the work described by the apostle—"That every

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

Again, the evil workings of his own heart also "condemn his soul." Let us look specifically and individually at some of these. One of them is **unbelief**. Whenever the blessed Spirit takes a soul in hand, he convinces that soul of unbelief. "He shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not in me." The Holy Ghost, in his work upon the heart of a sinner, in bringing him in poor and empty, convinces him of his unbelief, and makes him feel and know in the depth of his soul, that he has no power whatever to create faith—no, not a spark of it no, not a grain of it. The Holy Ghost shows a quickened sinner the difference betwixt letter faith and spiritual faith, betwixt the faith which is of the operation of the flesh and that which is of the operation of God. He shows every quickened vessel of mercy, that that faith, which is not of the operation of God, is "a bed too short, and a covering too narrow." He teaches him that he has no power whatever to raise up an atom of living faith in his own soul, and that all the natural faith which he has in the letter of the Word of God leaves him short of that rest, and that hope, and that peace, which alone can calm the raging storm within. Now, this unbelief "condemns his soul." He does not bring forward Antinomian excuses, and say, "If I am saved, I am saved, and if I am damned, I am damned;" he does not say, "As to this unbelief, it is in me by nature, and I cannot get rid of it, and therefore I need not trouble myself about it; if I am to be saved, God will give me faith sometime or other." A living soul, that has "the beginning of wisdom," and is exercised by the tender feelings which the Spirit of God implants, never can fall into such self-justifying language, but he feels, he mourns, he sighs, he groans, he cries, under the weight of unbelief, and says,

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

But further, the dreadful workings up of his carnal mind against God "condemn his soul." He opens the Word of God; he reads there what the saints are—how they say, "Thy will be done"—how they submit to the hand of God—how they sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his word—how they "wash his feet with their tears, and wipe them with the hairs of their head;" he reads all that Paul and the other apostles have spoken in the way of precept, as to "rejoice in the Lord always," to "be clothed with humility," and the various directions given in the New Testament to the Church of God. But instead of finding in his own mind the counterpart of this, he feels enmity, rebellion, peevishness, hardness, fretfulness, inability to submit himself to the will and wisdom of God, and that he is "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;" like Ephraim, he is "bemoaning himself," and yet is unable to submit, and cast himself simply and believingly at the feet of the Redeemer. This enmity, and peevishness, and rebellion, condemn his soul. And then again his impotency and spiritual helplessness, his utter inability to deliver himself from these evil workings, the miserable weakness and destitution under which he groans, being burdened, so that do what he will, sin is mixed up with all his actions, think what he will, he cannot raise up his thoughts to God, so as to enter within the veil, and speak what he will, evil streams forth with all his words—this deep destitution of the creature, this inability to do good, or think good, or speak good, or to deliver himself from these exercises and burdens, condemns his soul. But, further, his own backslidings condemn him. The Lord, perhaps, at times, has given him deliverances, bowed down his ear and heard his cry in some providential strait, in some marked and signal manner, brought him up when he thought he must go down into the pit, raised him up from sickness, delivered him from the very jaws of temporal death, and has at times given him a taste and a drop and a sip, so as to stay, and calm, and cheer his troubled mind; and he has forgotten it all, and slipped aside from it all, and started back like a broken bow, and gone after some filthy idol. These backslidings condemn his soul, wound his tender heart, and make him sigh and cry, like one well nigh in despair.



But these things condemn him **justly**; he is obliged to plead guilty to them; he can offer no defence, he can bring forward no plea to arrest judgment, he cannot say anything in his own favour that sentence should not be passed.

Other things, however, there are, that condemn him **unjustly**; and these he feels perhaps almost as keenly as those that condemn him justly. For instance, false professors, that heap up slanderous charges against him, malign his character, undermine his fair fame, impute to him false motives, misrepresent his actions, and go about the country seeking in every way to injure him. These condemn him; but **unjustly**. What keen wounds some of us have felt from professing friends! Have you never in the openness of your heart told something to one whom you esteemed your friend—perhaps broke to him some temptation that your soul was exercised with—acquainted him with some secret transgression which lay as a heavy burden upon your conscience—whispered to him something of the deep working of your depraved heart; and you thought he was your friend, and with his smooth tongue and holy countenance, he inveigled and entrapped you to open up to him the secrets of your soul, as Samson's wife enticed him to tell her where his great strength lay? And this false friend, this Judas, when he has wormed the secret out of you, has made use of it to misrepresent you, and to hold you up perhaps as having spoken or committed that in reality to which you were only tempted, and has thus magnified temptation into transgression. It has wounded you; it has cut you deeply; it has made sad havoc in your heart. This is an **unjust** condemnation. Or perhaps professors of religion may have picked up what you may have spoken inadvertently, carried it about the country, spread it through the Churches, and whispered one to another (**as "the children of his people talked against" Ezekiel**) that which perhaps has fallen from you in a thoughtless moment, and then it comes back upon you with redoubled weight, and your soul is condemned thereby. These are **unjust** condemnations. So, again, Satan also often accuses this poor man, that he has sinned against the Holy Ghost, that he has committed the unpardonable transgression, that his name is not

in the book of life, that he is nothing but a reprobate, that all his religion is in the flesh, that he began in hypocrisy and has gone on in hypocrisy, and will have his portion with the hypocrites. With all these fearful suggestions Satan sets in like a powerful flood upon the soul; and these condemn him unjustly. When Satan then tells us we have backslidden beyond recovery, it is an unjust condemnation; when he tells us we have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, it is an unjust charge. And when our professing friends, but deceitful foes, and those who hate us on account of the Lord's dealings with our souls, spread their malicious lies, these are unjust accusations; but they wound and cut deeply a tender heart.

Here, then, is the "poor" man, whose soul is condemned; condemned by some things justly, by others unjustly, but feeling most acutely that to which he pleads guilty. Oh! it is the feeling of guilt that presses down a man's soul; when he has not a word to say, nor a plea to bring forward, nor anything whereby he can extenuate the charge. But "he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul," be their condemnations just or unjust.

"**He** shall stand." And who is this? As I noticed in the beginning of this discourse, it is the God-Man, who alone can "stand"—being God in human form.

The expression, "He shall **stand** at the right hand of the poor," implies, first, that he appears there as a **friend**. How cheering, how comforting it is, to have a friend to stand by us when we are in trouble! Such a friend is Jesus. In the hour of necessity, he comes as a friend to stand by the right hand of the poor creature, whose soul is condemned by guilt and accusations. But he stands in a far higher relation than that of a friend; he stands too, as a **surety and a deliverer**. He goes, as it were, into the court; and when the prisoner stands at the bar, he comes forward and stands at his right hand as his surety and bondsman; he brings out of his bosom the acquittance of the debt, signed and sealed with his own blood, he produces it to the eyes of the court, and

claims and demands the acquittal and ablution of the prisoner at whose right hand he stands. He stands there, then, that the prisoner may be freely pardoned, and completely justified from those accusations that "condemn his soul." sweet standing!—blessed appearance!—when this God-Man, this mediator betwixt God and man, Christ Jesus—this Immanuel, God with us—"stands at the right hand of the poor;" when he comes forward in behalf of the poor trembling sinner, takes his station at his right hand, and "saves him from those that condemn his soul!" The law brings in its charge; this God-man "stands at the right hand of the poor," and produces his own fulfilment of that law, which brings in its heavy charge against the guilty criminal. Unbelief, and the workings of a desperately wicked heart, and the stirrings up of that pool of all that is filthy and polluted, and the fearful suggestions of the great adversary of our souls, come forward to condemn us; but he "stands at the right hand of the poor," and produces his own glorious righteousness. Are we pressed down with unbelief? He communicates faith. Is our mind sinking into despair? He breathes into it hope. Is the heart restless and agitated with the billows and waves of enmity? He pours oil upon those waves by "shedding abroad love." Is the soul bowed down with guilt, at a distance from God, unable to approach him on account of its heavy temptations? He puts his own arm under this poor dejected soul, and lifts up his bowed down head, and as he lifts it up, the soul looks upwards, and instead of wrath sees the countenance of the Father beaming mercy and love, because the surety is "standing at the right hand of the poor." Jesus himself has stood at the bar, he himself has been arraigned, he himself has been condemned as a criminal, and has died the death of a criminal **(though he was not buried in the grave of a criminal, and he rose with glory and power to sit at God's right hand, until he hath put all enemies under his feet)**; and therefore he can sympathise and feel for the criminal, for he "was in all points tempted like as we are," and "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

But "he stands often **invisibly** at the right of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." Does the law condemn

you? He "stands at your right hand," even though you perceive him not, to save you from the curse. Does guilt condemn you? He "stands **(unseen)** at your right hand" to save you from these feelings of guilt. Does sin condemn you? He "stands at your right hand," undiscerned, perhaps, yet not less really, to save you from the power of sin. Does Satan condemn you? He "stands at your right hand," although you behold him not, as he stood before Joshua, and repelled Satan, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." And as to those unjust accusations which are brought against you under which your soul is cut and wounded, when false charges have been laid, and when professors have maligned your character, he secretly "stands at your right hand," to save you from their charges, and will bring you forth one day to the light, that, you may behold his righteousness. When men misrepresent your motives, pervert your words, and prove your enemies, he will "stand at your right hand to save you from those that condemn your soul," by not merely pouring his blessed consolations into your heart, but also bringing you out clearly, and so that none can lay a single charge against you of those accusations that have been your grief and burden.

"He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

Now, there are poor naturally, as well as poor spiritually. There are pilgrims of God, who are poor in an earthly, as well as a spiritual sense. And these often have "those that condemn their soul." Perhaps some of these are obliged, merely for the sake of keeping body and soul together, to run into debt for the common necessaries of life; and these debts "condemn their soul." Perhaps they are obliged to depend upon the bounty of others, from whom, instead of getting smiles, they only receive frowns; and instead of encouragements only meet with repulses; and this condemns their soul. Oh! to be a beggar—to be a child of God, and yet to be brought down so low in poverty as to have to go to a Christian brother and ask him for an alms, and perhaps get a repulse, or **(if not)** an excuse, or to have a trifle given with a cold heartless frown!—it "condemns the soul" of many of God's

poor pilgrims. But God will "stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul;" from unfeeling wretches, who never were in the same state themselves, who, perhaps, cast in his teeth the debts he has been entangled in by necessity, and make them an excuse for shutting up their bowels of compassion against him. "To save him from such as these that condemn his soul." And how? By appearing providentially—perhaps in marvellous ways—perhaps by stirring up some of your hearts, who have worldly substance, to impart to their poverty.

I have to plead for some of these poor this evening. They may have many of these things "to condemn their souls;" and what a mercy, if the Lord should make use of you and me as his instruments to save them from those condemnations. It is a high honour to be thus employed; it is a great privilege if the Lord should use my hand and yours to feed his poor and needy ones; if he has promised not to pass by unheeded "a cup of cold water," that hand which he thus uses to minister to the wants of his poor and needy children, he will one day abundantly acknowledge.

I will read to you a paper put into my hands by the Secretary of the Society. "The following is a brief account of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society, in reference to the number of persons now on that Society, and also the amount of its income and expenditure. There are 48 pensioners, who receive ten guineas per annum, or 17s. 6d. per month; 83 ditto, who receive five guineas per annum, or 8s. 9d. per month; 207 approved candidates, who receive 4s. per month; making a total of 338 poor aged members of the mystical body of Christ, of various denominations, from sixty years of age and upwards, among whom are distributed monthly £120. The Committee regret to say, that the permanent income arising from annual subscriptions does not exceed £1, , whilst the amount of expenditure is upwards of £1,700, leaving a deficiency of more than £700 to be made up by donations and collection sermons, wherever they can be obtained. Every department is filled gratuitously."

Now, this is the only religious Society that I belong to; the only Society that I can conscientiously support; the only Society I ever feel inclined to preach for. I look upon this Society as having greater good and fewer evils than any other. In bestowing upon it that which the Lord shall enable us, we are fulfilling a clear command of God, to "do good unto all men, specially unto them that are of the household of faith." We have no express precept to form Societies, and raise money to send abroad Missionaries and Bibles; but we have a positive precept to do good to the household of faith, and therefore we go upon sure ground, and stand upon a scriptural foundation, when we plead for them, or give our bounty to them. And who can need it so much? They have three claims to recommend them. There is, first, their age; there is, secondly, their poverty, the income from other sources being very limited, of all who receive anything from the Society; and there is **(so far as their experience is known)**, thirdly, the grace of God in their hearts—their belonging to the family of God.

But I am well convinced that the Lord must open a man's heart; and where he opens a man's heart to feel for the poor and needy of his flock, he will, more or less, open that man's pocket. Our carnal nature, our lustful covetous heart, can easily find money for our own gratifications; but when the cause of God and the claims of the people of God come before us, then our heart begins to shrink. If anything that pleases the flesh comes before our carnal mind, our hand very readily finds its way to our pocket; but when it is some destitute pilgrim, some poor cause of God, some needy minister of Jesus, something that does not gratify nor benefit ourselves, our nature begins immediately to contract itself, to put in a veto, to draw a chain round the purse, and whisper in our ears not to spend too much, or we may be poor ourselves one day, that we do not know that these are the people of God, or that tomorrow we may want the money ourselves. So all that a man really gives aright is drawn out of his hand and out of his heart by the grace of God in him. But though I have spent in my time a good deal of money, and have deeply regretted all that I ever wasted on the vanities of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, I never yet repented of having my

heart opened to communicate to the necessities of God's family; I never went to bed with a heavy heart or rose up with a burdened conscience, because, in a moment of sympathy, I had given more than I meant to give. Of all experience I never had that yet; and therefore I must leave other ministers to preach that experience; my experience is, that I have been thankful to God that I have done anything, and ashamed of myself that I have not done more. And I must now leave the matter with him. If he opens your hearts, he will have the glory; if he opens your hands, it will be for the consolation of his poor aged pilgrims. The money is not to be wasted upon platforms; it is not to be thrown away upon secretaries making expensive journies; it is not to be spent in providing nicely furnished seats for a parcel of people to clap at speeches; it is not to be wasted upon show and glitter. All the officers of the Society acting gratuitously, whatever is contributed goes directly into the pockets of God's people. You are not sending abroad unconverted missionaries to convert unconverted heathen; you are not thrusting out raw youths that know neither God nor themselves, to change natural heathenism into Christian hypocrisy; you are not sending out Socinian translations of the Scriptures, or mangled religious works; you are not scattering abroad tracts, half full of the grace of God, and half of the blind will of man; what you give, you give simply and solely for those who **(we may hope)** are God's people. Here is a large sum to be raised—£700; and perhaps some of these poor people are anticipating their little income, and saying, "On such a day such a person will call on me, and I shall have such a sum of money;" if the money is not raised, how will they be disappointed! what fretting, and trouble, and grief, and anguish of mind, may be obviated, by the people of God giving to the utmost of their power to communicate to their wants.

If the claims of the aged of God's family never touch your heart, I believe you have no heart at all. But may God open your heart, show you that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and sweetly constrain you to say, "I would rather tomorrow go without my dinner, or put aside till next year having a garment **(a bonnet, or a coat, or a pair of shoes)**, or some other

comfort, than that any of God's family should be so distressed." The way to give is to forego something; and that which you forego will gladden and rejoice some child of God. But I might stand here till midnight; unless God is pleased to open your heart, all my pleading will not do it, and therefore I leave it simply in his hand. May he blessedly constrain you to do that which shall be for his glory, and for the good of his poor and needy children!



## **Christ Jesus the Lord Received and Walked in**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 11, 1860

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."  
Colossians 2:6, 7

If ever there was one who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and his people with a pure and heavenly affection, it was that man of God, that great Apostle of the Gentiles, whose words are now still sounding in your ears. Nor was this love of his to the Lord and to his people a mere transient, temporary flow of affection which began and ended in mere feeling, nor a sudden gush of natural tenderness that, like the brook to which Job compares his friends, "when it is hot was consumed out of its place" (Job 6:17); but it was rather "a spring whose waters fail not," for it rose from the same source as that "well of living water" which the Lord Jesus gives to his people, and which "springs up in them unto everlasting life." (John 4:14.) It, therefore, continually, as drawn forth, manifested itself in words and deeds: in words most expressive of affection to all the family of God, and in deeds of labour, suffering, and peril almost without example or parallel, for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

But there was one peculiar feature of this love that burnt as a holy flame in the apostle's bosom, which I have often admired, as stamping upon it such pure disinterestedness,—that he loved those he had never seen, persons whose very names he was utterly unacquainted with, and whom he only knew by report as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; for he says, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." How grace here outshines nature! Ties of natural relationship, bonds of creature affection, often closely knit us to those whom

we know, and whom perhaps we almost daily see; but to love the saints of God, as the people of Christ, without even personally knowing them, surely there is something in love like this which stamps upon it a mark peculiarly heavenly and divine.

But this love of Paul's for the Colossian believers produced a mighty conflict in his bosom which he wished them to know, that they might have some proof of the reality and strength of his affection. The word "conflict" here means literally "struggle, wrestling, contest," and is taken from the public games at which competitors in ancient times ran, wrestled, and fought with each other in the presence of thousands to win an earthly crown of victory. It therefore spiritually denotes a vehement wrestling with God in prayer and supplication; a contending against Satan's accusations and suggestions, which would divert him from this exercise of Christian love; a combating with all errors and erroneous men who might seek to seduce them from the faith of Gods elect; an anxious "fear or care," as we read in the margin, that "they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12); and a trembling apprehension lest they might fall into evil or error. But there were four special blessings for which he wrestled with God on their behalf. 1. First, "*that their hearts might be comforted;*" for he knew that a heart full of grief and sorrow was little able to combat with Satan; that a dejected mind and a desponding spirit could not resist his accusations; and that a load of guilt on the conscience marred every lively act of faith, hope, or love. But he knew if God were pleased to comfort their hearts with the choice consolations of his gospel, and to shed abroad his love in their soul, it would enable them to fight against sin, Satan, self, and the world, even unto the death. It would animate them to run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus; would make all afflictions light in their eyes; would remove all fear of death from their mind; and would fill them with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. 2. The next blessing which he prayed for on their behalf was, that they might be "*knit together in love:*" for he felt that strife and division were a very canker that eat up all good in the soul. Union is strength; disunion weakness. Love in the churches is the very

bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14); and jealousy, suspicion, and dislike is the breaking up of all happiness and peace. If, then, instead of being knit together in affection and love, they were rent and torn with strife, it would fill them with darkness of soul toward God; would give Satan great advantage over them; would grieve the Spirit; would wound their own consciences; contract their hearts; restrain the voice of prayer, and stop the mouth of praise. 3. He desired, thirdly, that they might be blessed with "*all riches of the full assurance of understanding.*" Let no man despise an enlightened understanding into the truth of God. For want of it many are children all their days, and tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. A gracious and sanctified knowledge of God's truth is an inestimable mercy. There are "riches" in it of untold value. Nor is there only an understanding of God's truth, but "an assurance of understanding," for as there is faith and the full assurance of faith, and hope and the full assurance of hope, so there is an understanding and a full assurance of understanding; and more than that, there are "the *riches* of the full assurance of understanding," so as to know divine truth in the richest, sweetest, surest way by the power and plenitude of divine teaching. 4. And this would lead to the fourth blessing for which he prayed, "*the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*" I cannot enter upon this wide field, and therefore will briefly hint that he desired for them both an experimental knowledge in their own souls, and a holy acknowledgment before others of the mystery of a triune God, which he terms "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;" by which we may understand either the mystery of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or else the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ, as his only begotten Son. But to wean them from looking to human wisdom to instruct them in these divine mysteries, he reminds them that "in Christ were hidden (or stored up) all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and that therefore to him they should look to be taught and blessed; for as God had hidden in his glorious fulness these infinite stores of wisdom and knowledge, it was out of this fulness that they were to be enriched with all saving and sanctifying wisdom. Nor was this a needless intimation, for he was jealous over them with

godly jealousy; and, seeing how seducing spirits and erroneous men were lying in wait to deceive, he feared "lest any man should beguile them with enticing words," for feeling his heart knit to them, "though he was absent in the flesh, yet was he with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ." And this leads him to the admonition from which I hope to speak a few words this morning, "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

In endeavouring, with God's help and blessing, to lay open before you these words of inspired truth, I shall,

I.—*First*, show what it is to "*receive Christ Jesus the Lord.*"

II.—*Secondly*, how we are to "*walk in him*" as received.

III.—*Thirdly*, how we become "*rooted and built up in him.*"

IV.—*Fourthly*, how we are to be "*stablished in the faith as we have been taught; and to abound therein with thanksgiving.*"

I.—Many persons seem to have a religion without Christ. At least as far as we can see, he is not the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the sum and substance of their religion. Such a religion as this has neither root nor stem, neither foundation nor superstructure; and without harshly censuring them, we have our Lord's own words to prove that those who have a religion without Christ have not a religion wrought in the heart by the power of God's grace, for he himself declares, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and again, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." (John 15:4, 5.) The apostle, then, speaking to these Colossians, assumes that they had received Christ, in other words, that they had a religion of which Christ, as received into the heart, was the sum and substance. He does not therefore address them either as persons in a state of

unregeneracy, or as full of doubt and fear and unbelief, as still under the law in bondage at Mount Sinai, without any testimony or well-grounded hope and persuasion of interest in the Lord of life and glory. But he speaks to them as to persons who had "received Christ Jesus the Lord." It will therefore be necessary to show what it is "to receive Christ Jesus the Lord," that you may have some testimony in your consciences whether you have received him or not; because this is the grand turning point of life and death.

I. The Scripture declares of our blessed Lord that "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." (John 1:11, 12.) Here we find the Holy Ghost drawing a distinction between those who received Christ and those who received him not: one being in life, the other in death; the one his friends, and the other his enemies; the one saved, and the others, continuing so, lost. And the same Blessed Spirit, writing by the pen of John, tells us how and why it was that some were able to receive him when others did not. He says, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a high privilege did these enjoy, for he gave them "power to become the sons of God." But he does not leave us in ignorance how they received him, for he says, "Even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11-13.) Have we not here, then, the Spirit's own testimony that those alone are "born of God" who receive Jesus Christ by faith? and does it not follow that if a man has not so received Jesus Christ there is no scriptural evidence that at present he is born of God?

But examine the word "*received*" a little more closely. It means, of course, that Christ is received into the heart, for it is there that he is formed the hope of glory. (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27.) If, then, he is to be received there, a place must first be made for him. The key, therefore, to this text lies very much, I think, in the words which the Lord addressed to the Pharisees, "My word hath no place in you;" that is, there was no room in their heart to receive Christ. His place was preoccupied. Sin was there; the

world was there; self was there; and sin, the world and self, all effectually barred out Christ. We see this continually in the case of those in whose hearts the Blessed Spirit is not at work. Pride, prejudice, enmity, unbelief, infidelity, self-righteousness, love of the world,—all these are hindrances, obstacles, impediments, so that there is no room in their hearts for Christ and his gospel. He must, then, come and prepare the room; make a place for himself, that he may come in and dwell. To do this was the work for which John the Baptist was sent, as a figure of the law. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isai. 40:3.) But the certain effect of making a place for Christ is to turn out all intruders. We have this opened up in the parable of the strong man armed, of whom we read that "he keepeth his palace," that is, his castle; and whilst he does this "his goods are in peace." As long then as he keepeth his palace, there is no room for another owner, another Lord and master of the castle; for he is so strong by nature, and, besides his natural strength, is so encased in armour, that none can dispossess him unless of superior strength. But such an one at last is found; for a "stronger than he," which is Jesus, comes upon him, and overcomes him; and then "he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." This is a spiritual representation of Satan, who is the strong man armed; of the palace, which is the human heart; of Christ as stronger than the strong man armed; and of the way in which the Blessed Lord overcomes Satan, and takes possession of the sinner's soul. Now what I am chiefly aiming to show you is that, before we can receive Christ, there must be room made for him, and that this must be done by the power of God's grace; for sin and Satan are so strong that nothing else can overcome them. The usual way by which this room is made for Christ is by cutting convictions, distressing temptations, and alarming views of the majesty and purity of God; for it is by such dealings upon the conscience that we come experimentally to learn our own miserable sinfulness. The Blessed Spirit working in and by these convictions, and softening and melting the heart by a divine influence, thus breaks to pieces the pride, self-righteousness, prejudice, enmity, opposition, and all those obstacles that have so shut out the

gospel, so blinded the eyes, stopped the ears, and hardened the heart against the voice of truth. It is not now whether we will turn to the Lord or not, and leave the ways of sin or not; for he makes us "willing in the day of his power," and puts his hand in a mysterious way into the heart. As in the Canticles, we read of his putting in his hand "by the hole of the door;" so the Lord, by the secret power and influence of his grace, puts his hand into the heart, and by the secret movements of his Spirit in and upon the conscience, raises up not only a sense of the soul's ruin and misery, but, being poured out as a Spirit of grace and of supplications, communicates desires, breathings, sighs, cries and groans, lookings and longings for mercy, pardon, and peace. It is in this way that the Lord Jesus Christ makes his people willing to receive him; for he not only convinces them of their miserable state, but in a secret, mysterious way discovers, from time to time, so much of his suitability, beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory, as to make the heart willing to entertain him, and to dread nothing so much as to live and die without the manifestation of his blood and love. Now, however long or short this process may be, and in some cases it is not a very long process, yet it is in all cases effectual. The gaoler, for instance, at Philippi, was very soon raised, first out of a state of unregeneracy and death, and then out of almost the depths of despair; for the earthquake which shook the prison walls shook his heart to pieces and made him tremble at the wrath to come; and the same power whereby all the doors were opened and every one's bands were loosed, opened the door of his soul to a flood of conviction, and loosed the bands of his unregeneracy. God blessed the apostle's voice, "Do thyself no harm," and it came with such power to his soul, that he sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down almost in despair before Paul and Silas, with a cry in his lips, "What must I do to be saved?" But when Christ was set before him by the preaching of the apostle, and the Holy Ghost blessed his testimony, he received Christ then and there into his heart, and rejoiced in a full and free salvation. So with the publican. He went into the temple a miserable, guilty, self-condemned wretch, crying to God for mercy. God heard his prayer, revealed to him salvation by Christ's righteousness; he received Christ then and

there, for he went down to his own house "justified." So with the prodigal. He came home to his father's house self-condemned and self-aborred. The father fell upon his neck and kissed him, and revealed a sense of his pardoning love to his soul almost before the words came out of his heart and lips, that he was not worthy to be called his son. But it is not always, nor often thus. For the most part, the Lord leads his people up and down in various distressing ways in providence and in grace before he makes Christ known to their souls, that they may receive him into their heart as the Son of the Father in truth and love.

ii. But we now come to *the way* in which Christ is received. Before we can receive Christ into our heart, we must know something about him, both who and what he is. We must have some view of him by faith; for how can we long for Christ to come into the heart unless there be some view of him as suitable to our case, as desirable to know, to believe in, and to love?

1. The first thing then needful is, that the *eyes of the understanding should be enlightened*. And this God mercifully gives. A ray of light is made to shine upon some passage of Scripture which speaks of Christ, and from the Scripture it is presented to the eye of faith, which at once seeing light in God's light, beholds as in a glass the beauty, blessedness, grace, and suitability of Jesus. All these are revealed in the Scriptures, for they testify of him; but until the veil of darkness is taken off the heart, we cannot read the writing nor understand the testimony. His eternal Sonship, his glorious Godhead, his suffering manhood, his complex Person as Immanuel, God with us, his dying love, his atoning blood, his justifying righteousness, his victorious grace; all shine in the word of truth, but are not seen until revealed by a light from above. When, then, a ray of heavenly light shines into the understanding, it is then enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Is not this the very language of the Apostle, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?" (2 Cor. 4:6.) He also prays for the Ephesians that "the God of our Lord



Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Eph. 1:17, 18.) And thus we find John speaking, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) Where, then, there is this enlightened mind, and the grace and glory of Christ are thus seen, there is a receiving Christ *into the understanding*.

2. But we must go further than this. There is the *conscience* which God makes tender in his fear—in which he works by his Holy Spirit, and makes humble and contrite, simple and sincere. Now as a ray of divine light shines into the understanding to show the beauty and glory and suitability of Christ, the conscience is made willing to receive him in his blood and righteousness as the only balm for its guilt and shame; the only cure for a wounded spirit, the only hope of salvation from a broken law and from the eternal wrath of God. For we must ever bear in mind that the same light which discovers sin reflects the anger of God from a broken law into the conscience; and this produces guilt, bondage, and fear, from which there is no deliverance but by the application of atoning blood.

3. Then, again, there is receiving Christ into *the heart*. The heart must be made tender as well as the conscience. This is what the Lord took special note of in Josiah (2 Kings 22:19), "Because thine heart was tender." The heart by nature is hard and obdurate; what the Scripture calls "a heart of stone." This, we read, God by his Spirit and grace takes away out of the flesh, and gives a heart of flesh, which is the new heart given and the new spirit put within. (Ezekiel 36:26.) He thus make the heart soft, as Job speaks (23:16); nor can there be a greater blessing, for it is that broken and contrite heart which God will not despise (Psa. 51:17); that contrite spirit to which God looks, and with which he dwells. (Isai. 57:15.) As, then, the heart is made tender and contrite Christ is received into it, for there he dwells by faith. (Eph. 3:17.)

4. But by coming into the heart he also makes a place for himself in the *affections*, that is, the spiritual affections, which, by the power of his grace, are drawn forth and raised up so as to be fixed upon him as seated at God's right hand; which made the apostle say, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:2.)

Now can you say that you have received Christ in any or all of the *four* ways enumerated, for they generally if not always go together? Look at them distinctly one by one, and compare your experience with this fourfold work of the Spirit of God. First, then, have you seen by *the eye of faith* the beauty and blessedness, blood and righteousness, Deity and humanity, grace and glory, suitability and loveliness of a most precious Jesus? Secondly, has your *conscience* responded to what you have seen with the eye of faith, and have you felt a sweet coming in of mercy, love, and blood to heal its bleeding wounds, and purge it from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve a living God? Thirdly, has your *heart* ever been softened, melted, and touched by a gracious influence and constraining power so as to receive Christ by faith into the inmost recesses of your bosom? And, fourthly, have you ever at any time, however short it might have lasted, received Christ into your *affections* so as to love him with a pure heart fervently? Now no man can receive Christ in these four ways except he be brought nigh by the power of God. He must be revealed to your soul as the true, proper, and only begotten Son of God, that he may thus become God's gift to you, and you may be enabled to say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." This Paul enjoyed, which made him say, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15, 16.) This revelation of his Son in us we must have as a mark of God's having called us by his grace. When God then is pleased to reveal Christ in us, then we receive him. God brings him near, as he brought the coats of skins to Adam and Eve when he clothed them; and therefore he says, "I bring near my righteousness." (Isai. 46:13.) This is Christ, for he is "the Lord our righteousness." (Jer. 23:6.) Thus as our fallen parents took the coats of skins from the hand

of God as their covering robe, so the soul takes God's gift of Christ's righteousness. And when he in his blood and love comes over the mountains and hills of all our sin and shame, unbelief and infidelity, he makes for himself a place in the heart, where he is entertained by faith and hope and love. To know something of this in the sweet experience of the soul is to know what it is "*to receive Christ Jesus the Lord.*"

iii. But *whom* do we receive when we receive Christ? We receive him as the eternal Son of God in all his blessed relationships. Thus we receive him as our atoning *High Priest*, for his blood is seen to be unspeakably precious, and his righteousness to justify from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. We receive him as our teaching *Prophet*, that he may lead us into all truth. We receive him as our most gracious *Sovereign*, who is to sway his peaceful sceptre over every faculty of the soul, and be our Lord and *King*. We receive him as our *Saviour* from the wrath to come; as our *Mediator* between God and man; as our *Husband* who has espoused us in eternal covenant ties; as our *Brother* born for adversity; as our *Friend* who loveth at all times; as our *Surety* who has borne our sins in his own body; as our *Representative* in the courts of heaven; and as our glorious *Head*, out of whom we receive all supplies to sanctify us and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Now if you have received Christ in these glorious offices and these covenant characters, you have received him as "Christ Jesus the Lord." For as the "Lord" he is your Lord God, and thus you receive him in his *Deity*; you receive him as *man*, for you receive him as "Jesus," which was the name of his pure *humanity*; and you receive him as "Christ," which signifies the Anointed One, the Messiah; and in so doing you receive him in his *complex character as Immanuel*, God with us, for as the God-Man he is the Christ.

II.—I now pass on to consider what it is to "*walk in him.*" I. We often, through the power of sin, the subtlety of Satan, and the strength of temptation, get drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ.

1. When the Lord is pleased in any manner to manifest himself to the soul, *sin* receives a stunning blow: it cannot lift up its head in the presence of Jesus. He puts his victorious feet upon its neck, for he will not allow it to reign and rule in the believer's heart; nor indeed can it do so when under the influence of his grace, according to the promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. 6:14.) But when he withdraws his gracious presence, sin that before lay dead begins to revive. It is like the sleeping serpent—torpid in the winter, but revived by the warm beams of spring. So when sin once more comes forth out of its torpid state, and begins again to manifest itself in all its secret power and all its dreadful influence, the soul gets into worse confusion and trouble than ever; for fresh sin brings fresh guilt, and when guilt falls as a dark and gloomy cloud over the conscience, it hides and obscures all that God has done in the heart; it buries evidences, casts a mist of darkness over the throne of grace, shuts out access to God, and fills the whole mind with bondage, doubt, and fear.

2. *Satan*, too, who, when the Lord was pleased to manifest himself, withdrew for a time, begins again to lay his secret snares—sometimes puffing up the heart with pride; sometimes secretly insinuating what a good and blessed experience the soul has been favoured with, so as to lift it up with vain confidence and presumption, exalting itself and despising others; sometimes spreading a hidden trap for the feet, whereby he entangles it in some vile sin, or thrusts it down at once by some sudden slip or fall. If he do not succeed in this way, he will sometimes beguile the mind with some error, or work upon our reasoning powers, or raise up infidel thoughts, or whisper vile suggestions, or insinuate that all the soul has tasted, handled, and felt, was but delusion and deception; that he was the author of it all; and that we have been guilty of hypocrisy in speaking of anything which we thought God had done for us.

3. The *world*, again, which seemed to have little influence when the soul was under the blessed teaching of the Lord, begins again to work with renewed power. The worldly spirit which exists in

every believer's bosom is easily inflamed, for sin and Satan are ever at hand to pile up combustible material and set it on fire. Under this wretched influence a whole troop of worldly thoughts and desires begin again to take possession of the mind: and as these regain their former strength, they shut out union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, and produce inward darkness, deadness, coldness, hardness, barrenness, and a general stupor of mind, all which sad evils give great encouragement to the powers of hell to renew their attacks, and often with too much success.

ii. By these and various other ways which I cannot now enter into, the soul is drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ, and stripped of its enjoyments, its spirituality of mind, and its heavenly affections; and is thus no longer able to walk with God in the sweet fellowship which it had been favoured with when Christ was made precious to the soul. I have gone through all this in order to show you how in our text the apostle meets this case. He says, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in him.*" Do you wish, he would say, to maintain that life of faith which you once enjoyed; to keep up that sweet fellowship which you once experienced; to retain those clear evidences and bright testimonies with which your soul once was favoured? To obtain this, he says, you must walk in Christ as you received him. But now arises the question. how did you receive him? Was it not as a guilty sinner, despairing almost of life, and finding in yourself neither hope nor help; in a word did you not receive him as a poor, needy sinner? Then you must walk all your days as a poor, needy sinner, that you may ever be walking in him as you first received him. What wisdom, what strength, what righteousness, what goodness of your own first gave you any spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, or brought him into your heart? Did he not appear to you in his own time, in his own way? Was it not true of him that his coming was "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men?" (Micah 5:7.) Then you must walk in him, that is, in union with him, in his ways, in his dealings, in his teachings, in the display of his sovereignty, just in the same way as when

you first received him as I have described. What claim did you then lay to him, what merit did you bring before him? You came to him needy, naked, and unclean; so, as regards yourself, you must walk all your days in union with him as the branch with the vine, simply receiving of his fulness what he has to give. You came to him with cries and sighs, groans and petitions; you must walk in those cries, sighs, groans, and petitions, that you may have that same simplicity, sincerity, and necessity all the days of your life. You came to him a poor sinner, justly doomed to die, and when you received him, you received him as a full, perfect, and complete Saviour. You must walk then as a poor sinner still in yourself justly doomed to die, and only saved day by day by the same grace which saved you at first. Thus, you must walk all your life as poor, as needy, as dependent upon free grace, infinite mercy, atoning blood, as when you first approached the throne of grace, and Christ was made precious to your soul by the power of God. But here is the grand difficulty. It is easy to set out—hard to hold on. The beginning of a journey is easy enough, but to go on mile after mile with faltering step, exhausted strength, flagging spirits, and a wearied frame, will try, and that to the utmost, the patience of the stoutest traveller. So it is in the things of God: when Christ is first made precious to the heart, it is easy to believe, hope, and love in the power of his grace; it is not hard then to fight against sin, self, and the world, or run with patience the race that is set before us. But to be ever walking in opposition to sin, self, and the world, and this in the Lord's absence as well as in his presence; to walk on still in the straight and narrow road, when we see him not by faith going before; still to believe, though he do not appear: still to cling, to hang, to look, to sigh, cry, and groan, and wait for his appearing, when beset with darkness, without and within: here is the chief fight of faith; here is the main struggle of the Christian pilgrim; and yet in this difficult and trying path, consists the walking in Christ as we have received him.

iii. But God has appointed certain *means*, and *ways* whereby we may walk in Christ as we have received him. There are two blessed weapons in particular that God puts into the believer's

hands: one is *faith*; the other is *prayer*.

1. Faith is the grand weapon which is absolutely essential to thus walking in Christ as we have received him, for the whole of a Christian's course is a fight of faith, a life of faith, and a walk of faith. Now as the path of a Christian is often one of great darkness, he cannot walk in it by sight, and therefore needs faith, of which the very blessedness is to believe in spite of sense and reason, and to struggle on in face of every difficulty. The apostle therefore says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7.) And was not this Abraham's faith? For five and twenty years did not he believe in the promise of God that Sarah should have a son, though every day seemed to set him further off it? So we have to walk by faith when the way is dark as well as when it is bright; when the wind is in our face as well as when it is at our back; through evil report and through good report; through accusations of sin, Satan, and conscience; through a thousand perils, inward and outward, and before a thousand foes. But how without faith can we, in spite of all these difficulties, still set our face manfully forward, look on to the end, fix our hope and help in the Son of God in the sweet persuasion that he is our all in all? How else can we entertain any confidence that notwithstanding all our changes that his love changeth not; that he is faithful to his promises in spite of all the suggestions of sense and reason; that if he has begun a good work in our soul, he will never forsake it, but will carry it on even to the end; that he loves us even when he hides his face; is working for our good when all things seem against us; and that there is mercy in every trial, a blessing in every sorrow? To do all this and to keep doing it is the province of faith. Its work is still to look, wait, and hope; still to seek and cry and pray, and still to believe in the faithfulness of God to his promises, come what will, come what may. This is the fight, and this the victory of faith.

2. The next weapon is *prayer*, which indeed is intimately connected with faith; for it is the prayer of faith that overcomes. But prayer avails even when faith seems almost gone. Therefore though guilt may often stop the mouth; though sin may rise

mountains high; though the heart be filled with unbelief and infidelity; though doubt and fear seem wholly to possess it; still never give up crying to the Lord, seeking his face, casting yourself before his footstool of mercy, and wrestling with him until the morning light appears. Nor is it possible to walk in Christ except by prayer and supplication, for it is in this way that communion is maintained as well as obtained with him.

iv. But here let me give you a most needful caution. Not only must we make constant use of these two weapons, but we must learn to keep them bright and unsullied. Now this can only be done by *the fear of God* in a tender conscience; for if that grace of the Spirit be not in exercise, we are sure to fall into such things as darken the mind, obscure our evidences, grieve the Spirit, and thus so to speak, hinder Christ from revealing himself to the soul. Have you ever considered the solemn import of those words of the blessed Lord, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him?" (John 14:23.) If, then, instead of keeping Christ's words, and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, I walk in pride, self-righteousness, covetousness, worldliness, and sinful indulgence, how can I expect Christ to reveal himself to my soul? If I am doing things which his holy soul abhors; if I am in league with sin, Satan, and the world, his sworn enemies; if I am every day and all the day sowing to the flesh, or carried away from a life of faith and prayer by a careless, cold, and carnal spirit, how can I expect that Christ will manifest himself to my soul, or reveal his love and blood and grace to my heart? Are we not then bound by every gracious tie, in his strength, to crucify the flesh, fight against sin to our dying breath, resisting even to blood, to come out of the world without and within, and walk before God with a tender conscience, in humility, and godly fear? To do this is the difficulty; here we need the grace of God to work in us, to give us a strength not our own, and to fight our battles for us. But here is the blessedness of salvation by grace, that when we are altogether spent, out of breath and well nigh out of hope, and fall down before the Lord condemned in our conscience, then he will once more appear as



he appeared before, able to save and that to the uttermost. This makes us so desirous again to receive him in his love and blood, and ever to walk in him as at first received.

III.—But we come to our third point, the necessity and blessedness of being "*rooted and built up in Christ.*" The apostle here employs two figures to illustrate that establishment in Christ, which follows as a necessary fruit of walking in him as first received; the first is of a tree deeply rooted in the earth, and the other of a building reared up in strength and beauty proportionate to its foundation. Let us look at them separately; and in order to do so, let us take first the idea of a tree deeply rooted in the soil.

1. The root is necessary, not only to the growth, but to the very standing of the tree in the ground. I saw a striking instance of this one day last spring. When after my illness, I took for the first time, a walk in the Park, I there saw the effect of the storm which had passed over it in March, in the number of trees which were laid prostrate upon the ground. I never saw such a sight in my life; for they lay torn up by the roots, and some of them were very large trees, in all directions. But I could not help observing one thing, that none of the trees thus thrown down by the storm had any deep roots. Their roots appeared to have been chiefly upon the surface; there was no deep tap-root to hold them firm in their place; thus, they resembled the trees spoken of in Jude, "as plucked up by the roots." (Jude 12.) So it is with many that make a profession of religion: they have roots or what appear to be roots, but no tap-root. They have what I may call "running fibres" of an enlightened judgment whereby they take hold of the doctrines of grace; or a few shallow roots of natural conscience and temporary conviction which spread themselves into the letter of God's truth; and thus "they may spread themselves like a green bay tree." (Ps. 37:35.) Such a one, as Bildad speaks, may be "green before the sun, and his branch may shoot forth in his garden, for his roots may be wrapped about the heap" (Job 8:16, 17), and yet be altogether destitute of that deep, strong, and solid tap-root, which roots down and buries itself into the fulness

of the Son of God. It will be our mercy if our religion has a root to it, such as will stand the storm; for as the hurricane overthrew the trees in the Park, whose root was in the dust; so will the hurricane of God's wrath throw down those trees in the professing church, whose roots are fixed in the mere letter of truth, and not spiritually and experimentally in the Person, blood, and work of his dear Son.

But we may further observe that the root not only holds the tree firm in the ground, but is the main source of its nourishment, as the channel of communication between the stem and the soil; so that the tree is fed by the root as well as sustained by it in its place. Thus, it is with the root in the soul of a Christian. "For the root of the matter," says Job, "is found in me." (Job 19:28.) This is the tap-root of which I have spoken, which not only holds the tree of the soul firm in the truth, but roots down into, so as to receive vital nourishment out of the fulness of Christ. There is a natural affinity between the root and the soil, for they are made for and adapted to each other; and the consequence is that the deeper the soil and the richer its nature, the more firmly and deeply will the root bury itself in the ground and spread itself in all directions, as if it delighted in extracting all the nourishment possible out of the soil. There is a similar affinity between a believing soul and its most blessed Lord; for as a tree loves, so to speak, to root itself down into a deep and rich soil, that it may not only stand firm in the ground but draw nourishment out of the earth into every branch, leaf, fruit, and flower, so a believing heart, feeling the sweet suitability that there is in Jesus to every want, roots down more and more into him, so as to receive more and more out of his fulness grace for grace. It is a goodly sight to see a noble tree; and we may gather from the strength of the tree the strength of the soil, for only in deep and good soil will such trees grow. But look at the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified! What depth and richness there is in the heavenly soil in which they are planted! View the true, real, and eternal Sonship, the glorious Deity of Jesus, and view that Deity in union with his suffering humanity! What soil is there! What breadth to hold thousands and

thousands of noble trees! What depth for them to root in! What fertility to clothe them with verdure and load them with fruit! The most fertile natural soils may be exhausted, but this is inexhaustible. For can Deity be exhausted? Is not its very nature to be infinite? And when we view what our most blessed Lord now is at the right hand of God, what a perfect and complete Saviour he is for the soul to lay hold of! Again, as the more deeply and widely that a tree spreads its roots into the soil, the more nourishment does it suck up: so it is with a believing heart. The more Christ is laid hold of by faith, the more the soul roots down into him; and the firmer hold it takes of him, and the more deeply it roots into him, the stronger it stands, and the more heavenly nourishment it draws out of his fulness. This is being "*rooted in Christ.*" I spoke in the beginning of my sermon of some persons having a religion without Christ. Now this religion, if it be worthy of the name, is like a tree planted in shallow soil, where there is nothing but sand and stones and rock; what our Lord calls "no deepness of earth." Your religion must always be a shallow, deceptive, and ruinous religion if it has not Christ to root in, for then it must be rooted in self. But if it is planted and rooted in Christ, then there is a sufficiency, a suitability, a glorious fulness in him in which your soul may take the deepest root, and not only for time but for eternity; for such a faith can never be confounded, such a love never perish, and such a hope be never put to shame.

2. But there is also a being "*built up in him.*" Here the apostle changes the figure, and takes the idea of a house. How can a house stand that is not built upon a strong and solid foundation? A gentleman some time ago showed me a house in Stamford in which he had lived many years, of which a part of the front wall had been built upon the ground, without any foundation but the common soil. The builder was either too ignorant or too careless to lay a proper foundation in the rock. "And," said my informant, "the wonder is that the house did not fall and bury me in its ruins." But is not this a figure of many builders and many houses in religion? Instead of building upon the foundation which God himself has provided, they build upon self; and, however fair such

a house may look, not being built upon the rock, it will one day fall with a crash and bury under its ruins its miserable inhabitant. That our building may stand for eternity, we must build upon the rock of ages. God has laid "in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isai. 28:16); and upon that foundation we must build if we would stand for eternity. You must be well aware that in a building, especially one that is to be durable, the foundation is the most important part. If *that* be firm and good, the highest superstructure may be carried up; but if the foundation be defective, the higher the building the more certain the fall. On a solid rock, you may raise a lofty and beautiful superstructure without any fear; but no beauty in the building will save it from a crash if the foundation be in a swamp. So it is with Christ and the soul: he is a rock, and the soul that stands upon him stands safe for eternity. When, then, he is made known to the soul, he becomes the foundation of all its salvation and sanctification; and upon this foundation springs up a superstructure, which the Apostle calls being "built up in him." This superstructure consists in the graces of the Spirit, such as love, patience, humility, prayerfulness, and that spirituality of mind, which is life and peace. Thus there is a harmony between the foundation and the superstructure, for the same blessed Spirit who lays the foundation by revealing Christ to the heart, builds up the superstructure by the communication of his heavenly graces. These are "the gold, silver, and precious stones" of which the Apostle speaks as built upon the foundation, Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:12.) Thus by "walking in Christ," that is, in fellowship with him, as first received, there is a being "built up in him;" for as to "receive" him lays the foundation, to be "built up in him" rears the superstructure. O the mercy of being rooted in Christ, by a living faith, so as to be "a tree of righteousness," growing up into a holy conformity to his image; and to be built up on and in him as the only foundation that God has laid in Zion; and thus be made and manifested a temple of the Holy Ghost in which God himself dwells. (1 Cor. 4:19; 2 Cor.6:16.) May I not say, then, Look well to your religion? Examine the root; dig about the tree, and see whether your religion be rooted by the power of God in

the fulness of his dear Son. Examine too the foundation, remove the turf, shovel away the gravel, and see whether your house be built upon the rock. Has God himself laid the foundation? Is he building you up on the Son of his love? These are important questions. God enable us to give them a right answer.

IV.—Our fourth and last point is closely connected with the preceding: but I can only dwell upon it briefly. It is the being "*stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*"

1. There are those who seem tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine, and never to know anything of the power of truth in their own hearts. They seem scarcely to know whether we are saved by grace or by works; whether faith is the gift of God, or in the power of the creature. And others whose judgment is clear upon these points, yet as regards any testimony of their own interest in Christ, any assurance, or even any good hope of their own personal salvation, seem to have no real, well-grounded evidence that God has even begun a work of grace upon their hearts. I do not say that such have not the life of God in their souls, for we know how many who fear God are kept for a long time in uncertainty; but how can such be "*stablished in the faith?*" But apart from this special case, a religion without Christ will always be a religion like this—full of doubts, of uncertainties, and of conjectures. In fact, anything like an assurance of our state is condemned by them as presumptuous or deceptive. But how shall a man be able to face the dread realities of a dying bed, and the solemn prospects of a never-ending eternity, and yet be in utter uncertainty whether God has ever done anything by his grace for his soul? At such a solemn moment it will not do to be only hoping and hoping, and yet have no solid ground of hope; to have no evidence or clear testimony to satisfy the mind that God has had mercy upon us. Now I do not say that many a child of God is not much tossed up and down by doubt and fear, for his evidences are often beclouded, his mind dark, and the Comforter, that should relieve his soul, far from him. But, usually speaking, at these solemn moments he is not left long in this

miserable spot. The Lord does appear in a sweet promise to cheer and comfort his soul, or graciously enables him to look back to some testimony or manifestation given him in times past. But if a Christian is to walk before God in the light of his countenance, it must be by his being "rooted and built up in Christ," and this will enable him to be "stablished in the faith." O what an inestimable mercy it is for a man to know the truth for himself by divine teaching and divine testimony; to have it applied to his heart by a gracious influence and a heavenly power, so as to know for himself what salvation is, whence it comes, and above all to enjoy a sweet persuasion that this salvation has reached his heart. He will then know where to go in the hour of trouble, to whom to resort when sorrow and affliction come into his house, or illness or infirmity shake his tabernacle. He will not be a stranger to the throne of grace, nor to the sweetness of the covenant ordered in all things and sure. But there will be given him from above, out of the fulness of Christ, such grace and strength as will support him in the trying hour. It is by these gracious dealings upon his soul, that a believer becomes "stablished in the faith." Nay, the very storms through which he passes will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ, and thus become more established in the faith of him. As the same wind that blows down the poplar only establishes the oak; so the very storms which uproot the shallow professor only establish the child of God more firmly in the faith of the gospel. For though they may shake off some of his leaves, or break off some of the rotten boughs at the end of the branch, they do not uproot his faith, but rather strengthen it. It is in these storms that he learns more of his own weakness and of Christ's strength; more of his own misery, and of Christ's mercy; more of his own sinfulness, and of superabounding grace; more of his own poverty, and of Christ's riches; more of his own desert of hell, and more of his own title to heaven. Thus he becomes "stablished in faith," for the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on, goes on to fill up the original outline, and to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart, and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. The last fruit connected with this is "*to abound therein with thanksgiving.*" But time and strength are so far gone that I cannot enter upon this part of my text, except briefly to name that it comprehends the richest of all mercies and the consummation of all spiritual joy; for surely short of heaven there cannot be so holy, or so happy an employ as to abound in faith and hope and love and in the exercise of these heavenly graces; whilst here below to be full of thankfulness to the God of all our mercies, and thus even in this time state to bless and praise his holy name, and so crown him Lord of all.

## **Christ the Passover of His People**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,  
November 18, 1858

"Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor. 5:7, 8

You that read your Bibles will recollect the institution of the Passover in the land of Egypt, and you who are taught of the Spirit will remember that it had a typical and spiritual meaning. Well, with God's blessing, before we proceed with our text we will just look at the institution of that feast in Egypt. You will find that there were certain things in the paschal lamb and the mode of eating it which had a figurative allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house; and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb." Now, this lamb was to be without blemish, which points in a most blessed manner to the Lord Jesus Christ, for his humanity was without blemish; there was not a spot, speck, or wrinkle in it. It was a pure humanity, conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost; therefore, like ourselves, yet distinct in this, it was without sin, being conceived not by natural generation, but begotten by the express supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost upon her womb; therefore, it was not like ourselves, peccable, tainted with original sin, but perfect and spotless, completely holy and pure; thus it was figured by the paschal lamb, it being without blemish. He was also to be a male of the first year, just when he is about to become a sheep—not weak and feeble as in spring, but arrived at maturity, and this to show the power and



strength of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. "Ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats," which was to signify the fact of the Lord Jesus Christ dying for the Jew and the Gentile. "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month." Fourteen days before it was slain it was taken from the fold. This was figurative of the Lord Jesus Christ as being a man of sorrows; and as the lamb was separated from the flock for fourteen days, so Jesus was separated from sinners while he fasted, suffered, and wept here below. "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel," typical and figurative of the whole church of God, "shall kill it in the evening," margin, "between the two evenings," that is, before the sun dipped its glory in the sky, before the declination of the sun towards the west and its sinking under the horizon; thus showing that Christ came in the evening of a dispensation. What a dark and gloomy state of things was that when the Lord Jesus Christ hung upon the cross, figured by the withdrawal of the light of the sun! how God hid his face from his Son, through his displeasure at the sin which he bore on the cross. "And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it." The blood was to be taken and stuck upon the side posts and lintel, not on the threshold—no foot was to touch it; this was to show the application and sprinkling of this precious blood on the conscience. This was their safeguard, so that when the angel passed through Egypt and saw the blood sprinkled he passed by, and the persons in that house were safe; they might be sitting down, they might almost distinguish the rushing of the angel's wings and hear in the next house lamentation and mourning for the first born who had fallen; for all the first born of the land of Egypt were smitten, and all Egypt was filled with mourning and lamentation and woe, and yet not a single person died in the houses of the children of Israel; for the angel seeing the blood passed by. So it is with the saints of God. The blood sprinkled upon the conscience by the power of the Holy Ghost delivers them. People may die on the left hand and on the right; but the destroying angel will not touch them. They were to eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, to signify how the Lord Jesus Christ was roasted, so to speak, in the fire of God's wrath

against sin. Not a raw Christ, without sorrow and suffering, and without experiencing the anger of God burning him up in the flame of a holy indignation, not a Christ as a mere example; for that would be a raw lamb; but a Christ burnt with indignation and flame, the indignation of God against sin; that is the Christ whom we worship, and we feed upon him, for that he is the roasted lamb, sweet and savoury. "Nor sodden." It was to be roast, every part of it, the head and the legs with the purtenance thereof. But they were to eat it with unleavened bread, of which I shall afterwards show the spiritual meaning. "And with bitter herbs they shall eat it;" that is with the repentance of the soul, feeling what a bitter thing it is to sin against God. Never until we have tasted of the paschal lamb, and eaten of the bitter herbs, do we know what it is to repent of sin and loathe ourselves in dust and ashes, and no part of it was to be left to "remain until the morning," all was to be eaten that night. Nothing was to be reserved for magical purposes, that there might be no relic of superstition.

This is a mere simple sketch of the paschal lamb and how it was eaten, and now I proceed with our text in opening up of which I shall shew,

I.—First, how Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

II.—Secondly, that we are to keep the feast.

III.—Thirdly, how the feast is to be kept, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

IV.—Fourthly, the exhortation which follows from this, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened."

I.—"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." What a blessed thing it is when our souls can contemplate Christ as sacrificed for us, when we can look at the blessed Jesus bearing

our sins in his own body on the tree, and view the sacred stream of blood flowing from his brow in the garden, surcharged with sorrow, and on the cross pierced by the crown of thorns, and from his hands, feet, and side, and to have the Holy Spirit raising up a testimony in our soul that he endured this to save us from the bottomless pit. What a flame of love to him! What a flame of indignation against those sins that crucified the Lord of life and glory does it kindle. Without this there could have been no redemption, pardon, or peace. All the works of man could never have atoned for sin; oceans of tears, innumerable prayers repeated on bended knees, hard as iron, could never have put away a single sin. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." Nothing could take it away except the blood of the lamb; because the justice of God required satisfaction. As long as his sins are not blotted out by Jesus' blood, the sinner must die, that justice may not be infringed upon. But when Jesus came, the justice of God was satisfied, the debt was paid by his obedience to death, even the death of the cross, and now God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." God views every sin by virtue of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! what an intolerable load of sin lies upon a sinner's conscience when the Lord searches his heart as with candles, and spreads before his eyes the sins from childhood's hours to his present time of life, holds them up in the light of his countenance, curses them by the sentence of an inflexible law, and then brings all these sins upon the sinner's conscience. What can keep that sinner from destruction and despair? It is like a rapid river which breaks through the dam, which would sweep him away unless he was supported by the power of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ had borne his sins upon the cross. How we should have died in despair, and have fled from God's presence, as those that go down to the pit flee from the presence and indignation of the Lord by an act of violence and only throw themselves into an endless hell, but for the power of God, and all because we could not endure the opening up of the floods. Never think little of sin; think of it only as a most dreadful and damnable thing. But when we can view the sacrifice of the Lord

Jesus Christ as the passover, that God can pass over sin by virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then we can rejoice in the propitiation offered and in the sprinkling of the atoning blood upon the conscience; for as the children of Israel could rejoice in Egypt under protection of the blood sprinkled on the door posts, so the children of grace can rejoice under the covering of the protecting hand of God. They may see people falling on the right hand and on the left, death, eternal death may visit houses and families, but if the child of God only knows he is under the protection of atoning blood sprinkled upon his conscience, he can welcome death and say, "let death come when it will."

II.—But "let us," to go to our next point, "let us keep the feast." We are to keep the feast experimentally. How did they keep it? They fed upon the roasted lamb. Christ is our lamb, Christ as roasted in the flame of God's burning indignation against sin. The sacrifice has been offered, the Lamb has been roasted, now let us keep the feast. The first thing that is requisite to the keeping of the feast is to feel an hunger after it. We know that the choicest delicacy might be spread before our eyes; but if we had no appetite it would be all in vain. But how sweet the smell of roasted meat to a man pining for want of food, how distasteful to one who has no appetite! How loathsome is Christ crucified to a Pharisee; he is sick unto death and full of self-righteousness, such an one is not called upon to keep the feast, God has not bidden him, nor does the Holy Ghost say to him, "let us keep the feast." But how are we to keep the feast? First, by having a view of the roasted Lamb put upon the table, that is viewing Christ put upon the cross. Now come the bitter herbs. We must know something of the bitterness of sin, which will make the Lamb all the more savoury and sweet, the contrast being greater. This is real sauce that makes the Lamb sweet. So if a man knows nothing of the bitterness of sin, how can he feed upon Christ? To him there is no sweetness in the Paschal Lamb. On the one side of his mouth, the child of God has the joy and sweetness of the roasted Lamb, on the other side the bitter herbs; on the one side mourning over sin, on the other side rejoicing in Jesus. At the same moment with the same mouth he tastes the sweetness of

the Lamb and the bitter herbs. So the sinner that feeds upon Jesus feeds upon his sweetness, and at the same time feels the bitterness of his sins. Do you know what it is to feed upon a roasted Christ, and upon the bitter herbs of repentance at one and the same time? Again, they were to eat it with their loins girded, with their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and they were to eat it in haste as pilgrims all ready to go. And so the saint of God is to pass through this world as a pilgrim with his staff in his hand waiting to depart, knowing that he is only in this world for a time, waiting for a home of eternal bliss. Unless there is a turning from Egypt there is no passover; for it was in the house of bondage that the children of Israel cried and wept under their cruel taskmasters; but the time drew nigh when the Lord's promise was to be fulfilled, and they were bound to go forth for all eternity, and on that very night they ate the paschal lamb; no more were they to return to Egypt, but to go forth under the Lord's leading to the promised land. So with the saint of God, he is going on his pilgrimage to a heavenly country, where he is to see Christ face to face without a veil between.

III.—But the apostle tells us we are to keep the feast not with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. That was a very prominent point which the Jews had to observe in keeping the passover. Before that time they might eat unleavened bread. The leaven is something like our yeast or balm, though not exactly the same. The bread made from it is very good the first day or two, but it soon becomes sour. The leaven is a piece of the sour bread, which put among the fresh dough makes the whole ferment, and it acts in the same way as our balm or yeast. Well, this leaven was not to be used in making the bread for the passover. No leavened bread was to enter the houses of the children of Israel during the feast, before which there was a universal clearing out, and I understand in the houses of the Jews in London and elsewhere, at the time of this feast they do not leave a nook or corner unstirred, every crumb, every speck of dust and dirt is taken out of the house, and to this in a great measure is to be attributed the health of the Jews. It shows how rigorous of old were the children of Israel in

observing the passover. It is a remnant of an old custom. But we are to keep the feast, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness. Now there is a leaven in our hearts, as there was in the houses of the Jews, and if we keep the feast, we are not to keep it with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness. What is this old leaven in our hearts? First, there is a great deal of legal leaven, strong pride and self-righteousness, which is diffusing itself as the leaven spreads itself in the dough. Just as the leaven heaves up the dough, and every part is diffused in the lump, so this legal leaven, this pride and self-righteousness mixes itself with all a man thinks, says, or does, with his hearing, with his reading, with his preaching, and with his praying. Those who come to hear cannot hear without it, those who preach cannot preach without it, and those who pray cannot pray without it, any more than those who read can read without it. So that pride and self-righteousness work in everything we do. Whether we read, hear, sing, or pray, whether we are at home or abroad, alone or in company, oh! how this leaven is poisoning every word and work and contaminating the whole. And then there is the antinomian leaven, a principle of antinomianism, of licentiousness as well as legality, and these fit together. One moment we are thinking sin cannot damn us, and the next priding ourselves on our legal performances, as though there was something in that wherewith to commend ourselves to the court of heaven, and thinking very little of evil temper, evil words, and evil works. Thus we go on oscillating between the two. First comes the legal and pharisaical leaven, and then the antinomian licentiousness and we can hardly tell which makes the dough the most sour. If you know your hearts, you know I speak the truth. The apostle says, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened." It must be put out of the house. We must fight against it with tooth and nail, and if we get entangled in pharisaism we must confess it before God, and if we get ensnared in antinomianism we must beg of him to give us a deeper view of what his Son endured for sin. But there is not only a legal and an antinomian leaven; but there is also a leaven of malice and wickedness. Ah! how can we think that a child of God has malice! I want to know whether he has

not. If people injure you in business, don't you feel a malicious spirit heaving up? If a person has ridiculed you, or said something unpleasant to your feelings, and you get to hear about it, are you very mild and gentle, or do you feel a spirit of resentment, and if you could do them an injury upon the spot you would. You cannot endure malice, and yet there is this malicious spirit about you. It might not pass through your lips or hands, but still it is in your heart. Now, how can you keep the feast? You are to sweep out this malice, this callousness. If you have bad thoughts, unkind feelings, against any man or woman, and especially a child of God, how *can* you keep the feast? How *can* roasted lamb agree with malice; a pure, spotless, innocent Christ correspond with wishes against your enemies, so that you could almost malign them, and blacken their character? How can you keep the feast, and all the time have these malicious thoughts in your mind? There might not be leaven on the dining room table, but there might be a crumb or two in a corner of the house, if there were, there was still a condemnation. So though your leaven might not be on the table, it is in a corner of the house, it may be wickedness of any kind, sin, lust, pride or covetousness, yet here is the leaven, and one leaven works as well as another. It must not be so, we must not keep the feast with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness. The feast is to be eaten with unleavened bread, of which the first element is sincerity. If a man is not sincere, he has not taken the first step in religion. How much hypocrisy is there in men's breasts, in men's flattering words, how much insincerity, hypocrisy and vanity is there in the best of men! How hard it is to be sincere! If a person comes to see you, whether you want to see him or no, you are almost forced to say, "I am glad to see you to-day," and perhaps all the while are glad when he is gone, and there is a lie in your mouth! How hard it is to be sincere before God for a single moment. Have you ever had five minutes of sincerity before God? How impossible, and yet without it, what is man before God? What is he, if he carries a heart about with him that is not sincere? We expect it about worldly people. If a man was known not to be sincere, who could trust him with a five pound note, and oh! in the things of God to be insincere, how awful! The

saints of God often fear that they are hypocrites, they feel so much hypocrisy, they feel that they are insincere to the very core. I have felt it over and over again, it has tried me again and again. The feeling of fear lest you should have indulged hypocrisy, and lest you should prove to be an impostor, a stage player, anything but a child of God is very trying; but if we had not unleavened bread we should not so search and try ourselves. When we sweep hypocrisy out of the house as a thing loathed and contemned by God and man, when we have truth in the inward parts, truth in speaking, truth in acting and truth in all the relations of life, and truth before God, then we have the unleavened bread, and they who feed upon a precious Christ must put away all the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, of falsehood and insincerity.

IV.—Then we come to the exhortation which is our fourth and last point; "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are leavened." There is purging out, which is by affliction and furnaces, and deep waters where there is no standing, and by feeling the anger of God made manifest against sin. Though the Apostle is speaking to the Church we may take the words in a personal sense, and I ask, "Are you made sincere by the Spirit of God in you, and the eyes of God upon you, by deep afflictions, hot furnaces, and the presence of a heart searching God and by a heart searching ministry?" A heart made sincere is continually purging out the old leaven; hardly a day goes by but what he has the broom in his hands, like a cleanly woman or servant who always has the duster or brush in her hand to wipe away every speck of dirt, so the Christian takes the brush God puts into his hands and is continually purging out the old leaven from the inward house, for without this dusting and purging there is no feeding upon a precious Christ. What a continual searching of heart does it require to keep out all this which is so disgusting in the eyes of a holy, heart searching God! By all these things the soul is kept alive in the hands of God. Dust is ever settling. Every day brings the dust and every day brings the duster. It is so naturally, and it is so with the Christian. There is in his inward house, there must be, a regular sweeping that



the Master may sit down with him, and feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But those that eat the passover here will be privileged to sit down hereafter with the Lamb, and will see him in the light of one unclouded day.

## **Christ's Resurrection the Standard and Measure of the Church's Regeneration**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Afternoon, September 16, 1867

"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." Ephesians 1:19, 20

Many persons complain how uninteresting the Epistles are, and assign as a reason that it is so difficult to understand their meaning. "The Gospels," say they, "are quite different. We can read again and again the parables of the blessed Lord and the miracles which he wrought. We understand their plain, simple language without any difficulty; they deeply interest us, and the more we read, the more pleasure we seem to take in them. And so with the Sermon on the Mount: we can read it with pleasure, for we can understand its meaning, and can see a clearness and a force in every word. But O these Epistles! When we come to election, justification, sanctification, and other high doctrines laid down in them, we seem fairly put to a stand. Our minds get puzzled, our judgment perplexed; and we take little interest in what we read, for really we are quite at a loss to understand their meaning." Now, whence arise these complaints? Are they well founded or are they ill founded? Are the Epistles difficult or are they easy to understand; and do these complaints spring out of sloth and indifference, or are they in some measure founded upon truth? To help us to form a right judgment upon this important point, for it is closely connected with an experimental knowledge of the truth of God, let me bring a figure or two before you. Take, first, that of a child learning to read. He manages pretty well words of one syllable, and by and by words of two syllables; but after a little time he comes to words of three syllables. "O these long words, O these hard words!" he cries, and his little heart begins to swell and his eyes to fill with tears: "I never can, I

never shall be able to master these long, hard words!" Or take another figure, which may help us still to the same idea: Look at a boy at school—he gets on pretty well with his numeration, addition, and subtraction, and can do an easy sum in multiplication. By and by, however, he comes to the rule of three, or practice, vulgar fractions, or the extraction of the square or cube root: "I never can understand it; I never can understand it; I never can master it, I am sure I can't!" Cowed, therefore, by this seeming difficulty, he scarcely makes the attempt to put pen to paper or to apply his mind to his task, and loses all interest in his arithmetic. Now, the Gospels are the beginning of Christian instruction; they are the A, B, C, or the words of three letters; or a sum in addition or subtraction, easy to be mastered by a school-boy. But does that show that because words of three syllables are very hard for a child to master, nobody is ever to read a word of three syllables long; or because the rule of three is a wonderful puzzle to a school-boy, that nobody is ever to learn it? So it is in grace. We begin with the simple lessons of divine truth which are laid down in the Gospels; but as we are led on by the blessed Spirit—we cannot attain it by our wisdom—but as led on by the Spirit from lesson to lesson, these Epistles, which were to us in our early days like a rule of three sum to a school-boy, begin to open up their spiritual meaning. We learn to take a new and increasing interest in them, and as we are enabled more and more to understand them, we see in them something far deeper than there was in the Gospels; as the school-boy, when he has mastered it, finds out that there is something far deeper in a rule of three sum than in a common sum in addition. He begins to perceive also that he has already, by learning multiplication and division, made a preparation for the rule of three and other advanced rules, and that he has only to go forward in the same track to master them also. Thus the Epistles are really only advanced Gospels; and there is scarcely a doctrine or a truth laid down in the former which is not to be found in the latter. All the seeming difficulties of the Epistles will, to one who understands and believes the Gospels, be removed as the blessed Spirit guides him into all truth; and he will see and feel in them a beauty and a blessedness which I have long seen and felt but cannot describe.

The complaint made against the Epistles might also be made against the prayers of Paul. I have no doubt that the prayer, a part of which I unfolded this morning, and the remaining part of which I hope to open this afternoon, has wonderfully puzzled people of the same complexion as those who have been so perplexed by the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Colossians, or Ephesians. They cry out, like the school-boy before a long rule of three sum: "I never can, I never shall understand these long prayers of Paul." What does he mean by praying to God to bestow on the saints at Ephesus "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ?" What does he mean by "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what was the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints?" "Why," say they, "We don't pray like that: we pray for God to have mercy upon us, and forgive us our sins, to plant his fear in our heart, to make our conscience tender, and keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us. These are our prayers." And very good prayers too. I can tell you, if it will give you any comfort, that they are such as I often put up for myself. But we must not think there are no higher, deeper, and better prayers than those which we often offer before the throne of grace, and no richer and greater blessings to be desired and enjoyed than we usually pray for. Indeed this is one of the great advantages of such prayers as Paul's that not only do they make us ashamed of our own, but they show us that there are blessings in the heart and hand of God to be bestowed upon us which would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, if made known to our souls. Paul was not for always keeping the saints of God at the bottom of the class or in the lowest form; he was for leading them on into the unsearchable riches of Christ. His desire was that they might be spiritually and experimentally led into the fulness of the everlasting gospel, that being lifted out of the mire and mud of our wretched nature, and what he elsewhere calls "the beggarly elements of the world," they might be banqueted with heavenly food and be filled even to overflowing with the riches of God's grace revealed in the gospel before they entered into the

possession of their mansions of eternal glory.

With this introduction to the subject now before us, I shall now, with God's help and blessing, proceed to unfold the gracious truths contained in our text. I shall not, however, confine myself within its boundaries, but shall take a larger view so as to comprehend, as far as I can, the whole of the remaining part of the prayer of the apostle which I did not unfold this morning. In looking at which, and endeavouring to open it to your spiritual apprehension, and thus breaking to you the bread of life, I shall

I.—*First*, speak of the *resurrection* and *exaltation* of Christ, and especially as made *head over all things to the Church*.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall, as the Lord may enable, show that the exceeding *greatness of God's power* to us-ward who believe is not only the fruit of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, but that it is also the *standard* and the *measure* of it.

If you will give me your ears this afternoon, and pay attention to the thread of my discourse, and if the Lord enable me to open up our subject in any clear, comprehensive, and effectual manner, I hope before we shall part at the close of our service, you will see its meaning; and, what is far better, will find some things brought forward which will harmonise with your own experience of the truth, and thus be able to set to your seal not only that I have rightly interpreted the oracles of God, but that the word from my lips has the authority of God commending it with power to your conscience.

I.—I was endeavouring to show you this morning some of the *fruits* which, according to the prayer of the apostle, would be the result of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Following in the track of the prayer of the man of God, I showed you that they were four: 1, first, an enlightening of the eyes of the understanding; 2, secondly, a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; 3, thirdly, a knowledge of the hope that is stored up in the bosom of

our calling; and 4, fourthly, a knowledge of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints.

But the blessed catalogue of the fruits and results of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is not exhausted by these four fruits. The apostle, therefore, goes on to pray that the Ephesian saints "might know what is the *exceeding greatness of his power* to us-ward who believe."

But to bring more clearly before our eyes, and to certify more fully to our hearts the greatness of this power, he compares it with other manifestations of the power of God, and especially those manifestations in which God displayed not so much the power of his hand as the power of his grace. Let me explain the difference. God is Almighty in power. He has but to speak and it is done; to command, and it stands fast. He commanded the world into being; he bade the day-star know its place, and at his Almighty fiat light broke in upon the dark waters of chaos. When he spake, the sun appeared in the sky to rule the day, and the full-orbed moon followed in his train to rule the night. Every thing that meets our eyes day by day, be it bird or beast, be it tree, fruit, or flower, is the product of God's creative hand. We ourselves, in our wondrous bodies, and our not less wondrous souls, are standing monuments of the Almighty power of God. But the apostle does not select these instances of the power of God to illustrate the riches of his grace, and exemplify the wonders of his heavenly kingdom. He does not pray that the Ephesian saints might know the exceeding greatness of the power of God according to the working of that mighty power whereby he created heaven and earth and all things therein. He does not measure the works of his grace by that standard. He does not lay down any of those visible and palpable evidences of the Almighty power of God which creation furnishes as instances from which we might learn the greatness of his power in the dispensation of mercy. But he takes as his measure and standard the invisible works of God in grace, works no less demonstrative of his power, but manifested in a way altogether different from his creative energies, and displaying his omnipotent might in a higher,

deeper, and tenderer relationship to his dear Son, and to the church in him, than the ordinary evidences of his Almighty power which are visible in creation to the common eye.

i. The first work of this description which the apostle takes as his measure and standard of the work of faith in the heart with power, is the working of the mighty power of God in the *resurrection* of Christ. Let me quote the exact words, for there is wonderful force as well as depth in them: "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." According to our translation, the words run, "according to the working of his mighty power," but in the original the language is stronger still; and of this we have some intimation in the margin, where we read "the might of his power." The words might be literally rendered, "according to the active energy of the strength of his might." It seems as if this man of God, in the depth of his enlarged heart, in the full sway of his mental and spiritual faculties, laboured as it were to bring before us, in the strongest and clearest manner, the mighty power of God which he puts forth when he works faith in our souls to believe in his dear Son. And that we might have a clearer conception of the exceeding greatness of this power he brings before us, as its measure and standard, another stupendous act of gracious power—that, namely, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

But you will say, perhaps, "I don't see that there was such a wondrous display of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead. Did not Christ himself raise Lazarus? Did he not raise also the son of the widow at Nain? Did not even Peter raise Dorcas from the dead? Did not Elijah and Elisha do the same miracle? Where was, then, the mighty miracle in raising Christ from the dead? Was he not the Son of God? and was there more difficulty in raising himself than in raising Lazarus?" Yes; for if there were not, where is all the argument of the apostle gone? What is become of the standard whereby he measures the work of faith

with power, and what is the meaning of those strong expressions to which I have called your attention? Depend upon it, therefore, that there is something deeper in this subject than you have yet learned to understand if you think that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was an act of no greater power than the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. Let me, then, endeavour to explain this point; and in order to get a clear conception of it we must not only see under what circumstances Christ died, but we must take a view of who Christ was, of the work he had to do, how he did it, and the honour and glory that God put upon him as having finished the work he had given him to do.

Now in viewing the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we must look at our blessed Lord expiring on the cross, and thence borne to his grave. How did he die, and how was he buried? Apparently, under the curse of the Almighty, for by dying upon the tree he was made a curse for us; and by thus being made sin, or a sin-offering for us, he died with all the weight of our sins upon his head. The prophet, therefore, speaks, "He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isai. 53:8); and Peter tell us, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24.) These mountains, therefore, of imputed sin rested, so to speak, upon his sacred head, and had to be removed before he could be raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. Not but what sin was put away by the bloodshedding of the Lamb before he gave up the ghost, for he cried out before he committed his departing spirit into the hands of God, "It is finished;" but death was necessary to complete his offering; for not only without shedding of blood is no remission of sins, but without the death of the victim there is no sacrifice. Our Lord therefore said, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" and the apostle declares, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The law demanded death, for its words are, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," Christ, therefore, "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3); "was delivered"—that is, to death—"for our offences;" when "we were yet without strength, in due time died for the ungodly;" and thus "God



commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." All these passages clearly show that there was a necessity that Christ should not only shed his precious blood that we might "be justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9), but also die, that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10), bloodshedding and death constituting the two necessary and effectual elements of sacrifice. But though our blessed Lord was made a curse for us, and thus by dying on the tree seemed to die under the wrath of the Almighty, we must ever bear most carefully in mind that he did not die as the ungodly die, under the wrath of God, for he was always his beloved Son. He never lost Sonship, nor did the Father lose Fatherhood. It was a voluntary sacrifice, both on his and on the part of his heavenly Father, for he came to do the will of God. "Then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.) But when we view the loads of sin that were put upon his head, for the prophet testifies: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or to adopt the marginal reading, "made the iniquities of us all to meet on him." (Isai. 53:6); when we view the curses of a fiery law which consumed his heart, making it like wax, (Psalm 22:14,) and the anger of the Almighty, due to imputed sin, which he had to sustain as the sin-bearer of his people, then we see how the Lord to the eye of sense sank, as it were, into the grave as if borne down by the sins of millions. It was not really so, for sin was effectually put away, atoned for, and expiated before the Lord closed his eyes in death. We must not think for a single moment that sin and the wrath due to sin followed Jesus to the tomb, or that, as some have unadvisedly said our sins sank him into the grave, and that he left them all there when he rose from the dead. But to the eye of sense, in the sight and opinion of the Jewish people, according to the malice of his implacable foes, he died a malefactor. I wish to lay down this point with great care, for some through ignorance or inadvertence, have spoken as if imputed sin followed Christ even to the grave. No; he has put away sin fully, wholly, and finally by his blood-shedding before he gave up the ghost. The wrath of God which had rested on him for six hours, like a dark and gloomy cloud, was over and gone; and

he died under the approving smile of his Father and his God. For he was a voluntary sacrifice. No man took his life from him. He did not die from the sufferings of the cross; his heart was not literally broken, as would-be wise physicians have said and written; for to show that he died in the fulness of his strength, he cried with a loud voice just before he gave up the ghost. But he laid down his life that he might take it again, as the highest act of obedience to God, and the deepest act of love to man. He was, therefore, not interred as a malefactor, but was buried honourably in the garden in a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid, to show that though he was numbered with the transgressors and died a malefactor's death, he had not a malefactor's grave.

These thoughts may help us to see in what way the resurrection of Christ from the dead was a display of the power of God's grace. You will observe my words, "a display of the power of God's grace." It was not a display of God's creative power, or of any such operation of his hands as his visible works furnish; but it was a manifestation of the mighty power of his grace towards his dear Son and the church in him. By raising Christ from the dead, God made it openly manifest that his offering was accepted, that sin was put away, the law justified, divine justice honoured, the character of God fully cleared, every perfection harmonised, and every seemingly jarring attribute reconciled and magnified. It was also a proof that through death our gracious Lord had destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. 2:14.) By it also Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power." (Rom. 1:4.) It was the fullest testimony that could be afforded, that the same Jesus whom his enemies had taken and by wicked hands had crucified and slain, was what he had declared himself to be, the Son of God, and that as a proof of it, God had raised him up from the dead, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:23, 24.) But it was also a pledge of the future resurrection of all his saints; "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:21, 22.)

But take another view of the subject. View Christ as the covenant Head of his church and people. See how heaven is one day to be filled with countless myriads of saints, all conformed to his glorious image, all saved, eternally saved, all sanctified, eternally sanctified, all interested in his great undertaking, all washed in the fountain of his precious blood, and all clothed in the robe of his imputed righteousness. See what a work there was here to do. It was not raising Christ as one man; merely raising his sacred body from the dead. It was raising him as the head of millions, the head of the church; and in fact was a raising of all his elect people together at the same moment with him. The apostle, therefore, says, "God hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together;" and again, "and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) He therefore calls upon us (Col. 3:1) as "risen with Christ, to seek those things which are above."

If we put all these things together we shall see what a display of the power and grace of God it was to raise Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Christ, then, is the greatest miracle earth ever saw, because it was a miracle of grace as well as a miracle of power; a miracle of mercy as well as a display of omnipotent strength; a miracle in which all salvation was laid up; a miracle the depths of which can never be plumbed, the joys of which can never be fathomed, and the glory of which can never be fully exhausted or enjoyed.

ii. Now, when God had raised Christ from the dead, "he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." I proposed to bring this before you as the *exaltation* of our gracious Lord.

This exaltation of Jesus is in some respects—I purposely qualify my words—is in some respects almost a greater miracle of power and grace than the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For how is the Lord set at God's right hand in the heavenly places? *In our*

*nature.* This is the unfathomable mystery. Christ did not go back to heaven altogether as he came from heaven. He came, it is true, as the Son of God, and he went back as the Son of God. In that point there is no difference; but he took into heaven the human nature which he assumed upon earth into union with his glorious Deity and divine Sonship; and in that nature as God-Man, he was exalted to the right hand of the Father after his resurrection from the dead. This is that stupendous mystery; this is that mighty miracle, a miracle not only of power, but of grace and love which we have to believe, to admire, and to adore; for it is a mystery which can only be apprehended by faith. God and man in one Person; the infinity of Deity with the finiteness of manhood; all that God is in his essential attributes, and all that man is in his natural perfections; human nature united to a divine nature, glorified, of course, beyond all conception, but human nature still; illuminated with all the glory of Deity, and yet retaining all the several parts and essence of a true and pure humanity. This is the great mystery of godliness; this is that which we are called upon and invited to receive in faith, and hope, and love. Here we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; here we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, presented to our view and acceptance in the word of truth, as the High Priest over the house of God. When faith receives and believes in him as thus exalted to the right hand of power, it finds its home and resting place. Thus in believing in the Lord of life and glory, we do not believe in him simply as God, nor simply as the Son of God, but we believe in him, embrace him, and adore him as God-Man, the Mediator between God and man. This is the sublime mystery which fills heaven with glory, and the hearts of those who believe in his name with holy joy. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

But see also how a view of this risen and exalted Lord bears upon our personal experience. See what access faith in this mystery gives us to the throne of grace. We often come there fearing, trembling, shrinking, guilty. We have often to put our mouth in the dust, as if only just able to breathe out a cry for mercy; only just able to confess our sins and beg for forgiveness of them.

Shut up in our feelings by legal bondage, we lose sight of "the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel," just as if we had never come unto mount Zion, but were still wrapped up in the blackness and darkness of Mount Sinai, which, like a thick cloud, hides from our view the Mediator on his gracious throne. But O, could we more view with believing eyes who and what Jesus is at the right hand of the Father; could we see how he retains in the highest heavens all the tenderest and most exquisite feelings of his sacred humanity when upon earth; could we believe that we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, how much more boldly should we come to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. But blinded by the remnants of the old veil flapping over our heart, we lose sight of his compassion, pity, and tenderness to poor sensible sinners. We forget how he himself travelled through this vale of tears and watered earth with his sorrowful eyes, and that with all the power of Godhead he still retains a human heart. O, could we really believe that such a God-Man was at the right hand of the Father, an Intercessor ever perfuming the courts of heaven with the incense of his meritorious work upon earth, ever presenting before the eyes of the Father the efficacy of his blood and righteousness, how many a sweet entrance we should find unto the throne of grace; how our hand would stretch itself forth to take hold of the benefits and blessings, mercies and favours which are enthroned in the bosom of a Mediator like this; and how, instead of shrinking back appalled by our sins, we should venture nigh, seeing there is a high priest over the house of God who has consecrated for us a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

iii. But to pass on to another stupendous miracle of mercy and grace connected with Christ's resurrection and exaltation. "All things were *put under his feet*, and he was given to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

It is as if the apostle laboured for language to express the exaltation of the Son of God as God-Man Mediator. How his pen traces word after word, all of the strongest and most expressive character, and yet it seems as if the strongest words were feeble to set forth the greatness of the mystery. Observe the strength and majesty of his language, "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." First we have "principality," then we have "power," then we have "might," then we have "dominion;" and as if all this were not enough, then, "every name that is named," or as it might be rendered, could be named "not only in this world (that is this age or dispensation) but also in that which is to come;" as if he would look forward into a boundless eternity and view our blessed Lord exalted above every being and every existence for ever and ever. Angel and archangel, burning seraph and blazing cherubim, with all the hierachy—are under his feet. The God-Man is exalted above them all; and our nature, in union with him, is exalted above the highest created being, even in the heaven of heavens. This is the great mystery; not that the Son of God, as the Son of God, is exalted over the highest and most glorious of angelic beings, for he is by nature greater then they all, and they are but creatures of his omnipotent hand. As the Son of God, he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," and therefore "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." But the mystery is his exaltation in *our nature*—the exaltation of humanity, the naturally inferior, above all angelic, the naturally superior nature.

And it is in this nature, as thus exalted above the highest heavens, that "God hath put all things under his feet." How rich, how comprehensive is this dominion of Christ. Look at the words "all things" and see what they embrace. Do they not include all earthly things as well as all heavenly things? Therefore, all trials, all afflictions, all temptations, all sins and all sorrows, all foes and all fears, men, angels, devils; things present, things past, things to come, all are put under his feet; for he must reign until all his enemies are made his footstool. This was the Father's ancient

promise to him, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1.) This promise he fulfilled when he raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. There he still sits; there he reigns and rules. The Lord still sends the rod of his strength out of Zion; there he still rules in the midst of his enemies, and in spite of them; and there what is better still, he makes his people willing in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; for he still has all the dew and freshness of his youth, never waxing old by age, nor decaying by lapse of time.

Now, could we more frequently and believingly fly by faith to this exalted God-Man; could we see more clearly by faith the heart of Jesus beating in love to, and sympathy with his afflicted family; could we look more closely and continuously within the veil and realise more of that wondrous power with which God invested him when he put all things under his feet, how it would soothe us under, and alleviate the pressure of our various and complicated trials, temptations, afflictions, and sorrows! They often master us; but can they master him? Loads of trials and afflictions laid upon our backs are enough to crush our shoulders; but can they crush the shoulders of him upon whom God hath laid help as one that is mighty? Our sins borne by ourselves would crush body and soul into the dust, and not only into the dust of death, but into the flames of hell. But can our sins crush the Almighty arm and eternal shoulders of the glorified God-Man, who bore them away when he suffered upon the cross? Your temptations you cannot manage: they are too strong for you, and you fear lest some day you should fall a prey to them. But are your temptations too strong for his feet to crush, under which feet all things are put? Are your temptations too strong for his hands to remove from you, whose hands can bear up a world? Your afflictions, your distresses in providence and in grace, borne by yourself, you may well succumb to. O, if you could but bring them to the burden-bearer! O, if you could but believe that underneath are the everlasting arms! O, if you could see the raised feet of our blessed Redeemer ready to be put down upon your afflictions and

sorrows, and his hand stretched to lift the burden from your shoulders and put it upon his own, how it would lighten your griefs and enable you to bear up under a weight which, without this power, would crush you!

iv. But we have not yet exhausted our subject, nor drained dry the fountain of truth that flows forth so freely from the heart and pen of the man of God. He tells us that not only hath God put all things under Christ's feet, but *"gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*

By the word "fulness" we may understand completeness, that is, the complete state of the church, viewed as the aggregate body of the members of Christ. Thus Christ mystical would not be complete unless the church were with him in glory. In this sense, the church is the fulness of him, or the completion of him who filleth all in all. So that when the head and the members are brought together in the blessed realms of eternity, the glorious head will be in manifest union with the glorious members, and the glorified members in manifest union with the glorified head and then the body will be complete and Christ be all in all.

But though this in its strict fulfilment is still future, yet in the mind of God, and as viewed now by him, the church, in her militant state, her present suffering condition, is still the body of Christ; and he is made head over all things now for the present benefit as well as for the future glory of that body. But though full of blessed truth, I cannot now dwell upon this point.

Have you, then, gathered up from my faint and feeble description any idea of those divine realities? Have you walked step by step with me in the way which I have laid down this afternoon? Is your understanding sufficiently enlightened, is your heart sufficiently wrought upon by the power of God's grace to see the resurrection of Christ as I have described it, and to feel some measure of its power in your soul? Have you ever beheld by the eye of faith the exaltation of Christ as I have traced it out: and seen how he is



made head over all things to the church, as I have declared it from the word of truth?

II.—Now, then, let me take you a step onward. Let us advance a little further into this field of sweet meditation and divine contemplation which I proposed to lay before you as the *second* leading branch of my subject. Let us not always be stumbling over our numeration table, and doing a little sum in addition, or in subtraction, and unable to get beyond putting two and two together, or getting by heart the first part of the multiplication table. Let us see whether our faith can embrace some of those divine mysteries which are the food of living souls, those heavenly realities which I have this afternoon laid before you. Was it not the earnest prayer of the apostle that the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward who believe, according to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ, as I have just described? But, perhaps, you will give me the same answer as I before put into your mouth, "Well, I don't see that there need be such a mighty work in a man's soul. God has only to speak and it is done. All he has to do is to convince a man of sin, and then lead him to Christ. Why then need there be all this labouring of language, as if the work of grace upon a sinner's soul were a mighty work such as can only be paralleled by the resurrection of Christ, his ascension into heaven, and his exaltation at the right hand of the Father?" Of course, if you take your idea of regeneration from penny tracts upon conversion, and "coming to Jesus," such as ladies carry in their baskets and leave every week at house after house of the poor of the parish, I am not surprised that you have no right ideas of the work of God upon the soul, and view regeneration as easily accomplished by man's own will as by a little water sprinkled upon a child's face. But if God the Holy Ghost has taken you in hand and wrought with divine power upon your soul, you will find that to believe in Christ with a saving faith is not a work to be described in a penny tract, hawked about from house to house for every body to do, as a pedlar carries about a string of ballads which any one may learn to sing. Coming to Christ, knowing Christ, believing in Christ, and

obtaining peace in believing, are not like a child's lesson which any body may understand, and every body perform if he has a mind. The peace which God gives, the peace which flows like a river, the peace which passeth all understanding, is not to be got by reading the words in the Bible, or even believing that they are the words of God and that we are bound, as people tell us, to take God at his word. All such faith, as I cannot say is described, for it is not described at all, but as is assumed and enforced in such books as "Come to Jesus," is but natural and notional; not such a faith as the apostle speaks of when he prays that the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe. According to the apostle's words, to believe in Christ is a mighty act wrought in a sinner's conscience by a divine, mysterious, and supernatural power, worthy from its greatness as well as its importance to be placed side by side with the power displayed in raising Christ from the dead.

But let us look at this important point a little more closely. Have you ever seen, have you ever considered, have you ever felt the state to which sin has reduced man? Did you ever see light in God's light as regards the dreadful evil of sin, and what you are as a sinner before him? Did you ever feel the burden of sin upon a guilty conscience? Did you ever know the wrath of God due to you as a transgressor? Did you ever see what God's holy law is, what is its curse, and how it discharges its thunders and lightnings without pity and without mercy, without remorse and without recall? And with all this sense of sin upon your conscience, have you seen and felt your thorough helplessness, miserable inability, and total impotency to remove a condemning law out of the way, or believe in Jesus with a faith which brought any relief to your mind? And then, as you lay under the burden of a guilty conscience, the fears of going to hell, with the dread of the Almighty, pressing hard upon your spirit, have you seen and felt how perfectly helpless you were to save your own soul, or bring into your heart any evidence or testimony of your interest in God's great salvation? Now, if you have been thus dealt with, and know from the testimony of your own conscience what a

wreck and ruin you are through sin original and sin actual, you will not think regeneration is a work so easy that it can be wrought with a touch of a little finger. Men go about preaching and writing of "coming to Jesus," and devout women carry here and there their little books and tracts, inviting all the world to come, as if coming to Jesus were the easiest thing in the world, and as readily done as coming to breakfast or coming to dinner. So it is, according to the way in which they themselves have come to Jesus, when they make it manifest by their ignorance of the power of God, and by their own worldly lives that they know nothing experimentally and savingly either of Jesus or what it is to come to him. According to the apostle's testimony, to believe in the Son of God with a saving faith is the mightiest work that God can do in a sinner's heart short of, and excepting the mighty power which he displayed when he raised his dear Son from the dead. The two run parallel with each other. Resurrection and regeneration go together. Regeneration is the proof of Christ's resurrection, and the power of regeneration is measured by the power of Christ's resurrection. Had no power been put forth in his resurrection, no power could have been put forth in your regeneration. So that regeneration is not only the proof of Christ's resurrection, but the resurrection of Christ is the measure and standard of the regeneration of the saints.

I endeavoured to show you just now, the obstacles and hindrances which lay in the way of Christ's resurrection; such as the anger of God due to transgressors, the curse of a broken law, the loads of sin laid upon the head of the great Mediator, the difficulty of satisfying every demand of inflexible justice, and reconciling to the minutest degree every apparently jarring attribute of the glorious Jehovah, all which must be done or Christ must be in the grave. If Justice could say, "I am not yet satisfied;" If the Law could say, "I am not yet fulfilled;" if Holiness could say, "I have not sufficiently been made clear," Christ never could have risen from the dead. But justice being satisfied, the law being magnified, holiness fully cleared, and every perfection of God harmonised, the way was then open that God could and did raise his dear Son from the dead, and he could

and did set him at his own right-hand in heavenly places, as the Mediator between God and man; and he could and did make him "head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And thus by his resurrection and exaltation, he made a way for regeneration. Regeneration never could have taken place unless the work of redemption had first been accomplished.

Now we have to sink in our measure as Christ sank in his, if we are to be raised with him in resurrection. Did he sink under the imputed wrath of God, the curse of the law, the demands of justice, and the burden of sin laid upon him? So must we sink also, for we have to die with Christ as well as live with Christ. The apostle therefore says, "I am crucified with Christ," and tells us that "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" drawing from it this inference, that "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Rom. 6:5-8.) And not only so, but we must be buried with Christ as well as die with him, for we are "buried with him by baptism into death"—not to lie there, as he lay not there, but "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Thus was Christ raised by the mighty power of God? So must we be raised by that same mighty power. Do you not see from this that Christ's resurrection was a pledge, a representation, a measure, and a standard as our regeneration, and that we must be conformed to him in death if we are to be conformed to him in his resurrection from the dead?

Now, this is the grand lesson which we have to learn, the divine secret which we have to know, according to the apostle's prayer in our text; for the breathing of Godward, was, that we might "know 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." Let me then, take a poor sinner yearning to know it, and show him how it is to be made known in his soul. Is not this his inquiry; "Can my sins be pardoned? Have I sinned beyond the reach of all

forgiveness? My iniquities, I know, are infinite: there is not a law which I have not broken, there is not a command which I have not violated; I have sinned by night, I have sinned by day; in thought, in word, in action, have I sinned, and that repeatedly, and that awfully, and that horribly, and that damnably." If this be the feeling of your soul, you want something that can relieve you from the guilt, the weight, and the pressure of these sins charged upon your conscience. It is a weight you never can remove off your own shoulders, a burden you can never take off your back, a pressure you cannot throw off your conscience; for if you do, it will come back again. But now, see the way in which God does it. By the same mighty power wherewith he raised Christ from the dead, he speaks a word to that poor sinner's soul; and as his word, so to speak, raised his dear Son from the dead, so the word of the King where there is power, raises up the soul from guilt, condemnation, and death when God puts forth the power of his word by applying it to the heart. This, then, we have to know; and it is often a great comfort and relief to the family of God to know that the whole work is finished, accomplished, and done; that they have not their own sins to atone for, their own righteousness to justify them, or their own work to recommend them to the favour of God; but that it is a finished work by the blood-shedding of the Son of God, and that when he died, all the sins of his people were cast behind God's back. Now when they see and feel the exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising his dear Son from the dead, it raises up a sweet hope and a blessed testimony in their souls that the fruit and effects of his death and resurrection may and can visit their breasts; that they have not to atone for their own sins; they have not to work out their own righteousness; they have not to reconcile themselves to God; they have not to satisfy the demands of a righteous law; they have not to pay the debt themselves, but that all **his [was?]** paid for them by the blood of the Lamb.

So again, when they see by the eye of faith Christ's glorification at the right hand of the Father, and view the exalted God-Man at his right-hand, how it draws forth their faith unto and upon him. And as it draws forth their faith upon him, virtue flows out of his

fulness into their soul, to relieve their wants, remove their fears, support their troubled minds, and bring a blessing into their hearts. When, for instance, upon our bended knees, faith is raised up in our hearts to look unto the Son of God in our nature at the right-hand of the Father, and we can believe in his blood and righteousness as a finished work, what relief it gives to the burdened conscience, what hope it creates in the mercy of God, what an inward persuasion that Jesus having done all that was given him to do, there is nothing left for us but to believe and take the comfort of it. When, then, one who truly fears God, having been long exercised by the burden of his own sins is enabled by the power of divine grace to view by faith the Son of God in his nature at God's right hand, it brings into his heart a testimony that God has accepted the work of his dear Son, that his anger has been propitiated, and the way to heaven made clear.

But there is something more still, for as his faith embraces the solemn mystery of a crucified, risen, and exalted Christ, and hope casts its anchor within the veil, love flows forth to so lovely a Redeemer; for as love flows in, so love flows out. It is thus he proves the exceeding greatness of God's power, in setting Christ in our nature at his own right-hand.

Again, when he can see by the eye of faith how Christ is made head over all things to the Church, then he begins to drink into the fulness of Christ, having all his wants supplied out of that ever-flowing fulness of grace and glory; and he sees by faith that as he is made head over all things to the Church, he will put under his feet every foe and every fear, will fulfil every promise, and never leave him until he has done that which he has spoken to him of.

And now, my dear friends, for a parting word by way of application. Depend upon it, whether you know these things or not, they are very weighty truths, very solemn realities, and your religion, sooner or later, must be able to embrace them, if you have, or are to have a faith that will save your soul. They must

be the food of your faith, the strength of your hope, and the source of your love, if your faith is to have any work, your love any labour, and your hope any endurance. The faith that rests short of believing in, laying hold of, and resting upon the Son of God in his finished work, will not be the work of faith that God will own and crown with his approbation; the love that never labours for an entrance into the mysteries of his dying love, will be found to be a love more in lip and tongue than in heart and life; and the hope that anchors in any thing short of the finished work of the Son of God, will be a brittle cable which will snap asunder, or a rotten piece of iron which will break in the first heavy storm. Do not rest in the knowledge of a few doctrines in the letter of truth. Do not take up with a few passing thoughts and feelings; do not be satisfied with a few fleeting convictions or a few transient desires. Press on to know the blessed mysteries of the gospel as the food of your soul; press on to know the Son of God, not only as a crucified man, not only as sweating blood in Gethsemane's garden, and agonising on Calvary's tree; but press on to know him as the exalted God-Man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and press on to enjoy him as your living head, distilling into you as a living member of his mystical body, what the Psalmist calls, "the dew of his youth;" that is, the fruits of his resurrection, ascension, and glorification, as manifested by the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. Many hop about here and there, picking up some little crumbs like so many sparrows, instead of flying like a dove to the window. O how many are satisfied with a few miserable evidences, scarcely to be distinguished from natural convictions and natural consolations. How, when guilt and death stare them in the face they flee for comfort to a few fleeting hopes, trying to persuade themselves that this is true religion, the work of God upon the soul, and real regeneration; and that this is all that is required. How many seem willingly ignorant of the great mystery of a revealed Christ; ignorant of a living faith in the exalted Son of God; ignorant of what he is as seated at the right-hand of the Father—so rich in mercy to all that call upon him, so full of every grace and every gift, and so ready to relieve every want of all

that truly seek his face. How sad it is to see so many satisfied with a few passing evidences, or with what they dimly hope are marks of grace, and yet as really ignorant of God and his dear Son and the work of faith with power, as those who never make mention of his name.

I say not this to discourage the living, but to sound a warning note to any who are walking in the sparks of their own kindling. I would encourage rather than discourage all in whose hearts God has planted his fear. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on. He will lead you on step by step; he will bring you into those states of trial, affliction, and temptation, and it may be bitter anxiety of soul and real, felt distress of mind, that you will want something more than fleeting evidences or shallow ill-grounded hopes. You will want a blessed revelation of the Son of God to your soul; you will want a manifestation of the love of God to your heart, and a sweet assurance of your eternal interest in the God-Man Mediator, such as I have described this afternoon.

Now, compare your prayer and your experience and your knowledge of these things with the word of God as I have opened it up, and don't think because you have heard the Gospel a great number of years, that you are necessarily well grounded and established in God's truth. There are those who are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; who are children all their days, and never get beyond learning the A, B, C, and can hardly at the end of their tuition distinguish A from C. Be not like them. Press onward to know the power of the precious gospel you profess, to enjoy it more in your soul, and to manifest its reality more in your conduct, your conversation, and your life. I leave it in the hands of the Lord to bless it to your soul. I have preached his truth, I hope this day, in the love and in the faith of it; and may he be graciously pleased to make it manifest that the word spoken by my lips has not been spoken to you in vain.



## **The Christian's Property and Possessions**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, April 18, 1858

"Therefore, let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:21-23

On an ever memorable night, at a poor village, in a lowly stable, there being no room for such humble guests in the inn, a babe was born of a pure Virgin. I need not tell you who this babe was: you well know that it was no other than the Son of God in our flesh. But who on that memorable night, when, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, the child was born and the Son given, knew what a momentous event had taken place? Who from Herod on the throne to the captive in the dungeon, from the high priest at the altar to the slave grinding at the mill, knew or thought anything of that babe whom his weary mother, in the hour of woman's trouble, had just brought forth, and had then wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger? What did the Kings and princes of this world, sitting in their royal state, know about that babe of Bethlehem, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who, like the mystic man child in the Revelation, was to rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:5)? What knew the Scribes and Pharisees and great men of Jerusalem of the dignity of that babe who was even then born King of Zion, that he might put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of lowly degree? It is true that God did not suffer him to be without honour, even in that lowly stable. He sent a choir of angels to announce his nativity to the shepherds, and placed a brilliant star in the sky that it might be a guiding light to bring the wise men of the east to worship him and present unto him their gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. But to most then living in Jerusalem, the babe—though the Son of God; the great Creator of the world and all things in it; the Sovereign Judge of all men—was a poor, weak, despised infant,

lying in a manger, when his mother's arms did not hold him. And so from the manger to the cross. Not only in his infancy, when marked out for slaughter by Herod, but during his whole continuance here below, he had in the eyes of the world no form nor comeliness, and when it saw him there was no beauty that it should desire him. (Isa. 53:2.) As he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," the scornful men, whether professing or profane, which ruled the people in Jerusalem (Isaiah 18:14) hid their faces from him, so that he was despised and they esteemed him not. So with his saints. They are despised, in this day of great profession, as their master was before them. The world scarcely knows there is such a people: or if it cannot altogether ignore their existence—if a few stray units meets its averted eye, it looks down upon them with supreme contempt, and scarcely thinks them worthy even of a passing glance. As, however, now and then they must cross its path, it bestows upon them behind their back sometimes a hearty curse, and sometimes a mocking word; or if the lips be silent, it scorns them as poor deluded creatures, whose head is crazed with thinking too much about religion. How little do these scoffers think that those whom they thus ignorantly despise are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and shall sit one day upon a throne of glory, when they will outshine the sun in the firmament, and clad with immortality and fully conformed to the image of Christ, glitter like the stars for ever and ever!

These thoughts suggest themselves to my mind in connection with the words before us, where the apostle seems to labour for language to set forth the blessings and privileges of the saints of God. He uses what one might almost call, unless we understood it experimentally and spiritually, extraordinary language. He tells the Corinthian believers that all things are theirs. As speaking with power and authority from God, he puts everything into their hands—proclaims their title to, and gives them a vested interest in the whole universe; for does he not plainly say—"All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours?" Is not this as if he said—"All these, without exception, are given to

you; they are all put into your hand, all laid at your feet, and you have them for your own full, entire, and indefeasible possession?" But why is this? How can this be? Hear the reason. Because "Ye are Christ's." And why has Christ all this to give? Because he is God's.

In opening up these words, therefore, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show—

I.—*First*, the meaning of the words, "*Ye are Christ's.*"

II.—*Secondly*, how Christ is *God's*.

III.—*Thirdly*, what follows from these two grand truths, that *All things are the Christian's*.

IV.—*Fourthly*, what should be the fruit of this—"*Let no man glory in men.*"

I.—The Scripture lays it down in the clearest and broadest light—and what Scripture externally declares the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of God's saints internally seals—that with all the social distinctions that exist, and necessarily exist in the world, of rank, class, and station, there are really in the sight of God but two grand classes: the righteous and the wicked—the godly and the ungodly—the saint and the sinner—the wheat and the tares—those that are Christ's, and those that are the wicked one's. Now when our eyes are first opened to see this grand fact, and by the communication of light and life by the Holy Ghost to our conscience, we begin to have some personal feeling upon the matter, so as to be anxious to know on which side of the line we stand—whether we are bound for heaven or hell; whether our happy lot will be with the saints in eternal bliss, or our miserable portion be with the lost in eternal woe, we need no angel from heaven to tell us there are but two classes. Our eyes see distinctly, our consciences tell us feelingly, that there are but these two grand divisions of the sons of men. As eternal realities press with more and more power upon our mind, we begin to feel

more and more anxious and more disturbed about our own state, to know in which class we stand—whether we have any evidence to believe we have passed from death unto life, and are among the saints of God, or are still in our sins. Nor is this a mere matter of dry speculation, as a man may set himself to examine a mathematical problem or a disputed point in history. The question is too important, the matter too urgent for any such cold inquiry. Heaven and hell are at stake; eternity is in the balance; and we feel that it is a terrible thing for a man to deceive himself on this important matter, and that it is the worst and most dangerous of all delusions to take it for granted that he is a saint and a child of God without any evidence, or at least without any that the Scriptures or a tender conscience warrant as genuine. If a man come forward into the midst of a company and say, "I am a peer of the realm: Lord So-and-so is my title"—a title not in the peerage—we may reasonably ask, "Where is your patent of nobility?" If he answer "I have none; but I choose to call myself, and expect you to call me, 'My Lord,'"—we are certainly not bound to receive his pretensions and may reasonably think him a monomaniac or an impostor. Or if another man say, "I am a member of Parliament," and we ask "Well, what county or borough were you chosen for?" and he name some place not represented in Parliament, we are not required to receive his claim. Or if a third should say "I have a large estate in Yorkshire: will you lend me a thousand pounds upon it?" a banker may ask "Where are your title deeds?" None but lunatics or swindlers talk in this way. The world will not suffer men to make pretences to rank and property unless they were based on solid and reasonable or generally received grounds. Apply this to the things of God. How will you stand, with any false pretences, claiming to be what you are not, before the eyes of him who cannot be deceived and who will not be mocked? But whatever others may think or say, you who know that you have a soul which is worth to you more than a million of worlds—the value of which never can be indeed estimated at anything short of eternity—you cannot and will not take it for granted that you are a child of God unless you have some testimony on which you can rest; in a word, unless God himself has been pleased to certify it in your

conscience.

When the apostle says to the Corinthian believers, "*Ye are Christ's,*" he of course means to include all believers as possessing the same privileges and as favoured with the same blessings. The words are very full, large, and comprehensive, so that I feel I can scarcely grasp them; but they clearly mean that the saints of God are Christ's property, his possession, his inheritance; that they belong to him and are his, as a man's estate or wife and children are his. If you can find any other word, or figure to convey the idea of full, entire, and absolute right, possession, and enjoyment, do so. No words, no figure, can be too strong to express Christ's property in his people. But they are his in three different ways.

1. First, they are his *by gift*. God, in his infinite wisdom and in the boundless depths of his love and grace, chose from all eternity a vast number, yea, an innumerable multitude of the human race unto eternal life. But though he chose them individually, he did not choose them distinct from the Son of his love, for we are expressly told that, "he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4.) Having chosen them, he gave them to his only begotten Son, that they might be his kingdom, his inheritance, his everlasting possession. Let no one then think that when they are all assembled together the number of Christ's people will be few. On the contrary, they are called "a multitude which no man can number," and from their vast assemblage, as well as their purity and beauty in Christ, they are compared in Scripture to the dewdrops of the early morn:—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from [*margin*, "more than"] the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." (Ps. 110:3.) How beautiful, how expressive, the figure! Walk into the meadows in summer's early morn, and see how the dewdrops bespangle the grass. How pure, how bright, as they reflect the rays of the rising sun, each drop a miniature rainbow, but how countless! So it is with the innumerable multitude given by the Father to the Son: no human tongue could ever count—no human pen could ever write that number down. But innumerable as they are, the Lord can count

them, for he knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 1:19), and has expressly said, "I know my sheep." With what filial affection, with what meek humility, and yet with what firm assurance, did the blessed Lord say to his heavenly Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." (John 17:6.) And again—"That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." (John 18:9.) What language can be more express? With such words sounding in our ears, can we doubt that those who are Christ's are Christ's by gift? They are the Father's by absolute right. Does he not say—"Behold, all souls are mine?" (Ezek. 18:4); but they are the Son's by donation, yet not to the exclusion of right before gift. As he says—"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." Now what is given to us by a dear friend we highly prize. To prize the gift is to prize the giver; to despise the gift is to despise the giver. Thus, Jesus loved his people as the gift of the Father, besides loving them himself as a Person in the Godhead, as there is but one mind and one will; for as there is but one God, there can be but one love. But what a security does this give to the church of Christ! Can any one of his sheep, then, be lost? When at the great day he will say to his Father, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me," can any one be missing? No, not more than he himself. Will he not be able to say, "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none?" (John 18:9.)

2. But they are his also *by purchase*. As the apostle says, "Ye are bought with a price." And what price was this? The apostle Peter shall tell us:—"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18, 19.) The church fell in Adam; she sank into the depths of all his guilty crime; for he being her federal head, she was in his loins, and thus partook of his sin and shared in the same penalty. Thus she became a prisoner under the law, amenable to its curse and condemned by its sentence. But it was provided by the Mosaic

law that a captive Israelite might be redeemed by one of his brethren. (Levit. 25:48.) This was typical of the redemption of his captive brethren by Christ their elder brother. But he must pay a price for him, for without that there was no redemption. So Jesus redeemed the Church with his own blood, and she became his by actual redemption price. When we pay a price down for a thing, it is ours; and generally speaking, the more we pay for it, the more valuable it is and the more highly we prize it. But what can be compared in value to the suffering and sorrows of the Son of God? What can be put upon a level with his precious blood? This was the ransom price he paid for the church. The Scripture is very express here:—"Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:20.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14.) As thus redeemed, the church is Christ's own property, and it is therefore called his "purchased possession." (Eph. 1:14), and his people "a purchased people." (1 Pet. 2:9, *margin.*)

3. But they are Christ's also *by possession*. A person may purchase a house, and it may be in very bad condition. The walls may be covered with filth; the paper-hangings all dropping to pieces; the boards all broken; from every corner may be hanging the spider's web, and the whole place a scene of dirt and confusion. But the buyer, for his own ends and purposes, has fixed his eyes upon that house, and he therefore purchases it and pays down the money for it. Now no sooner is the key put into his hand than he takes possession of the house, and begins to put it into repair that he may live in it. But taking possession is the first step after paying down the purchase money. So it is in grace. What are we by nature and practice but like this old, dirty, miserable house, bearing all the stains and marks of sin, dilapidated from cellar to roof, and fit only for tramps and gipsies? But directly that the gracious owner takes the key in his hand—for "he hath the key of David" (Rev. 3:7)—and puts it into the wards of the lock, the heart melts and moves at the sound (Cant. 5:4), for it knows that he has "the right of redemption," and is come to take possession. The owner of the house will not live in it until he has made it a fit abode for his own permanent

residence. But much must be done before this can be. It is with the soul as with the leprous house spoken of in Leviticus. The plague is in the walls; the hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, manifest how deep seated is the plague of leprosy. The worst stones must be taken out and cast into an unclean place, and new ones put in; the walls thoroughly scraped and plastered. (Lev. 14:40, 42.) This is done by that work of grace on the soul whereby the Lord prepares it for his own habitation; for he has graciously said—"I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. 6:16.) When, then, Christ visits the soul with his presence and sheds abroad his love therein, he takes full possession of the heart and affections and makes the body the temple of the Holy Ghost. But remember that there is a taking an *initial*, and a taking a *full* possession of a house. The initial, or first possession, is when the key is put into the lock before the walls are scraped; the full possession is when the house is furnished for the owner to live in. Thus the Lord may have begun the work upon your soul, and so taken initial possession. He may have planted his fear in your heart, given you a spirit of prayer, separated you from the world, and brought soft feelings into your conscience. He may have with the hammer of the law knocked away the leprous stones and scraped the walls from their filthy as well as Pharisaic mortar; but there is something yet lacking. You have not received the desired manifestation: the furniture of his grace, the bed of his love (Cant. 3:7) is not yet in the house; and above all the Master is not there. This causes you doubts and fears and misgivings, and you are often sunk into trouble and distress of mind because Christ does not manifest himself. "O, when wilt thou come unto me?" (Psa. 101:2) is often your cry. But he will surely come, "for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37.) Wherever there is a beginning of a work of grace upon the soul, there will be a carrying on; and where there is a carrying on, there will be a completion. The Lord will never suffer his children to rest short of himself. This is what they are sighing for—what they inwardly desire; and unless they are enabled to realise this, they can neither happily live nor comfortably die.



II.—But our text gives a reason why the saints are Christ's: "*Christ is God's.*" These are remarkable words, and need to be carefully and reverently opened up. The fulness of the mystery is beyond our grasp. Still, we may attempt to look at it in faith and godly fear. How, then, is Christ God's? First, he is God's Son—not a Son by covenant or by office; in other words, not a nominal, but a true and proper Son—a Son by nature, by his eternal mode of subsistence as a Person in the Godhead. "This is my beloved Son" was twice proclaimed by God the Father with an audible voice from heaven. 2. But he is also God's servant. "Behold my servant whom I uphold." (Isa. 42:1.) "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Israel" (Isa. 49:6), and this he was as Messiah. But because he is by office God's servant, he is not less by nature God's Son. Here, however, he is spoken of as the God-Man Mediator, the Son of the Father in truth and love, the great High Priest over the house of God: and especially what he is as viewed in union with the Church—the Bridegroom with the bride, the Vine with the branches, the Shepherd with the sheep, the living foundation with the living stones built into and upon it. Christ, therefore, in our text is said to be God's not only as the only begotten Son of God, but as "the Head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18); for, says the apostle, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Ephes. 5:30.) Christ, then, is God's, with all those that belong to him—he as much they, they as much as he. Look, then, once more at these glorious truths. "Ye are Christ's" because by donation, purchase, and possession ye are members of his body. "Christ is God's" as Son, as servant, as Mediator, as Head of the church. Then ye too are God's, because ye are Christ's; for the members are one with their covenant Head.

Now how this view, if we can but realise it by living faith, takes us up out of our miserable selves, where we are so often grovelling in captivity and bondage, and lifts us up into the very bosom of God. "Am I Christ's? Have I any gracious testimony that I was given to Christ in eternity; any living witness that he shed his precious blood for me upon the cross; any scriptural evidence that he has taken possession of my heart and manifestly sealed

me as one of his own peculiar people? If I have this inward witness that I am Christ's, then I am God's. He has taken me into union with himself by taking me into union with his Son; he has given to me all that he is and all that he has for time and for eternity. He has given over unto me himself, and in doing this he has given me everything to make me happy and holy, to carry me safe through life, be with me in death, and land me in a blessed eternity, where there are unspeakable pleasures at his right hand for evermore."

But then comes the question—"How can I, such a poor vile sinner as I; how can I, who often am so cold and dead, dark and stupid, who have so sinned against him over and over again; how can I, who have backslidden so repeatedly and brought such guilt upon my conscience; how can I, who live so little to his praise, who bring forth so little fruit to his honour, who enjoy so little of his presence, and know so little of his love; how can I believe that I am what the Scripture tells me I am, if indeed I am Christ's? Here is the struggle, here the conflict, here the fight of faith. Two armies contending within, Jacob and Esau struggling in the womb, guilt and fear and bondage, unbelief and despondency, fighting against faith and hope and love. Thus there are the breathings of love and affection towards the Lord, who, we feel at times, has done so much for us, raising us up: and then there are the miserable workings of coldness, carnality, enmity, and bondage, that depress us again into the dark valley of doubt and fear. So that a continual conflict is going on in the bosom of the child of grace. And yet the weakest believer shall eventually win the day, for with all his infirmities he is Christ's, and Christ is God's, and he therefore as one with Christ is also God's. What then follows? "All things are yours," which we have, with God's blessing, now to open up.

III.—In the church at Corinth there were many divisions, and these had sprung from a variety of causes. One was for Paul, another for Apollos, whilst a third was for Cephas. The apostle, then, who had sweet and blessed views, far beyond what these Corinthians had ever seen or enjoyed, of his and their eternal

inheritance, reproaches them for these carnal divisions, as though he would say—"Why need ye fret and fume and have all those contentious janglings as to whether Paul is a greater preacher than Apollos, or Apollos a more able minister than Cephas? What vain creatures to be taken up with such petty things as these!" It is almost as if when a young man, the heir of a wealthy nobleman, had just succeeded to his title, and the steward accompanied him over the estates, and was showing him well nigh half a county, instead of looking to the wide domain spread before his eyes, he began to quarrel with some poor old woman who was picking up a few sticks to carry home to her fire. Well might the steward think if he did not say—"All things are yours: will you quarrel about a few sticks, when trees and parks and lands for miles round are your own property?" So we may say to Christians—"O these sticks and straws; these vain trifles; these miserable contentions and church bickerings! Lift up your eyes and see what a glorious kingdom is spread before you! 'All things are yours.' Why, then, glory in men or fight about men?"

But as a steward of the mysteries, he goes on to lay before the heirs of God the catalogue of their vast possessions. He tells them that the very men about whom they were quarrelling, Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, were theirs—that their preaching, their gifts and graces, all belonged to them; that they being Christ's, and Christ being God's, the servants of God were their servants. All their wisdom, knowledge, grace, experience, and power; all their unction, savour, and dew were theirs, and that for their profit and benefit, because Christ was theirs.

And "*the world*," was that theirs too? What! the world? May a child of God stand upon London Bridge and say, "All the ships in the river are mine?" May he go to the Bank of England and say "All the bullion in the cellars is mine?" May he stand upon St. Michael's tower in this town and say "All Stamford is mine?" Not in a worldly sense. But if he feels that his soul is worth a thousand worlds, and that it is saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, then he may stand upon London Bridge and say—"O, ye mighty ships that crowd the stream laden with all the world's

wealth, what are ye compared to my soul? O, ye cellars, full to overflowing with millions of yellow gold, what is the value of all compared with that eternity to which I am fast hastening? O, Stamford, with all the houses and all the property and all the people in it, could you purchase a drop of water to cool the tongue of a miserable soul in hell? And is not my soul to me worth you all?" So though he cannot lay a temporal claim to all the world, yet when he feels that his soul in his bosom is worth a thousand worlds, that that soul has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and will live in a happy and glorious eternity, when earth and all its works under his feet will lie buried in the ashes of the general conflagration; the world is his, because he is the master of it; he can put his feet upon it, and say—"O earth, I only want enough of thee to take me safely and honourably through life; enough of thy bread to feed me; enough of thy wool and flax to clothe me; enough of thy stones to shelter me; enough of thy timber to make my coffin; enough of thy ground to give me a grave. I would not have thee for my portion, my master, or my idol." When in faith and feeling he can thus speak, is not the world his? for faith makes him master of that which is master of all. It is true he is not here often in feeling, but fact remains when feeling fails.

Nay, more, the Lord makes "the world" to serve him, and thus makes it his. Nobody can harm him but by God's permission, and this very permitted harm works for his good. God can make the world lie at his very feet so that not a dog shall move his tongue against him (Exod. 11:7); the ravens shall feed him and he shall eat the riches of the Gentiles. For the gold and the silver are the Lord's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and he can give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to his people, his chosen. (Isa. 43:20.) When, too, you can look around you upon the fields and meadows, trees and rivers, and meekly say, "My Father made them all," they are all yours, because they are your heavenly Father's. I often walk in the beautiful park adjoining this town, and I have sometimes thought I enjoy it more than its noble owner; for I have had many a secret prayer and sweet meditation there, and I have the additional pleasure of admiring

its beauties without the anxiety of proprietorship. Is not the park, then, mine—the trees, the avenues, the lake and the walks, all my own?

Then there is "*life*," and that too, says the apostle, is "yours." But how can this be? In two ways. Life present and life future, both are the Christian's, according to the words, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8.) But life present is natural and spiritual. In three senses therefore, is life the portion of Christ's people—life natural, life spiritual, life eternal. Life natural is theirs for they alone can truly enjoy it. What is natural life if it hang by a thread over an awful eternity? How soon spent and gone, and how soon death and judgment close the scene. But the Christian's very natural life is his season for faith and prayer, the seedtime of an immortal harvest. Most men are life's slave, but he is life's master; to most, life is but an opportunity of evil, but to him an opportunity of good. Spiritual life is peculiarly his, for he alone possesses it. Natural men share with him natural life; but he alone enjoys spiritual. This life is his because Christ is his. Christ is his life, and because Christ lives, he lives also. And then there is life eternal, which commencing now in life spiritual is transplanted above to bloom in immortality.

And then, more wondrous still, "*death*," that last enemy, that king of terrors, who makes the strongest tremble and the stoutest heart quake; that too is yours, if ye are Christ's. Death is not your enemy if you are Christ's, but your friend. He may indeed in the dim and distant prospect seem to come in the guise of an enemy; you may dread the thought of his approach, and may even sink down with fear how it may be with you in that solemn hour. But if you are Christ's, death is yours as well as life, for he has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light. Death then cannot harm you, because Christ died for you. Death will merely cause your poor body to drop into the ground, whilst it will open to your soul the everlasting doors through which the King of Glory, the Lord mighty in battle, entered as your forerunner when he went to prepare a place for

you.

*"Things present"* also, whatever they may be, are yours, if you are Christ's. Things just now may be very trying, very distressing. Your present path may be one of great darkness, doubt and fear. Things past may be forgotten; things future may encourage hope; it is things present that burden and distress. But things past were once present. Did not the Lord manage them then, and can he not manage them now? If things present are painful, they are yours to endure; if pleasant, they are yours to enjoy. Still they are yours, for they are on your side working together for good. Use the present; it is yours; the past is gone. Present faith, present prayer, present waiting upon God, present grace, present mercies, present blessings—all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

*Things to come* are yours also. They may in prospect seem still more gloomy than things present. Illness, family afflictions, painful bereavements, and many other anticipated evils may seem standing at the door; but if ye are Christ's, things to come are yours as much as things present. All will surely be made to work for your good; all are in the hand of your heavenly Father, of your gracious Redeemer, and of your Holy Intercessor and Comforter. All that lies in the womb of time, all that is folded up in the bosom of eternity is yours, for Christ is Lord and Master of them all, and he is your Lord and Master too. Then fear not the future. The things to come will, if they bring fresh miseries, reveal fresh mercies; if trials march in their front, deliverances will come in their rear.

IV.—Now comes the exhortation founded upon these grand truths—*"Let no man glory in men."* The Corinthian Church was much torn by party spirit, and especially as regarded the ministers of God. One set up Paul, another was for Peter, and another for Apollos, till the church was filled with strife and confusion. This wretched spirit the apostle sought to quench by pointing out its folly. All things are yours. Let no man then glory in men as if they were anything. What they are, they are by the

grace of God; and neither you nor they have anything to boast of. View them as servants of God, and glory not in their gifts or graces, but in their adorable Lord and Master.

But it is time to draw to a close. The grand point to have decided in a man's bosom is, whether he is Christ's or not; and this is a problem which none but the Lord himself can solve. Blessed is he who has the witness in himself; and this he can only have by believing on the Son of God, as John speaks, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10.) This is the internal witness of the Spirit, as the apostle declares, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) What witness have you ever had in your bosom that you are a child of God? Or if you have not had this special witness, what marks or evidences, what tokens for good has the Lord bestowed upon you? Can you not remember something that the Lord has done for you in times past—some promise applied, some manifestation of his presence, some look of love, some softening touch of his gracious hand, which melted you into the dust, and brought sweet peace and assurance with it? It might not last long, or be very deep, but it was an evidence when felt that you belonged to Christ. You remember the time and the circumstances, the darkness, distress, and bondage before, and the deliverance into sweet liberty then enjoyed: but still you are dissatisfied. You want the Lord once more to appear; you want another smile, another word, another look, another promise, another testimony, and without it your soul often sinks down into doubt and fear. Now this is the path in which most of God's saints walk; I will not say all, because some are more favoured with an abiding testimony. But even they have great sinkings and heavy trials. But with most it is a very chequered, in and out path. Thus, sometimes they are indulged with a smile, and then such darkness of mind falls upon them that they can scarcely see a single evidence. Then the sun shines again; but darkness once more covers the scene, and down they sink again into doubt, guilt, and fear. Then the Lord appears again, then they love, and hope, and rejoice again; and so they go on, the scene ever changing, like an April day. Still on they go until they

come at last to the closing scene, when the Lord usually appears, scatters all their doubts and fears and darkness, and gives them a blessed dismissal into his own bosom of eternal rest and peace.



## The Clean Water Sprinkled and the New Heart Given

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, September 23, 1866

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:25, 26

There are two sins which are deeply embedded in the human heart. One of these is unbelief; the other is idolatry. They are indeed twin branches of that one great stem, that huge trunk of human depravity, which, having its roots deeply and firmly embedded in the soil, tosses on high its gigantic arms, as if it would bid defiance to the very lightnings of heaven. The history of the children of Israel contains very striking examples of both these sins. View, first, their *unbelief*. Though they had personally witnessed all the plagues in Egypt, and had experienced a miraculous exemption from every one of them; though they had passed through the waves of the Red Sea, when the waters were a wall to them on the right-hand and on the left; though they ate daily of the manna which fell from heaven and drank of the water that gushed out of the rock; though ever before their eyes there was the spectacle of the pillar and the cloud, denoting the immediate presence of God in their midst; yet none of these mighty signs could cure them of their inveterate sin, unbelief. So that at last, God swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness; and they could not enter in because of unbelief.

But their *idolatry* was almost, if not altogether as great as their infidelity. Though from Sinai's blazing top God had revealed his law with thunder and lightning and earthquake; though he had spoken himself from heaven, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth;"

yet, when Moses tarried for awhile upon the mountain in solemn communion with God, they must needs make to themselves a golden calf, and cry out with all the brutish ignorance of infidelity and idolatry: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of Egypt." What, a calf to be the representation of the great God who had done such mighty wonders! What brutish ignorance for them so quickly to depart from the worship of the living God: and as the Psalmist speaks, "to change their glory," (that is, their glorious God) "into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." (Psa. 106:20.) Can we wonder that God was so provoked by this abominable idolatry, as to say unto Moses: "I have seen this people and behold it is a stiff-necked people? Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." (Exod. 32:9, 10.) But this was only one instance of their stubborn and deep-rooted idolatry. When they got the promised land into possession, and that "not by their own sword, nor by their own arm, but by the right-hand and arm of the light of God's countenance because he had a favour unto them;" even then, instead of destroying the altars, breaking down the images, and cutting down the groves (or, as the word should be rendered, "the wooden images") of the heathen nations as they were expressly commanded, they bowed down to their false gods. As we read, "They provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images." (Psa. 78:58.) In fact, what is their whole history down to the time of the Babylonish captivity, but one continued series of idolatrous worship, whenever they got the least opportunity to gratify that propensity of their besotted minds?

We see, then, from these examples of the children of Israel, who are set before us in the Scriptures as warning examples "to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted, nor be idolaters as were some of them," how deeply seated are the two sins of unbelief and idolatry. Similarly, wherever a missionary has penetrated, into whatever remote and dark corners of the earth he has carried his foot, there he has found idol worship as the only form of religion known and practised. In

Greece, in Rome, in their palmiest days, idolatry was the only religion of the people. Great as Athens was in learning, cultivated as was every art and science there, yet we read of that distinguished city, that while Paul waited for Silas and Timotheus "his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," [or, as it is in the margin, "full of idols."] There was indeed an altar "To the unknown God;" but it was because the true God was an unknown God that they put an idol in his place.

But we should greatly err if we thought that idolatry was confined to graven images. These are but the outward signs and tokens of something within far deeper than setting up and bowing down to such idols made by human hands as formed heathen worship. There are *heart idols*, bosom idols; and though not made of wood and stone, yet, if we pay them the secret worship of devotion and affection, and inflame ourselves secretly with them, as the prophet speaks, under every green tree that grows in our bosom, they are as much idols in the sight of God who searches the heart, as if we bowed our knee to an image made with the fingers of men.

As, however, I shall have occasion to speak more upon this point when I open to you the subject of this discourse, I will not now dwell upon it. Let me then, simply read our text again, that you may more distinctly remember it; and may the Lord enable me so to bring out of it and lay before you its rich contents as shall, with his special blessing, be instructive, edifying, and comforting to your souls: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

In opening up these words, I desire to bring before you chiefly three points, which I think you will find closely connected with our text.

I.—*First*, I shall endeavour to show you what the "*clean water*" is

which we find promised in it.

II.—*Secondly*, how this "clean water" is *sprinkled*, and its *effects*: "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

III.—*Thirdly*, its *accomplishments*: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

I.—Water, all through the Scripture, is employed as a typical representation of the Holy Spirit. Thus our Lord said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit." (John 7:37-39.) A similar testimony we find in the language of the prophet, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." (Isaiah 44:3.) It was of this gift of the Holy Spirit, as symbolised by water, that the Lord spoke in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, where, contrasting the water of Jacob's well with the living water which he had to give, he said to her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14.) And it is in this sense I understand those words of the Lord which have given rise to so much error and so much controversy: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By water here I do not understand the material element water at all as applied in baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, but water in its spiritual meaning as signifying the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus, to be "born of water and of the Spirit" is to be born of the Spirit and his gracious communications and influences which are poured out or applied to the soul as water to the body.

i. But now arises the question, Why the Lord, and I may add the Scriptures generally speak of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit under the figure of water? It seems to me that there are three distinct circumstances connected with water which aptly qualify it to be a representative of the blessed Spirit.

1. *Water satisfies the cravings of thirst.* Physiologists tell us that water enters very largely into every liquid and solid part of our bodily frame; as therefore, there is a continual exhaustion and evaporation of this fluid, fresh must be supplied; and thus thirst is the demand of the body for that needful supply. So similarly the water of life, which the Holy Ghost can alone give, satisfies the cravings of that spiritual thirst which is created whenever and wherever God is pleased to communicate divine life to the soul. I need not to tell you that this thirst after God and after what he alone can give is a sure mark of being quickened into spiritual life. You will recollect in the passage I have just quoted how the Lord himself said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Did not he also pronounce a blessing on those who hunger and thirst after righteousness? (Matt. 5:6.) And is not this blessing the blessing of life for evermore? How we hear the psalmist crying out, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." How he compares himself in his pantings after God to the hart which panteth after the water brooks. (Psalm 42:1, 2.) How he cries, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." (Psalm 63:1, 2.) And again, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land." (Psalm 143:6.) How expressive also is that invitation in the prophet, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." (Isaiah 55:1.) Does not this cloud of witnesses show that wherever there is grace, there is a thirsting after God, the living God? Now, what can quench or satisfy this thirst but that water which the Holy Ghost brings and gives, implying thereby all that strength, support, deliverance, and consolation which he affords

by his gracious visitations and divine communications, and especially by revealing Christ, taking of the things which are his, as his blood and righteousness, grace and glory, and showing them to the soul, and shedding the love of God abroad in the heart?

2. But again, water, especially as coming from heaven in the shape of dew and rain, has a *fertilising* effect upon the soil. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." And what is the consequence? "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses." When, then, the blessed Spirit would describe a favoured people as coming and singing in the height of Zion, and flowing together to the goodness of the Lord, he says, "Their souls shall be as a watered garden." (Jer. 31:12.) Now, a watered garden was one which is irrigated, as is still the practice in the East, by a brook or river which ran near it and was thus made fruitful; for in that hot climate nothing was needed but an ample and perennial supply of water to make a garden teem with flowers and fruit. Similarly the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, is compared to "a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river." Now, what is said of this tree but that "it shall not see when heat cometh" (that is, shall not see barrenness and drought), "but its leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought" (as always having a supply at hand in the river into which it dips its roots), "neither shall cease from yielding fruit?" (Jer. 17:7, 8.) It is only then as the blessed Spirit is pleased to bedew the soul by his grace, and water it with his divine influences and operations that we can bring forth any fruit unto God.

3. But water, thirdly, as representing the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit, has another distinguishing quality. It *washes*, it *cleanses*, it *purifies*. With water we wash our bodies, with water cleanse our houses. It may seem strange to tell you so, but it is an established fact that the very air itself is defiled by smoke, dust, and exhalations from the earth, and needs to be continually washed and cleansed by showers from

heaven. The rain, as it falls from the upper regions of the sky, catches hold as it were in its descent of these gross particles, and straining them out of the air carries them down to the earth. How fresh and sweet the air smells after a heavy shower, as if it had just been newly washed. Nor do the cleansing effects of rain cease here. How, after heavy rain we see the whole aspect of nature smile as with a fresh washed face. How on every side the dusty leaves upon the trees and hedges, and the soiled productions of the field and garden, lift up their faces clean and fresh as if, like children, they all rejoiced in a good washing from God's shower-bath in the sky, and to be dressed in a new suit of clothes. How clearly does our text speak of the cleansing effects of this pure water, for it is clean and pure as coming straight from heaven unmixed with anything of the creature. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

We thus see that water, as representing that which quenches thirst, as representing that which washes, cleanses, and purifies, clearly and beautifully sets forth in type and figure the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit. There can be no doubt, therefore, that "the clean water" spoken of in our text which God promises to sprinkle upon his people represents the Holy Spirit as poured out upon the family of God. This we know was the grand promise of the New Testament, the special fruit of our Lord's resurrection, ascension, and glorification. We therefore read that when our Lord promised that rivers of living water should flow out of the belly or heart of him that believed in his name, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.) We see therefore that the gift of the Holy Ghost was dependent upon the glorification of Jesus; and therefore he said to his disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7.) And what should this blessed Spirit do when he came? "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath

are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." (John 16:14, 15.)

ii. But now I wish to show you in what way the blessed Spirit comes and acts; for we must not suppose that there is anything visionary, wild, or enthusiastic in his divine operations. No, there is a most blessed, sober, and solid reality in them. His teachings, influences, and operations are not a mere matter of feelings which might be right or wrong, real or visionary, from God or Satan transformed into an angel of light, but are of substantial reality and power. Now, what makes the teachings, influences, and operations of the blessed Spirit so solid and so real is that he acts by and through the *written word*. We find this point blessedly opened by the apostle (Eph. 5.), and his words afford us a striking key to the waters spoken of in our text: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Observe the expression the "washing of water by *the word*." It is not merely the "washing of water," that is, the Spirit's influences and operations as represented by water, but it is "by the word." This corresponds also with the language of James, "Of his own will begat us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); and with that of Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23.) The waters then spoken of in our text we may consider to mean 1st, the washing of regeneration, and 2ndly, every subsequent renewing by the blessed Spirit of the work of grace. We find these two brought together by the apostle in Titus 3, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." We have also in that beautiful and striking parable of our gracious Lord, the parable of the vine, another key to the interpretation of the clean water spoken of in our text; "I am the true vine, and my Father is



the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it." The word "purge" here is the old English word for purify or cleanse; and I have often wished that our excellent translators had used the word "cleansed," because they would then have preserved the beautiful connection which there is in the original between the cleansing and the mode of cleansing. Let me show this by adopting the word "cleansed." "And every branch that beareth fruit he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." How clearly and beautifully does this connection between cleansing and clean show the way whereby God cleanses the fruitful branch. It is by the word. This word he had applied to the hearts of the disciples, and by the power of this word he had washed and cleansed them from their unbelief. The Lord, therefore said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) And it was the power of this word upon the heart which made Peter answer when Jesus said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the *words* of eternal life." Bear then, in mind that it is the word in the hands of the blessed Spirit which does everything set forth in the Scriptures, and therefore in our text is set forth under the figure of water.

Now, having given you this simple interpretation of the clean water, having shown you that it signifies first regeneration, and then every subsequent renewing of the Holy Ghost, I shall pass on to open what I proposed to lay before you as the second branch of my subject.

II.—I come now, therefore, to my second point—the sprinkling of the clean water, and its *effects* as sprinkled upon the souls of God's people, for it is to them that the promise is made.

I have pointed out that the main reason why the "clean water" is sprinkled is to cleanse and purify those to whom it is applied. Now, we find two main washings spoken of in the word of truth,

for I need not dwell upon the washings prescribed by the ceremonial law, which were merely typical and figurative. The washings which claim our attention are those spoken of in the New Testament, which are not typical and figurative, but real and spiritual. One, then, of these washings is the washing of our *persons*, and the other is the washing of our *souls*. There is the washing, to speak plainly, of our *outsides*, and there is the washing of our *insides*.

i. Let us consider for a moment the first washing which I have mentioned, viz., the washing of our *persons*. What is the song of the redeemed? "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This washing is the washing of our persons in the blood of the Lamb, whereby we are washed from all the guilt, filth, pollution, imputation, and consequences of all our sins and crimes in the fountain opened in one day for sin and for uncleanness. John saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. Whence came those white robes, and why were they so white? It was because those who wore them had washed them, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9-14.) David, therefore cried, when laden with the guilt and burden of sin, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm 51:7.) If we are indeed washed in this fountain, we shall stand before God at the great day without spot or wrinkle; for the fountain opened in the Redeemer's pierced hands and feet and side was a fountain appointed by God himself for all sin, and all uncleanness, and every soul washed therein stands before God as white as snow. He therefore says to his people, "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." (Isaiah 1:18.) This is the blood of the New Testament which was shed for many for the remission of sins; this is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin; this is the blood which purgeth the conscience from dead works to serve the living God; this is the blood of sprinkling which

speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The apostle therefore says, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:11, 12.) From this precious blood flows all our salvation, all our reconciliation to God, all our pardon, all our peace, and all our hope of eternal life. Here, then, we cast anchor as our only hope of our weary soul; and to this precious, atoning blood do we look as the only sacrifice for all our sins, the only balm for a guilty conscience, the only foundation of peace with God by faith in his dear Son; for it is by this one offering that he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

ii. But there is another washing of which I have just struck the key note in the word "sanctified." We have not only to be washed in the blood of the Lamb that all our sins and crimes may be for ever put away from the eyes of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and cannot look on iniquity; but we need to be *made meet* for the inheritance of the saints in light. We need to be sanctified as well as justified. And observe how the apostle brings together in the compass of one verse three of the choicest blessings of the gospel—pardon, justification, and sanctification. "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." It is in Christ's blood that we are washed. It is by Christ's righteousness that we are justified; it is by Christ's Spirit that we are sanctified. As I have just observed, we want not only a title to heaven; we want a meetness for heaven. We want not only pardon for the acceptance of our persons, but we want regeneration for the sanctification of our souls. For if, as the Lord declares, none can see or enter into the kingdom of God except he be born again, the work of the Holy Ghost upon our conscience is as needful for our entrance into heaven as the work of Christ upon the cross, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. How clear, how decisive upon this point are those words of the Holy Ghost: "They that are in

the flesh cannot please God." And again: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Paul, therefore, bids us to follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Now, it is of this work of the Spirit on the soul which we briefly call in one word "sanctification" that our text speaks in the gracious promise: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." The allusion here is mainly to a remarkable rite under the Levitical law, of which we have a detailed description in Numbers 19. You will recollect, perhaps, how in that chapter God commanded Moses to take a red heifer without spot or blemish, on which never came yoke. This heifer, which was a type of Christ, the priest was to bring forth without the camp, where she was to be slain before his face. He was then to take of her blood with his fingers, and sprinkle it directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. The next step was for one to burn the heifer in his sight, just as she was, with her skin, her flesh, and her blood; and then the priest was to take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, all which things had a typical reference to the blood of the one great sacrifice, as pointing to its durability and fragrance, its being sprinkled on the conscience, and its colour, and to cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer. All these rites and ceremonies were intended to invest the ashes of the heifer thus burnt with a peculiar efficacy and power, for they were to be gathered up by a man that was clean, and laid up without the camp in a clean place, that they might be preserved for a special use. Now, this use was, that when a person had become ceremonially unclean, some of the ashes of this burnt heifer, together with running water, were to be put into a vessel, and this water became a water of purification for sin; for hyssop was to be dipped into it, and sprinkled upon the unclean person on the third day and the seventh day. My explanation has been rather long, but every part of this typical ceremony carries with it a gospel meaning. I cannot go through these various meanings, but I will direct our minds to one as having a special connection with our text. There was a particular provision that the water in which the ashes were dipped should be "running water," that is, not stagnant, like that of a

pool, but clear and clean, like that of a river. And I may observe that there is a very sweet marginal reading: "Living waters shall be given," which connects it with the words of the blessed Lord to the woman of Samaria, where he tells her if she had known the gift of God, and who it was that said to her: "Give me to drink, she would have asked of him and he would have given her *living* water." And he tells her why it was "living water," for it would be in him to whom it was given "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Now, in the type of the red heifer there is a connection, and a very beautiful and significant connection between the two washings of which I have spoken. The killing, burning, and reducing to ashes of the red heifer all point to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; and the mixture of the ashes with the living water shows the connection between the blood of the Lamb sprinkled upon the conscience and the washing of regeneration by the power of the Spirit.

iii. But now, observe the *effects*. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and *ye shall be clean.*" There is a certain effect to be produced by the sprinkling of the clean water. It will not, it cannot fall in vain; it *will* have, it *must* have a certain effect, for it is sprinkled as clean water to produce a certain effect, which must follow; not only because it is sprinkled by the very hand of God himself, but because it is specially promised as an effect. It is "*I will*" and "*ye shall.*" "*I will* sprinkle clean water upon you, and *ye shall* be clean."

You will observe that there is an *application* of this clean water, or the effects could not be produced; and as the clean water is sprinkled to remove defilement, wherever it falls, that effect must necessarily follow.

Now, there are four things in us which need the application of this clean water, that they may be washed from their defilement: There is the understanding; there is the will; there is the conscience; and there are the affections. All these are, so to

speak, sadly filthy, and being filthy need to be cleansed by the sprinkling of the clean water upon them to make them pure and clean. Let me show you this more fully and distinctly in detail.

1. First, there is the *understanding*, and this has to be cleansed from its filth by clean water being sprinkled upon it. The filth of the understanding is, so to speak, *ignorance*. The understanding we may compare to the window of the breast, for through our understanding, as through an open window, comes all light into our soul. We find a contrast in the word between those in whom "the understanding is darkened" (Eph. 4:18) and those who have "the eyes of their understanding enlightened." (Eph. 1:18.) The one may be represented by a house without windows, or with windows and the shutters up, and the other with windows, or the shutters taken down. When God created man in his own image he gave him an understanding; in other words, he put a window into his breast. Now, this window of the breast has become, through the fall, encrusted with mud. It is like the window of a house not inhabited and standing by the road side. What with neglect to keep it clean in the inside, and what with the mud cast upon it by passing vehicles on the outside, the whole of that window has become encrusted with a thick coat of mud. Now whilst the window is so encrusted, however clearly the sun may shine, not a single ray will shine into the room. It is effectually obstructed by the crust of mud over the window. So it is with man's understanding. God gave man a good and righteous understanding of himself, and a knowledge of his will; but sin, through the fall, spread, so to speak, a crust of dirt over man's understanding. This I have called the defilement of the understanding; for a darkened understanding is always attended with deeds of darkness; as the apostle points out so clearly in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, that when men's "foolish heart was darkened," they were judicially "given up to vile affections," and dark deeds followed upon dark minds. Until, then, this darkened understanding is cleansed by the clean water sprinkled upon it, not a ray of divine light can enter into the mind, so as to illuminate it with the light of the living. But the clean water, in God's own time and way, is sprinkled upon the

understanding. This is "the washing of water by the word" which I have already mentioned, and chiefly the washing of regeneration, for that is the first work of God upon the soul. Look at the process. Here is a soul which has to be made alive unto God. He himself, in infinite mercy, sprinkles from heaven (his dwelling place) a few drops of this clean water on the understanding. What is the effect? So miraculous is its operation on a man's understanding, that it washes away at once that thick, deep-rooted crust which had gathered over the window of his breast. I have called it a "thick, deep-rooted crust." And have we not daily proof of it, in observing what inveterate prejudice, what obstinate determination not to come to the light, what wilful blindness to the word of God, and what resistance to every conviction which would tend to open the eyes are daily displayed by those by whom we are surrounded, and was once as much displayed by us? How truly did the Lord say: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." (John 3:19, 20.) The first thing needed, then, is to wash away this thick crust. Now, observe its effects. As the clean water, then, comes falling from heaven's gracious courts in all its divine purity, it drops upon the understanding. I hardly like to pursue the figure lest I debase it, but it is like the application of water to a dirty window: it cleanses. Now a few drops can do to the window of the soul what scarcely buckets of water could do to the window of the room. But mark the effect of the sprinkled drops! A ray of heavenly light now shines through that window of the breast, and we see light in God's light. Before the Lord was pleased to sprinkle this clean water on your understanding, how dark was your mind. You heard the word, but you understood it not. One of the first things you can now look back to as indicating a gracious work of God upon your soul was, that it seemed as if you had for the first time in your life, at a certain season, some understanding of the things that you heard under a preached gospel. You did not sit as before upon your seat, ignorant and wilfully ignorant, blind and wilfully blind, as if you would pull your very ears away from the truth,

and either sat stupidly vacant or tried to amuse your mind by thinking of something else. But it seemed as if a ray of divine light had penetrated your mind, and you felt as if you understood what the preacher meant, and that he was preaching to you, so as to fasten conviction upon your conscience. I cannot dwell further upon this point: but this understanding seemed to gradually increase, for it is, as the wise man speaks: "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18.) You now began to read the Scriptures with this divine light shining upon them; and the more you read the word and the more you heard the truth, the more you seemed to understand, believe, and feel it. Here was the clean water sprinkled upon your understanding.

2. But there is, next, the sprinkling of the clean water upon the *will*. God created man with a will in harmony with his own. What God bade him do, man did. God's will was his will. But sin came in and perverted this pure will. Man was determined to have a will of his own; and this obstinacy of the will we may call the *filth* of the will, for filth in the sight of God is much what filth is in ours, if we are naturally clean in habit and person. As a clean person is disgusted with filth; as there is something loathsome in it to his natural eye; so sin in the sight of God is loathsome, disgusting, and an abomination on which his pure eyes cannot bear to rest. Thus the obstinacy of man's will, his stubborn determination to have his own way, his unwillingness to submit to the will of God, may be considered as the filth of the will, because it is the sin of the will. It is a great sin to have a will not in harmony with the will of God. "Thy will be done," the Lord taught his disciples to pray. To have a will of our own is to have a filthy will. Why? Not only because it is filthiness in the sight of God, but because our natural will is ever bent upon sinful objects, and the gratification of those sensual, proud, or ambitious desires which are contrary to the will of God. But God sprinkles clean water upon the will; and when the clean water comes, what is the consequence? It removes that obstinacy of the will to please itself; that determination to have our own way and gratify our selfish desires, come what may; and by its gracious operation, brings



our will to lie in harmony with the will of God. The gracious promise made to Christ by his heavenly Father was, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Psa. 110:3.) And how blessedly do we see this exemplified in the case of Paul at Damascus' gate, when the clean water was sprinkled upon his will, and he all trembling and astonished at its effects, said: "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.)

3. But again, our *conscience* needs the clean water to be sprinkled upon it, as well as the understanding and the will.

There are two things that our conscience needs to be cleansed from: one is the *guilt* of sin, the other is the *filth*. The guilt of sin is felt first. Now, nothing can cleanse the conscience from this guilt but the application of atoning blood. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge (or cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Nothing but blood applied with power will cleanse the conscience from the burden of sin and the guilt which sin charged home brings. It is therefore called, "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

But our conscience is *filthy* as well as guilty. O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity; how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be, when the guilt of sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not loathed yourselves sometimes in your own sight on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of sin sometimes disgusted you—the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you? We complain, and justly complain, of a noisome sewer that runs through a street, or of a ditch filled with every thing disgusting, such as is seen sometimes in the outskirts of a town. But do we feel as much, do we complain as often of the noisome sewer which is ever running in our breast, of the filthy ditch in our own bosom? We can cover up the one with a culvert, and hide from view its hideous sights and restrain its noisome stench. The other lies naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and

as the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes too, and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-aborrence before the eyes of a holy God. We have then to be cleansed, not only from the guilt of sin by the application of atoning blood, but from the filth of sin by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And I will show you how. Our blessed Lord said to his disciples: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." When the word then of pardoning mercy comes, or the word of promise, or the word of truth in its unction and power, it carries with it a cleansing, purifying efficacy. John saw the side of the Redeemer pierced, and what met his astonished gaze? "Forthwith there came out blood and water." The blood came to wash away the guilt of sin; the water to wash away the filth of sin. As Hart says:—

"This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart:  
Unlock'd by the spear, it gushed from his heart;  
With blood and with water, the first to atone,  
To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one."

And I may also observe, though I have not time to dwell upon it, that the sprinkling of this clean water makes the conscience not only clean, but tender, submissive, and obedient to the will and word of God, so as to take his part against sin and self.

But the *affections* also want cleansing, as well as the understanding, the will and the conscience. For O, how our affections cleave naturally to earth and the things of time and sense; and this creature love, in all its shapes and forms, defiles our affections. Creature love does not leave room in our breast for the love of God to come in and dwell there. And though creature love in some respects is necessary, and therefore may seem innocent, yet we may be sure as long as earthly affections are indulged, sin is loved, carnal things delighted in, and the fancied joys of earth pursued to the dislike of everything which would interfere with them. There are no heavenly affections kindled in the breast, no mountings up of love toward him who

sits at the right hand of God. But the clean water which is sprinkled upon the understanding to enlighten it, upon the will to change it, and upon the conscience to cleanse it, comes upon the affections to renew them and fix them on heavenly things. God sprinkles them with the clean water; they are washed by the word; and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Have you never had the sprinkling of this clean water,—a sweet word of promise, a kind invitation, a gracious testimony, a heavenly look, a soft whisper, a gentle touch? Here was the clean water sprinkled upon the affections. And what was the effect? It purified them, and washed away that defilement and filth which they had contracted by earthly loves. What a blessed thing it is to have the clean water sprinkled, to have the word of God in our heart as well as on our lips, and to feel the power and efficacy of the truth of God in our soul. Have we an enlightened understanding? Have we a renewed will? Have we a purged conscience? Have we heavenly affections? What has produced it? The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; the washing of water by the word; the power of God's truth in the soul, according to the promise: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

iv. But I pass on to show another effect of the sprinkling of the clean water. God says: "*Ye shall be clean;*" and with the word of a King there is power. Peter said to our gracious Lord, when he said to him: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But the Lord graciously answered: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." So if you have had the clean water sprinkled upon you, you are clean every whit. It is true that you want a daily washing. We want sometimes our eyes to be washed: they are heavy with sleep, or bleared with looking so much to the things of time and sense. We want our ears washed, for they are sometimes dull and cannot hear the word of truth with life, feeling, and power. We want our hands washed and cleansed from every defilement of covetousness, and made more open and liberal to the family of God. We want our feet washed, because as

we travel through this muddy world, we often get defiled by the mire of the streets. Therefore we need to be washed not only in the fountain of Christ's blood, and washed by the washing of regeneration; we want to be washed also by the renewing of the Spirit day by day—to have again and again the sprinkling of the clean water upon us, to keep us clean as well as to make us so; for it is with our souls as with our bodies, they want to be washed continually to keep them clean. Now, godly people love this clean water on account of its cleansing effects. Filthy people love their filthiness; clean people love their cleanliness. What is the greatest punishment you can inflict upon one of those dirty tramps that are such pests and nuisances wherever they go? Cut off his matted locks; give him a thorough good wash; put him into the work-house bath; wash away the accumulated filth of weeks and months. Cleanliness is a martyrdom to him. But we who know what it is to be continually washing our bodies to keep them clean, love cleanliness; for we cannot bear the least dirt upon us. So it is in the figure. Sinners love their sins. How many a drunken sot would sooner sit this morning in some nook of the public-house smoking his pipe and guzzling his beer, rather than meet with us in the house of prayer. But would *you* like to be found there? Would you choose such a place and such a company for any day of the week, much more the Lord's day? What is a heaven to him is a hell to you, and what is a heaven to you is hell to him. He would be as much out of his place in the house of prayer, as you would be out of your place were you sitting in the corner of a public-house drinking beer and smoking a pipe. If ever a drop of that clean water has been sprinkled upon you, to enlighten your understanding, renew your will, cleanse your conscience, and purge your affections, you love to be clean. You cannot bear to step into the dirty puddles of the street. I have no doubt if some of you clean females in coming to chapel this morning, had unawares put your foot into a dirty puddle, you would sit upon your seat very uncomfortable all the time of service, and would get no rest until you had taken off your dirty shoe and stocking, and well washed your foot. So it is with the child of God. He may unawares put his foot in a puddle, but he is not like the street arabs, whose choice place of amusement is a

dirty puddle and a well soaked foot. One who knows anything of regenerating grace by the power of God, cannot bear even to soil his feet, for he knows it makes him thoroughly miserable till the clean water comes again to wash them from all their filthiness. And thus I might add a fifth place in us to be sprinkled, as well as the four which I have mentioned, and that is our *feet*, meaning thereby life, conduct, and conversation.

v. But God has promised in our text, that he will cleanse us "*from all our idols,*" as well as from all our filthiness.

Idolatry takes a wide range. It is astonishing what the invention of men has created in the shape of actual, material idols; and what a range they take, from the beautiful statues of Greece and Rome to those caricatures of humanity which are found in the South Sea islands. And yet all are idols. Whether it be a statue of the most consummate beauty, an Apollo Belvedere, or a Venus dei Medici, "The statue which enchants the world," or whether it be an African fetish, a monstrous object which the poor benighted negro worships, it is an idol still. And all the skill of art and all the refinement bestowed upon the production of a statue by a Greek sculptor, leave it as much an idol as if it were Mumbo Jumbo or an African fetish. But idolatry, that is, the idolatry of the heart, takes as wide a range as those which I have mentioned as made by human fingers. There are genteel idols and vulgar idols, as there are marble statues and such objects of worship made up of shells and feathers, as you may see in the British Museum brought over by Captain Cook; and yet each will still be an idol. We can bear with genteel idols, as we can look with pleasure upon a Greek statue; but we are very virtuously indignant against vulgar idols. We see a man in the street reeling with intoxication: we turn away with disgust; he is drunk with common beer. But a peer may get drunk with champagne, and nobody think the worse of him. A poor miserable creature, a thief, a pickpocket, a common prostitute will draw down universal reprobation. There may be another equally bad in the sight of God; but whose beauty or wealth, rank and titles, draw down universal admiration. Genteel idols we can admire, as men admire beautiful

statuary; vulgar idols we detest, as we detest such caricatures of humanity as make a negro tremble. But an idol is an idol, however genteel or however vulgar, however admired, or however despised may be.

But O how numerous are these genteel idols! Love of money, ambition, craving after human applause, desire to rise in the world, wanting to be what is called respectable,—all these we may think natural desires that may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may they turn out to be in the issue.

But there are more secret and not less dangerous idols than these lady and gentlemen idols. You may have a husband, or wife, or child, whom you love almost as much as yourself; you bestow upon this idol of yours all the affections of your heart. Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it. You don't see how this is an idol. Now, God has said, "From all your filthiness, find from *all* your idols will I cleanse you." Whatever you love more than God, whatever you worship more than God, whatever you crave for more than God, is an idol. It may lurk in the chambers of imagery; you may scarcely know how fondly you love it. Let God take that idol out of your breast, let him pluck that idol from its niche, you will find then how you have suffered your affections to wander after that idol and loved it more than God himself. It is when the idol is taken away, removed, dethroned, that we learn what an idol it has been. Our good name, our reputation, our character, our respectability, any little property we may have, how we hug and embrace these idols; how we cleave to them; delight in them; bow down to them, and seek gratification from them. How little are we aware what affections twine round them; how little are we aware that they claim what God has reserved for himself when he said, "My son, give me thine heart." Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that her husband was an idol; many a mourning husband learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly, how too idolatrously he loved his wife; many a man does not know how dearly he loves money until he incurs some serious loss; many do not know how dearly they hold name, fame, and reputation till

some slanderous blight that seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear self is until God takes it out of its niche and sets himself there in its room.

Now God has said: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Could you go into the courts of heaven with any spot or speck of filth upon you? Would God's eye rest upon you with holy approbation, if it were possible for you to creep into the gates of heaven, and he saw a spot or wrinkle upon your face or your garments? No; his frown would meet your horrified countenance, and that frown would hurl you from the very battlements of heaven into the dismal depths of hell. And as you cannot go into the presence of God with any speck or spot upon you, you cannot take your idols into the courts of heavenly bliss. Self and pride and reputation, and the love of money and name and fame, these idols you cannot take with you into the courts of heaven, as Rachel took her father's teraphim and hid them under the camel's furniture. How God would be moved to jealousy could you carry an idol, were it no bigger than a child's doll, into the courts above. "From all your filthiness, and *from all your idols*, will I cleanse you."

III.—But I must just say a few words, and only a few words upon our last point, although I fear I have almost exhausted your time and patience—the *accompaniments* of the sprinkling with clean water. God has promised to give a new heart, a new spirit; to take away the stony heart out of the flesh and give us a heart of flesh.

The first effect then of the clean water is to take away the stony heart out of the flesh. A stony heart is an obdurate, an impenitent heart, that cannot be and is not moved by anything to sorrow or to repentance. God, when he sprinkles the clean water, takes away the stony heart; and what does he give in its room? A heart of flesh. I reminded you just now that one of the first effects of regenerating grace was an enlightened understanding. I will now give you another early mark of quickening grace. A *soft* heart. You felt yourself wonderfully moved under some discourse; the

stony heart gave way; the heart of flesh was given; you were melted to tears; your impenitence was dissolved, your obduracy removed, and you found, to your astonishment, that the old stony heart that had so long resisted everything that looked like mercy was removed out of your breast, and there was a soft, tender, humble, penitent, believing, loving heart given in its room. Wherever the clean water is sprinkled there goes with it the taking away of the heart of stone, and the giving of the heart of flesh.

And this is expressed further by the *new heart*, which embraces with new affections heavenly objects presented to it, where faith and hope and love graciously dwell.

And with this new heart there is "a new spirit," whereby we worship God in spirit and in truth; believe, understand, and relish spiritual things; are made spiritually minded which is life and peace; and being made partakers of the Spirit of God, are thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I would that time and strength were given to me, and patience to you to enlarge more, but I have spoken enough if God is pleased to bless the word, for one occasion, this morning. The Lord add his blessing.



## **Coming and Singing in the Height of Zion**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 28, 1867

"Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Jeremiah 31:12

Our text and subject this evening are very closely connected with our text and subject this morning; indeed, so closely connected are they, not only in the sequence of the verses, but also in the sequence of the blessings, that when I went up into the pulpit this morning it was my intention to take both verses and attempt to speak from them. But before I gave out my text, it struck my mind that the subject was so vast and copious that I could scarcely hope to consider it in the course of one sermon as fully as it deserved, and I therefore decided to divide it into two discourses, the result of which is that not only was I enabled to enter more fully this morning into the nature of redemption both by price and by power, but hope to have this evening a clearer and wider field to lay open before you the rich and choice blessings which flow out of redemption as they are folded up in the bosom of our text.

You will perhaps recollect that there was a point on which I touched this morning which I said was, in the language of the apostle, a mystery, and I expressed a wish that I could unfold it more fully, as involving much precious truth. This mystery was, the right of us Gentile believers to claim an interest in the promises made originally to the Jews, and, as I believe, to be one day both literally and spiritually fulfilled to and in them. If then you will kindly bear with me, I will take the present opportunity to open this point a little more fully and clearly.

The apostle tells us that God by revelation made known to him a

mystery, which he calls "the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3, 4.) The word "mystery" in the New Testament does not mean something dark, obscure, and perplexing, but a divine secret, a gracious purpose of God, hidden for a time in his own bosom; and the revealing of a mystery does not signify some mystical communication of a secret intention of God to an individual, of which he alone is the favoured object, but the bringing to open light and the public proclamation of hidden purposes of mercy in God to thousands and tens of thousands. Thus the calling of the Gentiles and putting them into possession of the promises and blessings of the Gospel, was "the mystery" of which Paul speaks as "hidden from ages and generations," that is, the ages and generations which had run their course from the call of Abraham to the time of the coming of Christ; and the revelation of the mystery was the making known "unto the holy apostles and prophets" (that is, the preachers of the gospel under the New Testament) by the Spirit of the purpose of God, that believing Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with believing Jews, be members with them of the same mystical body of Christ, and be equal partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. (Eph. 3:3-6.)

Now connected with and flowing out of this leading mystery, is the peculiar point on which I touched this morning, viz., the right which believing Gentiles possess to appropriate to themselves the promises made to the Jews in the Old Testament, and to give them a spiritual interpretation. This I consider to be a point of very great importance, and yet, strange to say, it is one very little understood, and as rarely opened or explained. Indeed, you will scarcely find in a hundred ministers one who ever opens it, and among the religious books which are most in our hands any one, to my knowledge, which has even attempted to explain it. They all, whether ministers or books, seem to assume the point as a matter of course, and as one so plain and clear that it is not needful to bestow a word of explanation upon it. But if these promises were given to the literal Israel, as seems to me to be undeniable, should we not be able to establish a clear right to claim them as belonging to us? And unless we can plainly show that we have this clear right, might it not be an act of

presumption for us to rest upon them as if they were actually given to us by God himself, and therefore that he will fulfil them spiritually and experimentally to us? I do not say that we have not this right; I believe that we have it. But it is one thing to have a right, and another to know the grounds of it. You may be the lawful owner and rightful possessor of a piece of land but you ought to be able to show your title to it if enquiry be made into your right of possession. Look then simply at this matter as it stands before us. If a man make a will and insert a certain name or names in it as heirs and legatees of all his property, what right has any other person to claim an interest in the provisions and benefits of that will whose name is not put down in it either as an heir or a legatee? Now if you will read the chapter carefully from which my text is taken (Jer. 31), I think you will see very clearly that it is addressed to the literal Israel. Look for instance at the very first verse: "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." Does not the Lord here promise that he will at a certain time be "the God of all the families of Israel?" Now must not this mean the literal Israel, for it says in the preceding chapter "For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it?" (Jer. 30:3) Does not the Lord declare there that he will cause the literal Israel to return to the land from which they are now banished, which he gave to their fathers, and that they shall possess it? But take another verse: "Again I will build thee and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel." Who is "the virgin of Israel" but the ancient people whom God had separated and espoused unto himself from all the nations of the earth? When we read the historical declaration, "The virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing" (Jer. 18:13), we are ready enough to say, "Ah, that means the Jews of old;" but when we read the prophetic declaration, "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel," though the very words, "Again I will build thee," seem to point, expressly to the repairing of what is ruined and desolate, we say, "No; we must not take the words literally. They do not refer to the literal Israel; they must be

taken altogether spiritually." Thus we give to the Jews all the threatenings, and take to ourselves all the promises. Now I don't call this fair.

But look again at a more distinct promise: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." (Jer. 31. 8.) How distinctly does the Lord here promise that he will bring the literal Israel "from the north country and gather it from the coasts of the earth." Where do the Jews now live but in countries north of their own, such as England, Germany, Poland, &c., and are they not scattered in all the coasts of the earth? Is not he who has scattered them able to gather them?

But you will perhaps say, "This is to carnalise the Scriptures. Such prophecies as these must not be explained in that literal manner. They are all spiritual promises, and have nothing to do with the literal Israel; they must all be spiritually and experimentally understood, and to interpret them in that literal way is to rob believers of all the comfort of the promises of the Old Testament." Do you think that I am against the spiritual interpretation of these and similar Old Testament promises? Do you think because I contend that they will one day be fulfilled literally, that I believe that they are not now fulfilled spiritually? If I did not think so, why should I preach from such a text as I have read this evening? I believe in their spiritual interpretation as fully as you do; and if I hold with their literal interpretation, it is not to carnalise them, but to give them a wider, fuller, and even more spiritual interpretation than if I were to limit them to believers under our present dispensation. Let me then explain this point a little more fully.

Israel of old were God's people only by external covenant, and as such typically represented a people with whom God had made a covenant in a much higher, holier, and more glorious way. Whatever privileges, then, such as "the adoption, and the glory,

and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4), which Israel possessed, these external favours could not communicate spiritual life, or make them as a nation partakers of that internal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Circumcision of the flesh could not give circumcision of heart; and their very sacrifices, new moons, and sabbaths, became, through the wickedness of the observers of them, hated of God, and he was weary to bear them. (Isa. 1:14.) We find therefore that the Jewish people abused all their privileges, went greater lengths into open sin than even the heathen by whom they were surrounded, and by their profanity and wickedness made the name of God blasphemed among the heathen. God never intended therefore that they as a people should be saved with an everlasting salvation, nor be put as a nation into possession of those spiritual blessings allotted to the people of whom they were the typical representatives. These were reserved for the elect of God, for those who were chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began, and were to be made known to them in due time by the power and teaching of the Spirit. But the literal Israel, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, rejected him. They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us: crucify him! crucify him!" "Not this man, but Barabbas." Thus they were justly served in the righteous judgment of God; for as they rejected the Son of God, so God rejected them. The apostle therefore, in Romans 11, as I was quoting this morning, unfolds this subject under the figure of an olive tree. This olive tree, which the apostle calls "a good olive tree," as distinct from the "wild olive tree," which bare no good fruit, represents the literal Israel. Now when the literal Israel rejected the Lord of life and glory, they were for a time cast off. This is represented by breaking off the branches, "because of unbelief." The breaking off then of these natural branches gave an opportunity for the grafting in of Gentile believers, who thereby are made partakers of all the blessings and all the promises which belong to the literal Israel. This is expressed in those striking words, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and then, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." (Rom. 11:17.) To partake of the root and fatness

of the olive tree is to partake of everything that belongs originally to the good olive tree, and therefore of all the promises made to the literal Israel. And as this is a spiritual dispensation, and the literal promises do not belong to us, they still being Israel's portion, we have the peculiar blessing of their spiritual fulfilment and of their experimental interpretation.

This then is the reason why these promises belong to us, and are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. It is because believing Gentiles have succeeded to Israel's place, and because this is a spiritual dispensation, in which we now look not for the fulfilment of temporal but spiritual promises, that I take our text in a spiritual sense, and shall seek this evening to lay before you, in a spiritual and experimental way, the choice blessings promised in it. I shall seek therefore now to direct your thoughts to three leading points which seem contained in it.

I.—*First*, the *place* to which the redeemed come: it is said to be "the height of Zion."

II.—*Secondly*, the *way* by which they are brought.

III.—*Thirdly*, the *blessings* for which they come.

I.—I observed just now that the words of our text were closely connected with our subject this morning. This, you will recollect, was the redemption of Jacob from the hand of him that was stronger than he. This redemption I interpreted spiritually as being the redemption wrought out by the Lord, first by price and then by power. But I may now observe, that I fully believe there will be one day a literal redemption of the literal Israel by power as well as a spiritual redemption of the spiritual Israel by price; and these are not inconsistent with one another, for they only of the literal Israel will be redeemed by power who have been previously redeemed by price.

Now observe the connection of my text with the text and subject this morning. "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." (Jer.

31:11.) "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion." The word "therefore" connects redemption with the blessings which flow out of it.

But what is the meaning of coming and singing in the height of Zion? Am I departing from the grand current of God's truth if I express my belief that there will be a literal coming of the literal Israel to the local and natural Zion, as there is now a coming of the spiritual Israel to the spiritual Zion? And am I departing from the oracles of God in thus tracing out two distinct courses of the prophetic word? Have you never seen how two streams sometimes run for a while side by side till they unite in one and form a large and beautiful river? So it is with these two interpretations of the prophetic word. The literal interpretation which belongs to the literal Israel, as yet unfulfilled, flows side by side with the spiritual interpretation which belongs to the spiritual Israel now fulfilled daily, until both streams will more fully unite in times to come, when there will be in Christ a complete fulfilment of every prophecy and of every promise. The prophecies and promises of God's word are so vast that they cannot and should not be tied and limited to one mode of fulfilment only. But some now seem to be much of the same spirit with the Jews of old. They could not bear the thought that the Gentiles should have any share in the promised blessings of the Old Testament. When, therefore, Paul, making his defence before the Jewish people, told them the words which the Lord had spoken to him, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," they were so inflamed with wrath that he should preach salvation to the Gentiles that though they gave him audience unto this word, then they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." (Acts 22:21, 22.) So now if one drop a word about the future restoration of the Jews to their own land and to a place in God's favour, some are almost ready to say, "Away with such a doctrine; it is not fit that any one should hold it who stands in a pulpit as a living, experimental man of God."

But I was to show you *the place* to which the redeemed come. It

is called in our text "the height of Zion." What then is the meaning of Zion, and why is it called "the height of Zion?" Zion has two significations: one local and literal, and the other spiritual and experimental. The two are intimately connected because the spiritual meaning is always based upon the literal.

Let us look first then at the *literal* and local meaning. Zion means literally "a sunny place," "a sunny mountain"—a spot therefore which basks in all the light and heat of the glorious sun. The literal Zion was, you will recollect, a steep, precipitous cliff in Jerusalem, so strong by nature and so fortified by art that the Benjamites who occupied the lower part of the city could never drive out the Jebusites who were the ancient possessors of that stronghold: "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." (Joshua 15:63.) But David, we read, attacked this fortress, which was so strong that the Jebusites tauntingly sent him word, "except thou take away the blind and the lame," that is the blind and lame soldiers whom out of mockery they had set to defend the walls, "thou shalt not come in hither." But David through Joab, who was made for that exploit his chief captain, took it by force, and upon that spot thus won by the sword and thence called the city of David he afterwards built his palace. Mount Zion, then, was not the place on which the temple stood, as it is often explained. The temple stood on Mount Moriah, which was separated from Mount Zion by a very deep valley, and which faced the east as Mount Zion faced the south. As then the spiritual signification of a type is always based upon the literal, Mount Zion does not typify the temple, nor the things connected with the temple, but it represents the city of David in which was the royal palace which he built for his own residence. There he took up his royal abode; there he dwelt in regal majesty; thence he issued his laws; and there he displayed himself as king over Israel and Judah. It is very desirable to have clear views upon this point, for otherwise we shall miss the meaning of the figure. Zion, therefore, spiritually understood, does not represent Christ crucified, but Christ glorified; not Christ on the cross, but Christ



at the right hand of God; Christ as King, not Christ as priest; Christ as Lord and Head of the Church, not Christ as shedding his blood to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. If Zion had represented the temple, it would have represented the sacrifices of the temple, and would have been a type of Christ in his humiliation. But representing the royal city of David, it becomes a New Testament emblem of the present exaltation of Christ dwelling in regal majesty at the right hand of God. Paul therefore says: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12:22, 23.) Observe how Mount Zion stands in connection with the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Are not all these glorious accompaniments of a risen and exalted Christ?

For this reason, therefore, we may view Zion as typical of the gospel and the blessings of the gospel, as Mount Sinai was typical of the law and the curses of the law. And it is so because it is the proclamation of mercy and peace, of grace and truth, which the enthroned King sends forth by his servants from the seat of his glory. The blessed Lord having accomplished the whole work of redemption, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, having redeemed Jacob by the price of his own blood, having been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and now being risen from the dead, gone up on high, and at God's right hand in all the power of regal majesty, sends forth his word out of Zion in a precious gospel, as a proclamation of mercy; and his servants go forth as messengers of peace to proclaim the battle fought, the victory won, salvation accomplished, Christ risen, and at the right hand of the Father as King in Zion and Prince of peace.

Now till the redeemed know something of the efficacy of atoning blood and have their consciences purged from guilt and filth by its

application, they cannot come and sing in the height of Zion. But when they are redeemed from the hand of him who is stronger than they; when atoning blood is applied to their consciences to purge away guilt and filth; when Christ is revealed and made experimentally known; when his gospel in the hands of the Spirit becomes a word of power, and a view of the King in his beauty is granted to the believing heart, then, drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man, they come to Zion where the King sits enthroned in glory. It is called "the height of Zion" not only because Zion was high literally, but because the Lord of life and glory is exalted to the highest place of dignity and power. God's ancient promise was, "Behold, my servant shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high" (Isa. 52:13); and the apostle says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9); and again "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." (Eph. 1:21.) But why do they come? It is to commune with him, to worship him in the beauty of holiness, to get words from his lips, smiles from his face, touches from his hand, and whispers from his lips. And when he is graciously pleased to speak a word to them as Prince of peace, to reveal himself to their souls in the glory of his divine Person as God-Man, and to shed abroad his love in their hearts, then they can sing, and in them is the promise fulfilled, "they shall come and sing in the height of Zion."

II.—But let me now show *how* they come, *how* they are brought; but to do this I must take you back a few verses. If you will refer to verse 9 of this chapter you will find it written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." I believe for my part that there will be a literal fulfilment of these words when the Lord brings again the captivity of Jacob, and has mercy upon the whole house of Israel (Ezek. 39:25); but I will not dwell upon this point, as I have already spoken so much upon it, but explain them as fulfilled spiritually in

the experience of those who are brought by the power of God's grace to come and sing in the height of Zion.

1. The first thing said of them is, "They shall come *with weeping.*" Wherever God begins a gracious work in the soul, he takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh. Repentance, true repentance, is the first step in the divine life. "Repent and be converted," was the word preached by Peter to the Jews, "that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19.) "Repentance and remission of sins," according to the Lord's command, was to be preached "in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47.) And Paul's ministry was "to testify both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." True religion, then, begins with a sorrowful heart and weeping eyes. Wherever there is a spiritual conviction of sin, there will be penitential grief and godly sorrow on account of it; and it is by this godly sorrow, this brokenness of heart, this contrition of spirit, this penitential grief, that the true convictions wrought by the blessed Spirit are distinguished from those mere natural convictions under which the heart is as hard as adamant and as full of rebellion as Satan himself. It is in this broken heart—broken up with the plough of convictions, that the seed of the word takes root; and the deeper, for the most part, the convictions, and the more pungent the grief and sorrow for sin, the deeper root will the word of grace strike into the soul.

2. The next mark is, "With *supplications* will I lead them." Wherever the blessed Spirit convinces the soul truly of sin, he gives a spirit of prayer and supplication. This is another distinctive mark of a true work of grace. "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications" was the ancient promise (Zech. 12:10); and this is being continually fulfilled in the experience of every quickened soul. A spirit of prayer in a broken heart is a sure mark of the grace of God. A prayerless heart is a godless heart; and a prayerful heart is a gracious heart. Weeping and supplications go hand in hand and help and strengthen each

other; for the same grace which makes us feel our need of mercy enables us to sue for mercy. Prayer without a soft and broken heart is but the prayer of a Pharisee; convictions without prayer are but the repentance of a Judas.

But observe how the whole of their path from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion is marked with weeping and supplications. Every step of the way, so to speak, they water with their tears, and along the whole road they travel with supplications. Not that they are always weeping, not that they are always praying. I do not mean that; but as the Lord works in them by his Spirit and grace, they come with weeping, and with supplications does he lead them. As Hart says:

"Not for an hour, a day, or week  
Do saints repentance own;  
But all the time the Lord they seek  
At sin they grieve and groan."

Nothing is so bitter, nothing so grieves, nothing is such a trouble to the child of God, as sin; and glad is he, though it is in some sense a sorrowful gladness, when he can truly weep on account of his sins and mourn over them with godly sorrow. When then together with this broken heart and weeping eyes there is mingled the spirit of prayer and supplication, then the two work together. A broken heart works with and helps a praying spirit; and a praying spirit works with and helps a broken heart.

3. The third mark is, that the Lord causes them "to *walk by the rivers of waters* in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble." I think we may understand these rivers of waters as spiritually signifying those continual supplies of grace and life whereby the soul is kept alive unto God; for the communications of divine life to the soul are continually spoken of in Scripture under the figure of water, and of water as springing up or flowing. Thus our Lord speaks of the water that he gives as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," and promises that "he that believeth on him, out of his belly, or heart, shall flow rivers of living water."

John in vision saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Ezekiel too had a wondrous sight of a river that took its rise on the right side of the house at the south side of the altar. (Ezek. 47:1.) These testimonies show clearly that flowing water represents the communications of life and grace to the soul. Thus these weeping penitents are led by the rivers of water to intimate the continual supplies of the life and grace of God; and as pilgrims that travel by a river side are continually watered and refreshed by the stream, so the communications of God's grace maintain the life of God in their soul. As then they walk by the rivers of waters they are continually refreshed by that river which maketh glad the city of God.

4. And this is the reason why they walk "in a *straight way*, wherein they shall not stumble." All the paths of the flesh are paths of crookedness and deceit. But this way, the way of God's leading and bringing, is a straight way; and being upheld by the power of God, they neither stumble nor fall, but walk securely on till they reach Mount Zion.

5. But the Holy Ghost in our text points out also another way whereby they are brought and made to come and sing in the height of Zion: "And shall *flow together*."

By this is meant not merely a large assemblage of ransomed people all going forward to the same point, and flowing like a mighty river to Zion as standing before their eyes. This may be and probably is its literal meaning, and will be fulfilled when those whom the Lord will lead by the rivers of water will move Zionward with one heart and one soul; but I shall give it a deeper, more spiritual, and experimental meaning as fulfilled in the hearts and affections of the living family of God. It will thus describe the flowing together of their hearts and affections Zionwards; the melting of their souls into all the mingled softness and strength of a running stream; the union which they have with the truth of God, and with their fellow travellers who, like themselves, come with weeping and are led with supplications. We shall by and by

see how they flow together to the goodness of the Lord, and how a sense of his goodness having led them to repentance, they move Zionward with a holy freedom of soul; for they have been made willing in the day of God's power. The Lord has manifested himself to their souls; they have tasted that he is gracious, and have felt a sense of his goodness in their heart. Views and glimpses of the King in his beauty, as he sits enthroned in Zion, put forth a drawing efficacy, as we read in a preceding verse: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) It is these drawings of everlasting love; these discoveries of the suitability, blessedness, grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus which have a wondrous efficacy in drawing up to himself the tenderest feeling of their soul. His grace makes their heart flow down into meekness, humility, and brokenness; it softens their obdurate spirit, and makes every hard and obstinate feeling melt away and disappear, like the flowing down of ice and snow under the beams of a warm sun. When this is the case, every grace of the Spirit flows in sweet union with this broken, meekened, humbled, and softened spirit; and thus there is a flowing forth of faith to embrace the Son of God; a flowing forth of hope to anchor within the veil; a flowing forth of love to his dear name, and a flowing forth of godly sorrow for having so grievously sinned against him. And as every grace of the blessed Spirit unites with the rest in sweet harmony, there is a flowing together of the whole inward man to one point and to one object—to Zion, and to Zion's enthroned King. All enmity, prejudice, dislike, all strife and contention, all pride and self-righteousness, all carnality and worldly-mindedness, and everything which is opposed to the life and power of God sink out of sight, buried as it were in the waves of the flowing stream.

Even literally and locally we see this promise fulfilled. Have not many of you this evening flowed together to one spot with one object—to see once more the King in his beauty, to hear once more the words of his grace? Though some of you perhaps have come rather sighing than singing, rather sorrowing than rejoicing,

rather lamenting your state as sinners than glorying in a full and free salvation, yet still those that sigh and those that sing can flow together. All are setting their face Zionward; those that sigh in hopes that they may sing; those that sing in hopes that they may sing in higher strains, and from a renewed sight of the King in his beauty, sound more loudly his worthy praise. Thus you all whose hearts God has touched flow together. If you come with weeping and are being led with supplications, your faces are set Zionwards; and if enabled to sing, your song is still one of the songs of Zion, for thither you are bending your way with your mourning brethren. In this way the goodness of the Lord attracts every gracious heart, and to enjoy a sense of this goodness makes them move with willing feet in the way that leads to Zion.

III.—I have now to show you *the blessings* which they come to obtain.

All spiritual blessings may be said to be laid up in Mount Zion, according to that testimony of the apostle that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. 1:3.)

i. I have already pointed out that Zion represents the royal seat of our exalted King. He is sitting in regal majesty in heavenly places; and as God has blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, they are stored up in Christ as King in Zion. Now the Lord graciously inspires his believing people with a taste for these spiritual blessings, a longing heart for them, a spiritual appetite which can feed upon them, and an earnest desire to be put into living possession of them. Some of the choicest of these spiritual blessings are mentioned in our text.

1. The first mentioned is "*wheat*." By this we must understand not wheat simply in its pure, natural state, for wheat unground is not human food, but that which is made of wheat, viz., bread; and spiritually interpreted we may understand it as representing the bread of life of which the Lord spake so graciously (John 6) when he called himself "the bread of life," and declared that he

was "the living bread which came down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof and not die." Having, then, a keen appetite—for they are brought out of captivity where they were half starved; out of the prison cell, where their food was scanty and their water measured;—they come to Zion to feed upon the bread which God has stored up there. Christ himself in his Person, work, blood, and righteousness is indeed chiefly the bread for which they come; but we may also say that every sweet promise, every holy truth, every gracious invitation, every comforting declaration in the word of truth, and everything that savours of a risen Christ and gives them some taste of the sweetness and blessedness which are in him, is to them some of the finest of the wheat as springing out of and connected with him who is the bread of life. Happy soul is that which only living bread can satisfy, and which, under the teachings and drawings of the blessed Spirit, comes to Zion with weeping and supplications that it may feed upon living bread and thus live for ever.

2. They come also for *wine*. They want a cordial. Their hearts are often faint within them, their spirits drooping, and they want something that can strengthen their sinking soul, and cheer and encourage their weary mind. There is a wondrous wine of which we read that it "cheereth God and man." (Judges 9:13.) This cannot be wine literally, for the juice of the grape cannot cheer the heart of God; but when we view it in a spiritual sense as representing the atoning blood of the Son of God, we then see the beauty of the expression. For was not the obedience of his dear Son even to death most pleasing and grateful to his heavenly Father? To get, then, a sip of this gospel wine—the wine of the kingdom, the good old wine that is laid up in Zion as a cordial for the poor thirsty ones who are pining for something to relieve their fainting spirit, do the redeemed come to Zion; for the Lord has there laid up not only bread to satisfy their appetite, but wine to satisfy their thirst. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart," was the wise counsel of the mother of Lemuel to her royal son. (Prov. 31:6.) So the Lord has stored up in Zion strong drink for him that is ready to perish—the strong drink of eternal truth, and the wine



of gospel grace to cheer those that be of heavy heart. What are you who are ready to faint and are of heavy heart come here for this evening? Is it not to get some of this good old wine? And if the Lord be pleased to drop a sweet promise into your soul, to apply his word with power to your heart, it will be a sip and a taste of the wine of the kingdom which he has stored up in Zion.

3. They come also for *oil*, which in eastern countries is almost a necessary of life. We find therefore corn, wine, and oil put together in the Scriptures as special blessings given of God for bodily health and sustenance. "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." (Psalm 104:15.) Our bodies are so constituted that nature cannot be sustained without some food of a fatty kind, which we have in this climate in the shape of butter or the fat of meat. But butter can hardly be made in hot climates, and fat meat cannot be eaten without injury. God therefore has given the olive tree in rich abundance in those warm climes, that oil may supply the place of that fat food which is necessary for the human system, and which either cannot be obtained or is not consistent with health in those countries. Oil too is necessary in those hot, dry climates as an external application to supple the skin, remove the effects of dust and heat, and render the body healthy and comely. Thus taken internally oil serves for food, and applied externally for health, comfort, and comeliness.

But of course it has a spiritual meaning; and thus oil viewed spiritually is the unction of God's grace, the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, which not only feeds the soul as oil the body, but also supples and softens the heart and conscience, adorns and beautifies the inward man, and sanctifies the soul for the indwelling of God. This oil of heavenly grace is stored up in Zion; for a risen and glorified Christ has received gifts for the rebellious and sends down the Holy Ghost to testify of himself. Thus the redeemed come to Zion to get this oil. The servants of God want this oil when they preach, and the people of God want this oil when they hear. It is the unction of God's grace, the savour of his Spirit, the power of his presence, and the anointing

which teacheth all things and is truth and no lie attending the word, which make the gospel so precious when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

4. They come also for the *young of the flock*. By this we may understand the Lamb of God; for what is the young of the flock but the lamb? and what is the lamb spiritually viewed but "the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world"—the Lamb of God of which the Paschal lamb was a type and figure? Thus holy John saw "a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne." Although, then, Jesus is King of Zion, he is still the Lamb; and thus John heard millions of voices all saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," &c. They come therefore to the height of Zion to be fed with the flesh of the Lamb, to have a view by faith of the Lamb of God bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, that they may join in that song of praise, "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

5. But they come also for the *young of the herd*. This I interpret also of Christ; for as the young of the flock, being the lamb, was significant of the Lamb of God, so the young of the herd seems to signify the calf; and was not the fatted calf that was killed for the prodigal son, and on which they feasted merrily, significant of Christ? We might also refer to the sacrifice of a young bullock under the law as intimated by the expression "the young of the herd;" for we know that under the law sacrifices were taken both from the flock and from the herd; and that these sacrifices, whether it was that of a lamb or that of a bullock, equally pointed to the great sacrifice of Christ.

We thus see that all those blessings for which the redeemed come to Zion are typical of Christ. Is it wheat? It points to Christ. Is it wine? It points to Christ. Is it oil? It points to Christ. Is it the young of the flock—the lamb? It points to Christ. Is it the young of the herd—the calf or the bullock? It points to Christ. He is all in all, represented indeed under those various figures, and yet all insufficient to set forth his fulness and his beauty.

I have not time to enter more fully into these points, but you will see how the redeemed all come to the height of Zion, that they may feed upon the provisions that God has blessed Zion with. Nor do they come in vain. When they are enabled to come to the height of Zion, they find in rich profusion every blessing that their soul is in quest of; as we read: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Psalm 132:13, 14, 15.) Do they want the bread of life? There it is to be found. Do they want the wine of the kingdom? There it is to be had. Do they want the oil, the unction of God's grace? There it is stored in rich profusion. Do they want to feed upon the flesh of the Lamb? There the Lamb is enthroned in Zion. Or to partake of the fatted calf? There it is reserved for the prodigal who comes to his Father's house to receive a welcome in his embrace.

ii. And what is the effect? That their soul becomes as "*a watered garden.*" In Eastern climes a garden cannot exist without water, and soon becomes a parched desert. It needs continual irrigation from some river or stream even to obtain ordinary produce. Damascus, for instance, is celebrated for its gardens; but the reason is because the river Barrady, and other streams descending from the mountains, furnish the city and the plain with a constant supply of water, which is distributed into numerous canals, which irrigate the fields and gardens and clothe them with perpetual verdure. A watered garden therefore is a scriptural figure to represent a soul watered by the flowing in of God's goodness, love, and mercy. And as a garden dries up and becomes unfruitful without water, so it is with the souls of the redeemed. They need to be watered continually by the river of God's grace, to make them fruitful in every good word or work. How continually we feel parched up and dried; and how unable at such seasons we are to bring forth any fruit unto God. This makes us long for these streams, for the rivers of water in a dry land: for every grace of the Spirit seems to languish and droop without them.

But these waters flow from and are only to be had at Mount Zion. Mount Sinai yields none. That is literally a barren spot, for travellers tell us it is one of the most dry and desolate places on the earth; and it is spiritually more barren and dry than it is naturally. The law gives no wheat, wine, or oil; the law provides no young of the flock or of the herd. The world gives none of these things; sin gives none of these things. Nor can nature in its best and fairest shape yield one of these divine products. God has stored them up in Zion, and to Zion he brings all his redeemed, that they may there eat, drink, and be full. And as they come and sing in the heights of Zion, the Lord of the house, the Master of the banquet, says to them, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. All is cost free. Here is bread for the hungry; here is wine for the fainting; here is oil for the sickly; here is the lamb for the **[missing word?]** sprinkled with blood; and here is the fatted calf for the returning prodigal; and all without money and without price. Come and buy; come and eat. It is all free, for "in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isaiah 25:6.)

Thus the redeemed, when they are brought out from the hand of him that is stronger than they, delivered from the curse of the law, snatched from the power of sin, rescued from the hand of Satan, made conquerors over death and hell, freed from their foes and saved from their fears, come, drawn by the blessed Spirit, to the height of Zion, and there they find all these provisions laid up for them, with a full table, a flowing cup, a kind Entertainer, and a cheerful welcome.

iii. Now this whilst it lasts puts an end to their sorrows, for our text declares, "And they shall not sorrow any more at all." Why indeed need they, when they get these rich mercies, and are put into possession of these heavenly blessings? But how their previous path has prepared them for these enjoyments and employments! What a benefit they have gained from groaning under the law, from having been tortured by sin, tempted by

Satan, hated by the world, shot at by foes, and encompassed with fears! What lessons they have learnt in this salutary school! They have learnt their need of a Redeemer, of the ransoming blood of the Lord of life and glory; and they have learnt what he can do for the soul which he has redeemed by his blood; what his wisdom can contrive, his power perform, his love accomplish, and his grace be sufficient for. Thus there is no coming and singing in the height of Zion, there to feast upon the wheat, and wine, and oil, on the young of the flock and the herd, and for the soul to be like a watered garden, except by passing through the various things which I described this morning: knowing experimentally something of the curse of the law, the power of sin, the strength of Satan, the opposition of the world, the fear of death, the dread of hell, and the enmity of many foes; yet getting through atoning blood, and redeeming power, a deliverance from them; and as getting a deliverance from them, coming to him who has redeemed them, and is now risen from the dead, and sits enthroned in glory as Zion's King, and spreads the banquet for his redeemed, that they may come and sing in the height of Zion, and feed upon gospel delicacies.

This is God's way and we cannot reverse it. We might think and say foolishly, "What need of the prison house, of the bondage of the law, of the power of sin, the fear of death, the terrors of hell, the many fears? Could not all this be escaped? Why not come at once to the height of Zion, and there sing and rejoice, without all this preparatory work? Why not come and partake at once of the 'wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd?'" Why, we should not be prepared for those gospel delicacies. We should go to the feast in all our rags of self-righteousness, with all our legality and pharisaism, the love of sin in our breast, and the power of lust in our carnal mind; we should go in presumption, in arrogance, in vain confidence; not with broken hearts, contrite spirits, and weeping eyes; not as humble penitents saved by sovereign grace; not as poor prisoners redeemed by blood and power. We should go presumptuously, arrogantly, daringly, as thousands do. But knowing experimentally what we are, what we have been, and what we

are redeemed from, it produces humility, caution, circumspectness, tenderness, brokenness, and contrition, and prepares us for the gospel feast by giving us gospel grace. But all the redeemed, redeemed by price, and redeemed by power, will come and sing in the height of Zion; they will all have a new song put into their mouth; they will all be feasted with the wheat, and the oil, and wine, and the young of the flock and of the herd: their souls will be as a watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more.

There may be in this congregation many a poor prisoner under the law, under the power of sin, held in bonds of temptation, tempted by Satan, hated by the world, environed by foes, and encompassed by fears. Fear not: the Lord hath redeemed thee; he will bring thee out; he will manifest his power; he hath bought thee with his blood, and will save thee by his grace, and thou wilt come and sing in the height of Zion. And when thou comest thou wilt find wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, all prepared for thee, and thou wilt feast and be full, and bless the Lord of the house for the provisions he has stored, for the kindness of the invitation, and for the welcome he gives the guest.

O the mercy of redeeming love and atoning grace! O the blessedness of there being a King on Mount Zion, a high Priest over the house of God, an Intercessor that can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

## Coming up from the Wilderness

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, Oct. 18, 1857

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Solomon's Song 8:5

The Song of Solomon is altogether a spiritual book—as spiritual, because as much inspired by the Holy Ghost, as any other portion of the sacred volume. It is true that there are in it figures and images drawn from human love which the carnal mind may abuse; for what is there, however holy and sacred, which the perverse heart of man will not wantonly profane? Fire may be taken from God's altar to burn incense to an idol. A drunken profligate may feed his vile passions by looking upon the chastest and most virtuous female. An impure mind may pervert to wrong meanings the purest language. This is their sin and shame. But their abuse of what in itself is pure casts no taint upon, and communicates no defilement unto, the object itself. There is nothing in conjugal love, from which many of the figures of the Song of Solomon are taken; in itself impure, for that existed before the fall. It is of God's own appointment that the feeling or passion which is commonly called love should exist between the sexes; and when hallowed by God's own institution, marriage, there is nothing impure in conjugal affection: for Christian husbands are bidden by God himself to "love their wives;" and therefore there can be nothing impure in the chaste figures drawn from wedded love by the Holy Spirit. Man, it is true, has debased the pure passion of love by his own vile lusts; but God's own institution remains the same. The sin is with those who abuse it. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." If, then, we can read this sacred book under the unction and influence of the same Holy Spirit by whom it was inspired, and have in our bosom any measure of that divine love of which the representations of conjugal tenderness and affection are but dim and imperfect figures, we may draw water out of this sacred song, as from a well of salvation; and we may in the sweet intercourse and holy, affectionate communion that are here depicted as existing between Christ and the Church, find something corresponding to the experience of our own

hearts.

In the words before us an inquiry is made, and from the peculiar form in which it is couched, it would appear as if the person putting the question had a dim and indistinct view of two noble personages coming up side by side out of a dreary desert. The person who puts the question sees, we may assume, a lovely woman leaning upon a man who yet far outshines her in nobility of mien, beauty of person, and comeliness of aspect. Seeing this lovely woman, leaning on this comely and beautiful man, the question instantly and instinctively arises in the mind of the observer, to learn who she was; for there was something in her manner, appearance, gait, and whole demeanour that struck him with admiration. *Who*, then, is it that asks the question in the text? In this holy book there are for the most part but three speakers: the Bridegroom, the Bride, and the Daughters of Jerusalem. It cannot be the Bridegroom that here speaks, for he is spoken of as "*the beloved*." Nor can it be the Bride who puts the question, for she it is who is "*coming up*." It must, then, be the virgin Daughters of Jerusalem, who, struck with this unusual appearance in the wilderness, put to each other this question, expressive of their admiration as well as of inquiry:—"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"

In opening up these words, I shall, as the Lord may enable—

I.—*First*, endeavour to show *who* this is; in other words the *character* and *description* of the person coming up.

II.—*Secondly*, the *wilderness* in which the person spoken of at present is; for out of the wilderness the object looked at, is represented as coming.

III.—*Thirdly*, the *coming up* from the wilderness.

IV.—*Fourthly*, the posture in which she is seen, "*leaning upon her beloved*."

And the Lord enable me so to speak that power and unction, dew and savour, may accompany the word to your heart.

I.—"*Who* is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" No other



than the virgin bride of Christ—his chosen spouse, *the Church of God*. But by the term, the Church of God, we may understand not only Christ's bridal spouse, viewed as consisting of the "general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23); but we may also, following the language of Scripture, apply the words to a rather narrower circle. If we view the Church as the bride and spouse of Christ in the fullest sense of the word, then we must include in the term the whole of the redeemed, all for whom Christ laid down his precious life, and all who will be eternally in heaven worshipping and adoring a three-one God. This is the widest, broadest view of the Church of Christ. But we may also consider the Church in a somewhat narrower light—as representing the saints of God now upon earth—what is often called the "Church militant:" that is, the Church in her present suffering condition, as warring against Satan, the world, and the flesh, as distinct from the Church triumphant above. Not, then, to the Church in glory, but to the Church in grace, do the words apply which the Holy Ghost puts into the mouth of the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem—"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" But we may take a narrower view of the words even than this. We may bring the subject down, as I mean to do, to describe the experience of every living soul; for what is the Church below but an aggregate of believers? The Church of Christ upon earth is made up of believing men and women, who are all members of the mystical body of Jesus, who all have a certain work of grace upon their souls, and by means of which they are manifested as possessing a vital union with the Lord the Lamb. This is the view, then, which I shall take of the words in answering the question—"Who is this?" that I may not wander into loose and vague generalities, or merely entertain your minds with a doctrinal discourse about Christ and his Church, but bring the subject to bear closely and experimentally upon your heart and conscience. View, then, with me the person described as coming up out of the wilderness as an individual believer, a child of God, a saint of the Most High—not merely redeemed by atoning blood, but regenerated by effectual grace. View him also as possessing a vital union with the Lord Jesus—a union produced as well as evidenced by some manifestation of Christ to his soul. Let us be clear as well as decided upon these points, for such a one only, as I shall hope to show, can fully come up to the description given in the text, as coming up "leaning upon his beloved."

We need not, then, go very far to discover, in the light and life of the Spirit's teaching, *who* is this? The answer may be readily given: he is one made alive unto God by regenerating grace: one who knows something of the entrance of the word into his conscience, laying bare the secrets of his heart, and discovering the guilt, the filth, the evil, and the miserable consequences of sin. He is one who knows something of the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature. He is one who is separated from the world, whether dead in sin or dead in a profession, by a discriminating work of grace upon his heart. He is one who has been led to see the emptiness of a mere notional knowledge of the truth, without knowing experimentally, the healing power of love and blood. He is one who has been stripped of creature wisdom, human strength, and a fig-leaf righteousness, and been made to see that unless he has a vital interest in the blood and obedience of Jesus, he must perish in his sins. He is one whom God the Spirit has blessed with a living faith. And, by a "living faith," I mean a faith that works by love, purifies the heart, separates from the world, delivers from the power and practice of sin, overcomes the wicked one, receives grace and strength, life and power out of the fulness of Christ, and the end of which is the salvation of the soul. He is one who is blessed also with a good hope through grace: who has had some discovery of the Lord Jesus to his soul, so as to raise up in his heart a hope in his mercy, enabling him to cast forth that anchor which is both sure and steadfast, into that within the veil, where he rides secure from death and hell, and where, through upholding grace, he will outride every storm. He is one who is blessed with a vital union with the Lord Jesus; for he is said in the text to "*lean upon him*"—which implies that he has such a union with Jesus as enables him to rest wholly and solely upon him, and upon what he of God is made unto him. He is one who is also blessed and favoured at times not only with union, but with a measure of sweet and sacred communion with the Lord of life and glory; for to "*lean upon him*" implies that he is favoured with some such holy nearness as John had when he lay in his bosom. He is one, too, who is not ignorant of trial or temptation, for the wilderness finds him enough of both; nor is he one who is ignorant of sufferings, afflictions, and sorrows; for this is the distinctive character of the present wilderness condition. He is not unacquainted with spiritual hungering and thirsting, for the

wilderness in itself affords neither food nor water. Nor is he a stranger to the fiery flying serpents that haunt the wilderness, nor to the perils and dangers that encompass the traveller therein from the pestilential wind, the roving Arab, and the moving columns of sand.

But with all the vicissitudes of the wilderness, which he deeply and painfully feels, with all its dust upon his face and clothes, with all his swarthy visage and wearied gait, yet there is that in his mien and aspect which strikes a beholder, who has at least eyes to see what true grace is and does, with wonder and astonishment. A sinner saved is a spectacle for angels to contemplate. As the apostle says, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." The ancients used to say that "a good man struggling with difficulties was a sight for the gods to look at." We may say, with all Christian truth, that the mysteries of redemption are "things the angels desire to look into;" and among the mysteries of redemption, what greater than a redeemed sinner? That a man who deserves, by sin original and sin actual, nothing but the eternal wrath of God, should be lifted out of perdition justly merited into salvation to which he can have no claim, must indeed ever be a holy wonder. And that you or I should ever have been fixed on in the electing love of God—ever have been given to Jesus to redeem—ever quickened by the Spirit to feel our lost, ruined state—ever blessed with any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his saving grace,—this is and ever must be a matter of holy astonishment here, and will be a theme for endless praise hereafter. To see a man altogether so different from what he once was—once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned—to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state,—is not that a man to be looked at with wonder and admiration? To see another who might have pushed his way in the busy, bustling scenes of life, who might have had honors, riches, and everything the world had to bestow heaped upon his head, abandon all for Jesus' sake, and with Moses, "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,"—is not that man a wonder? To live whilst here on earth in union and communion with an invisible God—to talk to Jesus, whom the eye of sense has never seen, and whose voice the ear of sense has never heard; and yet to see him as

sensibly by the eye of faith as though the natural eye rested upon his glorious Person, and to hear his voice speaking into the inmost heart, as plainly and clearly as though the sound of his lips met the natural ear,—is not that a wonder too? To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus and one word from his peace-speaking lips to all the titles, honors, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow,—why surely if there be a wonder upon earth, that man is one. And so says the Lord himself—"Hear now, O, Joshua, the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men *wondered* at." (Zech. 3:8.) And again—"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for *wonders* in Israel." (Isaiah 8:18.) May we not, then, say with admiring as well as wondering eyes—"Who is this?" "Why, this man I knew, worldly, proud, ambitious, self-seeking. That man I knew given up to vanity and pride. The other I knew buried in politics, swallowed up in pleasure and gaiety, abandoned to every thing vile and sensual. But he is now become prayerful, watchful, tender-hearted, choosing the company of God's saints, giving up everything that his carnal mind once approved of and delighted in, and manifesting in his walk, conversation, and whole deportment that he is altogether a new creature." When we view such a man, especially if we see him for the first time after grace has changed his heart, well may we look at him a second time and say—"Who is this?" Was not this the very feeling of the disciples when Saul first "preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God?" "All that heard him were amazed and said, Is not this he that persecuted the Church of God?" So we look and wonder, and feel at times a holy joy that he who reigns at God's right hand is ever adding trophies to his immortal crown. And whenever we see any of those near and dear to us in the flesh—be it husband, wife, sister, brother, child, relative, or friend,—touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord, subdued by his grace, and wrought upon by his Spirit, then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder, but with the tenderest affection, mingled with the tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies. Thus far have I answered the question—"Who is this?" and have shown him to be a redeemed, regenerated, believing saint of God.

II.—But I pass on to show *where* the suffering Church of Christ now is; because she must evidently be *in* the wilderness before she can come *up* from it. The "wilderness" is a standing emblem

and figure in the word of God, and derives much of its significance from this circumstance—that in those countries there were, as there still are, vast tracts of desert sand. In this humid, favoured clime, where vegetation is so luxuriant and beautiful, we can scarcely picture to ourselves what a desert is in an almost tropical zone, where no blade of grass grows, and where all is waste and wild. But the regions east and south of Palestine are full of such barren tracts. That was one reason why a desert wilderness became a standing figure in God's word. Another reason is, because the children of Israel had wandered 40 years in the wilderness of Sin, which therefore became a standing emblem of the Church of God in her present, suffering condition. They sojourned there for 40 years, sustained by manna from heaven and water from the rock, as the Church of Christ lives now upon the bread of heaven and the streams of salvation.

But I have to explain, as the Lord may enable, why the present state and condition of the Church of God is compared to a wilderness; and there are certain features in a wilderness that set it forth in a very striking and experimental manner.

1. A wilderness is not only not cultivated, but it is *uncultivable*. No art of man can induce it to bring forth either fruit or flower. It is a barren sand—a wild tract on which the rays of the sun eternally beat; and there being but a wide, desolate waste of sand, nothing can possibly grow there which possesses vegetable life but a few stunted thorny shrubs. Such is the natural heart of man—not only not cultivated, but not cultivable. You never can get anything spiritually good to grow in man's carnal mind. I say *spiritually* good, because I am not speaking of anything naturally and morally good. When the Lord, then, would have good grow in a man's heart, he gives him a new heart and a new spirit; and in that new heart and new spirit the graces of the Blessed Spirit, planted there by his own hand, thrive and grow under his fostering eye. Whatever good there be in man, it is of the grace of God; for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. "From me," says the Lord, "is thy fruit found." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." It is true there still are some relics of the fall in natural kindness, compassion, benevolence, and a large amount of social affection; and there are many beautiful characters in the various

walks of life who, so far from being religious, would scorn even the very idea of a religious profession. It is indispensable to the very fabric of society that husbands should love their wives, parents their children, and that there should be a general tone of uprightness and morality pervading public thought and opinion. But here it begins and ends. The glory of God is not sought by them, and without this there is nothing spiritually good or acceptable in his sight. Justly, therefore, is the natural heart of man compared to "a wilderness," where dreariness and desolation ever reign.

2. But there is another reason why our present life is compared to a wilderness. It is a *solitary place*, as the Lord himself calls it. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them" (Isaiah 35:1). In the wilderness, no inhabitants dwell with fixed and settled abodes. Men pass through it, but they pass through it in haste. There are no towns or villages, busy cities, or crowded haunts of men. Mere migratory bands of roving Arabs, dwelling in tents, sweep over it like a cloud of rolling sand. So with this life: it is merely a state of transition. We have no abiding city here; no resting place; no home; but are always in a state of change. Like the roving Arab, we live in tents, pitched for the night; and, like the traveller described, Psl. 107, "wander in the wilderness in a solitary way, and find no city to dwell in." And this is true as much of our *heart* itself as of our present life. As the wilderness naturally is a place where men do not and cannot have any fixed habitation; so the heart of man, in our present state, is as restless as the moving sand, and as unsteady as the wearied foot that presses it. "Arise, depart, this is not your rest," sounds as with a trumpet tongue through the wilderness.

3. But there is another reason why the wilderness aptly represents our present state. In the wilderness, there are many *toils and sufferings*. The very circumstance of passing through it is a toil in itself. Had you under a burning sun to toil through sand perhaps half up to your knees, and that day after day—sometimes, maddened by the scorching rays beating upon your head; sometimes enveloped in clouds of dust; sometimes almost stifled by the pestilential winds that blow across the desert; with little food and less water—what labour and suffering would be your lot! And how again and again it would seem as if you were too faint and weary, when you cast your eye over the wide waste,

ever to hold out, or safely reach the place of your destination. So it is in grace. The toils and sorrows, labours and sufferings of the present life make it indeed a wilderness to all who truly fear God.

4. Again the wilderness was not only a place of severe toil and suffering, but one of great *peril and danger*. Moses reminds the children of Israel of "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought" (Deut. 8:15). Jeremiah speaks of "the Arabian in the wilderness" (3:2), as we know there are to this day various tribes of Bedouin Arabs, ever on the watch to seize the traveller, strip him of all his goods, treat him with violence, and leave him to perish in the sand. Violent winds also, alike noisome and pestilential, blow across the desert, as "the wind that smote the four corners of the house where Job's eldest son dwelt" (1:19), and such as "the blast" which God sent to smite the host of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:7, 35). Thus, besides the intrinsic perils of the wilderness, as a barren tract of sand, there were dangers of another kind that assailed the unhappy traveller. So it is in the things of God. There are fiery serpents and scorpions in our own hearts, in the sins that bite and pierce with envenomed tooth and sting. There is Satan, too, like a Bedouin Arab, with his long spear, always upon the prowl, and ever seeking to harass, if he cannot destroy. Winds also of temptation, both violent and pestilential, howl across the soul, as if they would overwhelm it with the power, and infect it with the poison of every inward and outward evil. And there are moving sands that threaten to stifle and suffocate the life of God within in the working up and rolling onward column of the corruptions of our own depraved Nature.

5. Once more: the wilderness *has no food*. The children of Israel were sustained by manna from heaven. The wilderness *had no water*. The children of Israel had to drink of the rock that followed them. So of this world. In a wilderness world, there is no food; in a wilderness heart, no water. Famine and thirst are perils enough, were there no other to stamp the desert with its own peculiar character.

For these reasons—and there are doubtless others that I have not mentioned—the present state of the Church of God is compared in Scripture to a wilderness; and every child of God has to prove it, sooner or later, in his own experience. He has to learn in and

for himself that solitary way, that path of trial, temptation, and exercise, which will make him feel this vale of tears is not his fixed abode; that it is not life to live here, nor is happiness to be found below the skies; that if he is to have happiness unmixed with sorrow and woe, it must be when he has dropped the body and has passed into the mansions of glory, where tears are wiped from off all faces.

III.—Pass we on to our third point, which is the description given of the bride as "*coming up*." She is described by the Holy Spirit as sojourning in the wilderness, but she is not viewed by him as in its very heart and centre; for she is represented as "*coming up*." Now, how does she come up? When she can leave, so to speak, the wilderness behind her in her feelings; and, so experimentally come out of it, as, in the anticipations of her soul, to be looking forward to a country altogether different from it. If you had literally to travel through a wilderness like the great Sahara of Africa, or the deserts of Arabia, your eyes would be continually looking forward that they might see on the horizon the land to which you were bending your steps—not a wilderness like the region in which you were travelling, but a land of brooks and streams, where you might find food and shelter, rest and repose. Now every desire of your heart to get over the wilderness, every stretching forth of your anxious mind to be delivered from the toils and perils that surround you, would, in fact, be mentally coming up, though many a weary mile might still intervene.

1. To come up, then, from the wilderness, is *first*, to come up *out of ourselves*; for we are ourselves the wilderness. It is our wilderness heart that makes the world what it is to us:—our own barren frames—our own desert, solitary, and bewildered minds—our own worthlessness, inability, and want of spiritual fruitfulness,—our own trials, temptations, and exercises—our own hungering and thirsting after righteousness;—in a word, it is what passes in our own bosom that makes the world to us a dreary desert. Carnal people find the world no wilderness. It is an Eden to them; or, at least, they try hard to make it so. They seek all their pleasure from, and build all their happiness upon it; nor do they dream of any other harvest of joy and delight, but what may be repaid in this happy vale, where youth, health, and good spirits are ever imagining new scenes of gratification. But the child of grace, exercised with a thousand difficulties, passing



through many temporal and spiritual sorrows, and inwardly grieved with his own want of heavenly fruitfulness, finds the wilderness within. But he still comes up out of it, and this he does by looking upward with believing eyes to him who alone can bring him out. He comes up out of his own righteousness, and shelters himself under Christ's righteousness; out of his own strength, and trusts to Christ's strength; out of his own wisdom, and hangs upon Jesus' wisdom; and out of his own tempted, tried, bewildered, and perplexed condition to find rest and peace in the finished work of the Son of God. And thus he comes up out of the wilderness of self, not actually, but experimentally. Every desire of his soul to be delivered from a wilderness condition is, in fact, a coming up. Every heart-sickening sight that he has of sin and of himself as a sinner; every aspiration after Jesus; every longing look, earnest sigh, piteous cry, or labouring groan, all are a "coming up." Every act of faith upon his gracious Majesty; every casting of his soul upon him who is able to save to the uttermost; every feeling of love, every tender thought and affectionate desire, with all the struggling of his spiritual faculties, all the straining of his anxious eye, all the stretching forth of his longing arms to embrace the Lord the Lamb, and get a manifestation of his love to his soul,—may all be summed up in the expression, "a coming up from the wilderness." His turning his back upon an ungodly world; renouncing its pleasures, its honours, its pride, and its ambition; seeking union and communion with Jesus as his chief delight; and accounting all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord as revealed to his soul by the power of God,—this, too, is coming up from the wilderness. Giving up everything inconsistent with the Lord's grace and glory; renouncing everything which has not the stamp of God's approbation upon it; tearing himself from friends, however near and dear, if they would keep him from the Lord, if they would throw their arms around him to prevent him leaving them for Christ; struggling out of all the twinings of sin, all the embraces of unhallowed desire, all the suggestions of pride, all the workings of self-righteousness, and all the sinkings of despair;—to break away from these ties and fetters, and to stretch forth the hands of faith to embrace Jesus who alone can deliver him from his destruction,—this is coming up from the wilderness. To love the dear saints of God; to desire to walk with them in sweet affection and holy fellowship; to esteem them the excellent of the earth; to make them our choice companions, is

also a coming up from the wilderness, because they too are all coming up: and we come up with them in heart and soul. It is then as if the saints of God took each other by the hand and said—"Come along, brother; come along, sister; let us come out of the world; let us leave this wilderness in which we have so long dwelt; let us journey onwards to a heavenly country. Home is in sight. Heaven is in view. Those who have gone before us have safely reached the heavenly country. They all came up from the wilderness; they all came out of the world; and they all looked to and leant upon Jesus. Let us come up together as they did. Let us join hands, hearts, and affections, and all as one band come up from the wilderness, and walk in sweet union, as men whose hearts God has touched."

But I may further remark that it does not say—"Who is this that *is* come up?" nor "Who is this that *will* come up?" But, "Who is this that *cometh* up?" She is ever coming up and yet never comes out; ever coming up and yet still in: coming out of self, and yet often miserably entangled with self; coming up from her own righteousness, and yet often ensnared by her own righteousness; coming up out of sin, and yet, inwardly at least, often entangled in sin; coming up out of temptation, and yet often overcome by temptation; coming up out of everything ungodly, and yet often bowed down by what is ungodly; coming up out of doubt and fear, and yet held back by doubt and fear; coming up out of unbelief, and yet continually fettered by unbelief; coming up out of sorrow, and yet again and again overwhelmed by sorrow;—so she is ever coming up, ever coming up, and yet till death snaps the slender thread, never fully comes out; or if for a few moments she does come out into any sweet enjoyment of Christ's love, yet again and again she falls back to her old state; again and again she has to sojourn in the wilderness. She thus resembles the children of Israel, who in the first year of their pilgrimage came to the borders of the promised land, and yet had to retrace their steps to the Red Sea.

IV.—But the fourth and last thing said of her is that she is "*leaning upon her beloved.*" She has then a choice companion; and if I know anything of her heart, she would not have any other. It is sweet, you know, for those who love one another to be together: two lovers are quite sufficient company for each other, and a third would only be an intruder. So it is with the

Church of Christ, and her glorious covenant Head. She is the best of all company, when she is with him; for she is leaning upon one who is dear to her, and to whom she is more than equally dear; for she can love him only with a human heart, but he can love her with a divine. He loves her with the heart of God, and we at best can only love him with the heart of man. As much, therefore, as God exceeds man, so does the love of Christ to his church exceed the love of the church to Christ. Do you think you can by any calculation within your reach measure the breadth, length, depth, or height of the love of Christ? Before you can do that, you must be able to measure God. And as you cannot measure him, who is infinite, you can never measure, as you never can comprehend, the love of Christ, for "it passeth knowledge." But "we love him because he first loved us." We have but a drop of his love, at best, in our soul; he has the ocean of love in his own heart. We may have a ray out of the sun; but the sun himself is full of rays. A ray may burst through a cloud, or shine through a chink in a shutter; but that ray is not the sun. He has millions of rays beside that one. So the Lord may shine upon a sinner's heart with a beam of his love or a ray of his glory; but when he has given that, he still has in himself all the fulness of God. He has millions and millions and millions of beams and rays of love wherewith to shine upon his saints, both in heaven and earth. Now it is a reflection of his love that makes us love him; and so far as we have a measure of love to his most blessed Majesty, we *lean* upon him. That posture implies weakness, and yet tender affection. It is a comely sight to see a wife leaning upon a husband's arm: it is her privilege to lean, as it is his privilege to support. But it is not a comely sight to see a loose woman hanging on a man's arm. So in grace. It is a comely sight to see Christ and the church in sweet union. But it would not be a comely sight to see your son walking down the street with a prostitute. That would be no pleasing scene to meet a father's eye. To see him walking with his wife might make you admire his attentive affection; to see him arm in arm with one who is a disgrace to her sex would shock your every feeling. Thus to see the church in union with Christ, and as such leaning on him, is a comely sight. But to see professors of religion arm in arm with the world—I leave the application of the figure to you.

To "lean upon" Christ as "her beloved" is for the church to lean upon his glorious Person as the God-man—upon his covenant

engagements—upon his unchanging love—upon his atoning blood—upon his justifying obedience;—in a word, upon all that he is as Jesus. Thus to lean upon him is to rest all that we have for time and eternity wholly upon the Son of God and his finished work. And this the Church of God is here represented as doing. The Holy Ghost brings her before our mind as coming up from a wilderness world "leaning upon her beloved." And who can the Church's "beloved" be but Jesus?

Is that your posture? Would the virgin daughters of Jerusalem, if they looked upon you, say, with holy, wonder—"Who is this man coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon his beloved?" Would they see you coming up in prayer, desire, and supplication? Would they behold you at any time on your knees looking up with longing eye, or in the enjoyment of manifested mercy, leaning, like John, upon his bosom? Would they view you having, or even desiring to have, any union or communion with Jesus? And would such say of you—"This person is coming up out of the wilderness, and he is leaning upon Jesus as his beloved?" Could any friend or relative say of you—"Who is this man that was once buried in the world—whom I once knew so light and trifling, so proud and vain, so given up to sin and self? O how Christ is now his all! What an alteration!" Or would the saints of God say of you—"How this man has come out of self, and how evidently he is leaning upon Jesus?" Would any one that knows you and fears God say this of you?

Now if you can find anything in your soul's experience corresponding to what the Holy Ghost has laid down in our text, you are manifestly one of Christ's dear people; you belong to the Church of God; you are coming up out of the wilderness; you are leaning upon your beloved. And leaning upon him here, you will see him face to face hereafter. You will be with him in bliss; and the day will come when you will see him without a veil between, and admire, adore, and enjoy him to all eternity.

## **A COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST AND A THRONE OF GRACE**

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 27, 1847

"For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb 4:15, 16

What reason the church of Christ has to bless God for the epistles that issued from Paul's inspired pen! And though it may seem scarcely right to select one epistle more than another as pregnant with heavenly instruction, yet, I think, we may safely say, that the epistle to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews, have, of all the epistles, been most signally blessed to the church of the living God. And when for a moment we contrast their author, Paul the Apostle, with Saul of Tarsus, O how striking, how miraculous was the change that grace made in him!

Let us take our thoughts backward to three particular seasons in the life of Saul of Tarsus. View him, first, at the feet of Gamaliel imbibing from his lips that traditionary law, that code of rites and ceremonies, which forms at the present day the religion of Israel. Had it then been whispered in his ear, 'The time will come when you will declare these things to be "weak and beggarly elements," trample them under your feet, and scatter them to the four winds of heaven.' Would not that youth have said, 'Perish the thought!'

Move a step further in the life of Saul of Tarsus. View him working out his own righteousness, striving to set up a religion whereby he could please God, and force his way to heaven. Had one then whispered in his ear, 'The time will come when all your hope will rest upon justification by the obedience of another,' he would have said, 'That time never will come; the sun may as well

cease to rise as for me to look to another's righteousness whereby to be justified.'

Take one step further, and view him keeping the clothes of the witnesses, who had stripped themselves lest their loose garments might encumber them, while they were, according to the Mosaic law, to throw the first stone at Stephen. Had one then whispered in his ear, 'The time will come when you will believe in Jesus of Nazareth and die for his name.' would not the thought of his heart have been, 'Let me rather die first than that such an event should ever come to pass?' But, doubtless, these very circumstances in Paul's life were mysteriously overruled for the profit of the church of God. For he, having been in these states, has been able to trace out with clearer evidence and more powerful argument the truth as it is in Jesus, from having experimentally known both sides of the question.

The grand object of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to set forth the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Into that subject we cannot now fully enter; and yet our text leads us **(and may the Lord lead us by the text)** into some attempt to shew who this High Priest is, of whom the apostle here speaks. And I think the simplest, and therefore the best division of the subject will be, to shew, as the Lord may enable, in the **first** place, the mind of the Spirit in the 15th verse, (Heb. 4:15) "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin:" and **secondly**, the **exhortation** which flows from, and is based upon the priesthood of Immanuel, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

I.—I need scarcely take up your time by shewing at any length in what way the high priest under the law was a type and figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, there are certain points of resemblance, and certain points of difference, which it will be desirable to enter into, in order to illustrate and set forth more

clearly the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in the words before us.

There were three points of **resemblance (there were more, but I confine myself to three)** between the high priest under the law and the great "High Priest over the house of God." The first was, that the high priest offered sacrifices; the second, that he made intercession for the sins of the people on the great day of atonement, by taking incense beaten small, and, putting it on the coals which were taken off the brazen altar, with it entered into the most holy place: (Lev. 16:12, 13) and the third, that he blessed the people. (Num. 6:23)

Now, in these three points did the high priest under the law beautifully resemble and set forth the great "High Priest over the house of God." But O, how feeble the resemblance! how dim the type! how shadowy the figure! The high priest under the law could only offer the blood of bulls and goats, which can never take away sin; the great "High Priest over the house of God" offered himself—his own body and his own soul—that precious, precious blood, which "cleanseth from all sin." The high priest under the law could only offer incense upon the coals taken from off the brazen altar; the great "High Priest over the house of God" is offering daily the virtue of his sacrifice by "making intercession for us." The high priest under the law could only pronounce the blessing in so many words; he could not **give** or communicate that blessing to the soul; the great "High Priest over the house of God" can and does bless the soul with the sweet manifestations of his lovingkindness and tender mercy.

But again. There are points of **difference**, as well as points of resemblance,

i. The high priest under the law was but a man; the great "High Priest over the house of God" is God-man, "Immanuel, God with us," the eternal "Son of the Father, in truth and love," having taken our nature into union with his own divine and glorious Person.

ii. The high priest under the law died in course of years, and was succeeded by a high priest as mortal as himself; (Heb. 7:23) but the great High Priest above liveth for evermore to "make intercession for us."

iii. The high priest under the law might be **(and the apostle seems to make some allusion to the circumstance here)** one who had no sympathy nor fellow-feeling for the infirmities and sins of those for whom he made sacrifice; he might be like some of our priestly Dons who seem all holiness, and have no tender heart to feel compassion for backsliders, and those that are out of the way: but the great "High Priest over the house of God," the apostle here says, is one that is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

iv. The high priest under the law might be, or might not be, tempted: he might be, or he might not be, a man who knew the plague of his own heart and the workings of his fallen nature, and therefore might not be "tempted in all points" like unto those for whom he might sacrifice: but the great "High Priest over the house of God" was "tempted in all points like as we are." and therefore can have, and has a fellow feeling for the tempted,

v. The high priest under the law was a sinner: but the great "High Priest over the house of God" is spotless, without sin, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." But the two points to which the apostle here refers, and on which I shall, with God's blessing, now more especially enlarge, are:

1. **First**, that our great High Priest, Jesus, is one that is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and therefore divinely suitable to us who are encompassed with infirmities. Here lies the grand distinction betwixt the child of God quickened into a sense of his deeply-fallen condition, and a self-righteous pharisee. The child of God, spiritually taught and convinced, is deeply sensible of his infirmities, yea, that he is compassed with infirmities, that he is



nothing else but infirmities: and therefore the great High Priest to whom he comes as a burdened sinner—the Lord Jesus, to whom he has recourse in the depth of his extremity, and at whose feet he falls overwhelmed with a sense of his helplessness, sin, misery, and guilt, is so suitable to him as one "touched with the feeling of his infirmity."

We should, if left to our own conceptions, fancy naturally that Jesus is too holy to look down in compassion on a filthy, guilty wretch like you and me. 'Surely, surely, he will spurn us from his feet; surely, surely, his holy eyes cannot look upon us in our blood, guilt, filth, wretchedness, misery, and shame; surely, surely, he cannot bestow one heart's thought, one moment's sympathy, or feel one spark of love towards those who are so unlike him.' Nature, sense, and reason would thus argue, I must be holy, perfectly holy, for Jesus to love; I must be pure, perfectly pure, spotless and sinless, for Jesus to think of.' But that I, a sinful, guilty, defiled wretch—that I, encompassed with infirmities—that I, whose heart is a cage of unclean birds—that I, stained and polluted with a thousand iniquities—that I can have any inheritance in him, or that he can have any love or compassion towards me—nature, sense, and reason—religion, natural religion in all its shapes and forms, revolts from the idea.

And therefore, to set forth the difference betwixt this compassionate, loving, merciful, tender-hearted High Priest, and such a stoical priest as passed by the bleeding one who had fallen among thieves, and would not turn his eyes lest he should be polluted by seeing blood in the path—to contrast, I say, this tender-hearted High Priest with such an unfeeling, religious stoic as this **(and many such proud, religious stoics have we in the pulpit and in the pew)** the apostle says, "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." It is as though he would thereby specially address himself to the poor, burdened child of God who feels his infirmities, who cannot boast of his own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and consistency, but is all weakness and helplessness. It seems as if he would address himself to the case

of such a helpless wretch, and pour a sweet cordial into his bleeding conscience. It is almost as if he said, What! thinkest thou, dear friend, that the great "High Priest over the house of God" will spurn thee away because he is so holy? No; we have not such a High Priest as this.' There is the negative. 'Let others have them, if they will; let others rejoice in such priests as they may; let them have all the comfort they can get from them.' 'Not so with us, dear brethren,' he would say. 'We, the children of God; we, that know each his own plague and his own sore; we, who carry about with us day by day a body of sin and death, that makes us lament, sigh, and groan; we who know painfully what it is to be encompassed with infirmities: we, who come to his feet as being nothing and having nothing but sin and woe; "we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities:" but One who carries in his bosom that sympathizing, merciful, feeling, tender, and compassionate heart that he carried here below.'

There is no change in him; for he is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever;" one and the same Jesus that wept when he saw the tears running from the eyes of the Jews who would comfort Martha and Mary; the same Jesus who did not reject the woman with the issue of blood when she crept through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment: the same Jesus who listened to the cry of the Syro-phenician woman, and heard her prayer: the same Jesus who went about doing good, and had tears to weep over human misery and sorrow: the same tender-hearted, merciful, and compassionate Jesus is **now** at the right hand of God: therefore "touched"—how sweet the word! Do we not know something experimentally of it, when someone comes to us with a tale of woe: and we see the tear, not of the hypocrite, but of unfeigned sorrow, trickling down the cheek? or when a child of God comes to us, tells us how he is burdened with sin and guilt, and sets forth in sincerity and godly simplicity the exercises of his heart—are we not "touched?" Is there not a melting of the soul? a breaking down of heart? He may have come into our company, and we sat stern and unfeeling; we may have looked with a suspicious eye upon him, and doubted whether he had any grace

at all in his heart; but let him open his mouth, let grace be clearly manifested in him, are we not "touched?" Is not our heart melted and softened? and is there not a sweet union felt betwixt him and us?

Carry this, spiritually, into the idea of our text. This compassionate High Priest is "touched," when we come with our sins, sorrows, infirmities, and complaints, and confess those things which from time to time burden and distress our minds. We have not to deal with an unfeeling, hard-hearted, stoical high priest, who scorns us, turns his eye away from us, and says, 'Until you are very much holier, I can have nothing to do with you.' But his heart is touched, and softened "with the feeling of our infirmities." There are some who have the abominable presumption to say, 'Away with your frames and feelings!' These presumptuous wretches might as well say, 'Away with Jesus! away with the great "High Priest over the house of God!" as to say, 'Away with feeling!' For is he not "touched with the feeling of our infirmities?" Destroy feeling! and you do all that lies in your power to destroy the great "High Priest over the house of God."

Take away feeling out of my heart! you do all in your power to deny there is feeling in the heart of Immanuel. Shall he be "touched with feeling," and you and I never be touched with feeling? Shall frames and feelings be ridiculed, and contempt poured out upon them, when the Holy Ghost here sets forth Immanuel as "touched with the feeling of our infirmities?" Blessings be upon his name: immortal honours crown his brow, that he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," that he is not that stoical High Priest which some would set him forth: but that he has a tender heart, which melts, moves, and yearns over our infirmities and sorrows. And I am bold to say, that we can have no communion with the Lord Jesus Christ except we know he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." When I go to a man, and tell him my infirmity and sinfulness, if he assume a stern look, as though he were so holy that I must not go into his presence, does not that daunt me? Can I tell out the feelings of

my soul—can I open the secrets of my heart to one that has no sympathy? As Hart says,

A faithful friend of grief partakes:  
But union can be none  
Betwixt a heart like melting wax  
And hearts are hard as stone:  
Betwixt a head diffusing blood,  
And members sound and whole;  
Betwixt an agonizing God  
And an unfeeling soul.

There can be no true union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ except so far as we know that he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" that we have his ear, and can pour into his ear the feelings of our soul; that we have his heart, and when we tell him what we suffer, his heart too is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." But O how numerous are these infirmities! The whole evening might be taken up with but a slight description of them; infirmities in faith, in hope, in love, in prayer, in reading the word, in preaching, in hearing—infirmities all the day long, so far as we are left to ourselves. And yet this blessed, merciful, compassionate High Priest can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

2. But we pass on to consider the **second** point which the Holy Ghost has here brought forward, connected with this compassionate High Priest—that he was "**in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**" I feel that I tread here upon very tender ground. I must move cautiously, very cautiously, lest I be betrayed into confusion and error. The Holy Ghost seems to me to have marked out the road by boundaries on each side: and as long as we keep within these boundaries, we keep to the mind of the Holy Ghost. What is one boundary? We must not pass it: "tempted in all points like as we are." What is the other boundary? "Yet without sin." Between these two boundaries we may safely walk.

Are you tempted? Then you may see for your comfort, if the Lord is pleased to apply it to your soul, that Jesus was "tempted in all points" like as you. But then, there is this difference betwixt the blessed Immanuel and you and me, that when we are tempted it is not without sin. But he was "tempted in all points," like as we are, "yet without sin." Sin never touched him; it recoiled, if I may use the expression, from his holy, sinless, spotless nature. Sin charged upon him was the grief of his soul; but sin never found an entrance into his holy, spotless nature. Satan might hurl his darts against him; but "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." But it is not so with us. When temptation comes, there is that in our heart which responds to it. And this makes temptation to be such a dangerous and painful thing to a child of God, that there is that in his fallen nature which answers to the temptation; there is that in him which temptation suits, meets, and intertwines with; so that only by the grace of God is he kept in every hour of temptation.

Now, I believe firmly, that every child of God will have to endure temptation. James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations:" and he adds, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." (James. 1:2; James. 1:12) Peter says, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." (1 Pet. 1:6) And when Paul was recounting, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle before us, the sufferings of the noble army of worthies, he says, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were **tempted**, were slain with the sword." (Heb. 11:37) Thus these saints of God, in their day and generation, were tempted: and you and I, so far as we are saints, and children of God, must be tempted too. But how numerous and various are our temptations! Some of these temptations are carnal: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life:" with all those base workings of our deeply-fallen nature, which are better alluded to than described. Then there are temptations to infidelity, temptations to error and heresy, temptations to deny the truth of God, temptations to doubt the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the personality of the Holy Ghost: in fact, there is not one

branch of truth against which the most subtle temptations do not easily find an entrance into the carnal mind, yea, temptations too base to name, too horrible even to hint at.

Now here is the difference betwixt the Lord Jesus Christ and us—that these temptations fell upon his holy and spotless nature, but never entered into it: but these temptations do find access to us. 'But if that be the case,' one may say, 'how can the Lord Jesus Christ feel a sympathy for a poor tempted sinner like me? The Son of God was spotless, holy, harmless, undefiled: and I am sinful, evil, and wicked. I feel something within me that closes in with temptation. I have never heard of an error in which I have not found something for my heart to lay hold of. I never hear of a sin without there being something in my heart that seems at once to close in with it. Heresy cannot come abroad without there being something in me that is ready to fall in with it. If the Lord Jesus Christ, then, were tempted like as we are, what is the difference between him and us in this matter?' I would ask you, what is it in us that makes us feel temptation and groan and cry beneath its weight? What is it that makes us hate sin, abhor heresy, and cleave to the truth—which makes us look to the Lord to deliver us from the power of sin, and trample temptation under our feet? The grace of God in the soul; is it not? The Holy Ghost, we would fain hope, having raised up, through mercy, in our hearts a spiritual and new nature that sees the temptation, feels the temptation, hates the temptation, groans under the temptation and flees unto God to deliver us from the temptation.

Now, if temptation is painful to us, it is only painful so far as we are partakers of grace. Temptation is not painful to the ungodly: it creates no agonizing feelings in the dead sinner; but those whose consciences are made and kept alive, those who desire in their heart and soul to love God and live to his glory, and to hate with perfect hatred everything that he hates: they, and they alone, feel, groan, sigh, cry, and lament deeply under the power of temptation.

Now if we who know and feel so little, find temptation a weight and burden, let us look at the Lord Jesus Christ. How his holy, spotless human nature must have felt, groaned, grieved under, and recoiled from the arrows of hell shot by the infernal king of darkness! How his holy soul must have shuddered at those things, which were presented to that spotless human nature which he took into union with his own divine Person! Thus, though the Lord Jesus Christ was "tempted in all points, like as we are"—so that there is not a single temptation, trial, or painful feeling which we may experience, that he has not experienced before us—yet through mercy, infinite mercy, he was "without sin;" without one spot, or speck, or tinge of the slightest evil. He stood spotless amid the darts of hell, spotless amid the temptations that were shot like hail against his holy human nature. It is this that so fitted him to become a High Priest—that he is thereby "touched with the feeling of our infirmity." When we go to the Lord Jesus Christ, and tell him how tempted we are, what a burden sin is to our soul, what snares are laid for our feet, how our mind is exercised with this and the other feeling; how we long after a deliverance from the gins, traps, and snares spread for our feet—we go not to one who knows nothing of these things through internal experience. He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." O what two sweet features in the blessed Jesus—perfect holiness, and yet thorough acquaintance with temptation! And how these features mutually harmonizing draw forth from time to time the affections of our soul unto him! If he were not "tempted in all points like as we are," we should not go to him with our temptations; if he were not "without sin," he could not be the great "High Priest over the house of God."

Thus we see in the Lord Jesus Christ a union of two apparently conflicting things—a perfect acquaintance with temptation in all its shapes and forms—a thorough experimental knowledge of it, the only true knowledge—and an entire exemption from sin. Do men decry experience? It is no less than taking the crown off the mediatorial brow: it is doing what is in their power to dethrone Jesus from his high priesthood. Had **He** not an experimental acquaintance with temptation? Did he look down upon temptation

as something he had no acquaintance with, no experience of? something seen in theory, something beneath his feet, but which his holy soul never entered into? No: he had a personal, deep experience of it: and therefore, so far as we have a deep and personal experience of temptation, how it seems to draw forth the feelings of our soul and the affections of our heart, that, tempted as we are, we can go to him as one who has been tempted!

And, on the other hand, when we can see his spotless holiness shining through all, this very holiness of his draws forth the reverence of our soul toward him, and the tenderest affection and love of our heart. So that, just as the union of the Godhead and of the manhood in one glorious Immanuel, draws forth the affection and reverence of our soul towards him as God-Man: so the union of perfect holiness and thorough acquaintance with temptation, draws out the sympathy and tenderness of our heart towards him, and draws forth too the sympathy and tenderness of his heart toward us.

Thus, the apostle says, "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of **our** infirmities." Was Paul a man who knew infirmities? Yes, deeply. He tells us that he gloried in them, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. (2 Cor. 12:9) Was Paul's faith, or hope, or love ever weak? Did he feel helplessness, and mourn and sigh beneath sin? Deeply, deeply. Did he get upon some lofty pinnacle, far away from human infirmity, helplessness, and misery? No; he descended more deeply into it than you or I. Was he a man who stood apart and away from temptation, clear from "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life?" Were the darts of hell never shot against him with infernal fury? "Tempted in all points like as **we** are." Strike out that word "we." It cannot be "**our** infirmities," if Paul had none; it cannot be "tempted like as **we** are," if Paul never was tempted. If he had stood upon some lofty spot, far away from infirmities, far away from temptation, he would have written a lie, had he said "**our** infirmities," and "tempted like as **we** are."



But Paul could look on the whole church of God, in their infirmities, and say, 'Like you, dear brethren, I am full of infirmities: I am tempted, dear brethren, as you are.' And I may say more: if we have none of these infirmities and temptations, these words will not suit us. Men may speak great swelling words about the Christ of God: but I am bold to say, they have got far away from Christ who have got far away from temptations and infirmities. It is through felt infirmity that we go to the great High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities:" it is through felt temptation that we come into a personal knowledge of our divine and spiritual union with that great High Priest who was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

I would add one word more. The more we are compassed with infirmity, the more we shall come to him: and the more we are tempted, the more, as the Spirit leads us, shall we have sweet and blessed communion with him. Hard hearts, unfeeling conscience—what communion have these with such an Immanuel as the scriptures set forth? But God's poor, needy, tried, and exercised family, burdened with infirmities, and assailed with a thousand temptations, through those very infirmities and temptations come to have union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

II.—The apostle, therefore, adds, **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."** Observe the word "therefore." What is the meaning of that word? It implies a connection with the preceding verses. What had been his drift in the preceding part of the text? "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; let us"—What **us?** proud **us?** presumptuous **us?** unfeeling **us?** dead, dry, notional, Calvinistic **us?** O no; no such us as that. But **we** whose minds are exercised, **we** whose souls are labouring under burdens and difficulties, **we** who feel ourselves to be lost, ruined, undone sinners, **we** who are acquainted with the desperate evils of our fallen nature, **we** that know, painfully know, what

infirmities and temptations are—"let us," none else—"let us come." Why? Because we have infirmities? because we have temptations? Not so; but because we have a great High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" because we have a great High Priest who has been "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

That is the foundation of the "therefore." Our infirmities, our temptations are not a sufficient warrant. We must indeed have infirmities, otherwise we cannot go to him who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities:" we must have temptations, or we cannot know him who has been tempted like as we are tempted. But besides this, we must have faith given us to see this great High Priest: we must have hope given us to cast anchor within the veil: we must have love given us that our heart's affection may flow forth towards him. We must therefore feel the leadings of the Spirit drawing us to his blessed feet; we must have our eyes anointed with divine eye-salve to see his beauty and glory, and our hearts touched by the blessed Spirit to feel the power of his love and blood.

Thus these two things combined—our misery and his mercy, our infirmities and help laid upon One that is mighty, our temptation and the succour he affords to us in our temptation, our wounded spirit and his tender heart—when these two things are combined and felt in our soul's experience, then we are drawn to a throne of grace. And this is the foundation of the "therefore;" the reason, the spiritual reason, why we should come, and why we do come.

1. But he says, "**boldly.**" What does that mean? Presumptuously? God forbid! Recklessly? Never let us entertain the thought. Self-righteously! Perish the supposition. In myself? No; let myself ever be a mass of ruin. What does boldness, then, imply? Holy boldness, spiritual boldness: not reckless daring, not pharisaical presumption, not self-righteous ignorance of God's perfections, and thus rushing upon the thick bosses of his buckler. But that boldness which is consistent with the deepest

reverence of the holy God; that union of godly fear and spiritual confidence which is raised up in the soul by a sense of what I am and of what Jesus is to me. "Let us come boldly," in opposition to slavish fear; "let us come boldly," in opposition to an apprehension that because he is so holy he will spurn me from his footstool. So that to come "boldly," is to come not with daring hardness, not with self-righteousness, not with ignorance; but to come under the sweet drawings of the blessed Spirit confidently, and yet not presumptuously—boldly, and yet not recklessly; the ground of our boldness being, not what we are in ourselves, but what the "great High Priest over the house of God" is to us.

2. But where are we to "come?" To "**the throne of grace.**" How much this word is used! but it is to be feared how little its sweet and solemn import is understood! Look at the words. We use words sometimes till we use them like parrots: without knowing or feeling their divine meaning. "A throne of grace!" What does it mean? Let us analyse the expression. Grace is here represented as sitting enthroned: in other words, grace as a king, as the apostle elsewhere says, "reigning through righteousness unto eternal life." Grace embodied in the Person of Immanuel is "the throne of grace." Then, where grace sits embodied in the Person of Immanuel, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, where grace superabounds over the abounding of sin, where grace wins the day in spite of guilt, sin and shame; where grace sits like a monarch upon his throne, swaying his sceptre over his willing subjects—**there** is "the throne of grace."

Now, look at it in this way. Perhaps you fall upon your knees before you go to bed; and call this 'going to a throne of grace,' when all the time you are upon your knees there is not one feeling in your soul that grace is reigning through righteousness to justify, pardon, and bless you. A mere dropping upon your knee, a mere stuttering out of a few formal petitions is called 'going to a throne of grace.' So ministers will use a set of mill-horse petitions, and call it 'going to a throne of grace,' when they are ignorant what "a throne of grace" is, and never think when

they run their unmeaning round of senseless words, what "a throne of grace" really and virtually means.

To come to "a throne of grace" is to come to that spot where grace reigns, where grace wields its blessed sceptre, where grace flows out of the fulness of Immanuel, as the rays of light and heat flow out of the sun—and flows into the heart of sinners to pardon their sins, heal their backslidings, save their souls, and deliver them from the bottomless pit. To come thus feelingly to "a throne of grace," how different, O how different from falling upon our knees and tumbling out a few senseless petitions with our mind's eye at the very end of the earth! To feel our souls encompassed with infirmities, assailed with a thousand temptations, and yet by faith to catch a view of the great "High Priest over the house of God;" to see and know that he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and was "tempted in all points like as we are," for the very purpose that grace might reign through righteousness, that grace might be manifested in his blood and obedience, that grace might deliver our souls from the bottomless pit, that grace might flow into our hearts and comfort our cast-down spirits, that grace might reign triumphant in us—so to come (**but O, how rarely we come so**) is really to come to "a throne of grace."

But we can only come thus when labouring under the burden of infirmities. It is my infirmities that make "the throne of grace" precious. The more temptations I have, the more grace I want: the more infirmities I feel, the more the superaboundings of grace are needful for my soul. The connection, therefore, between my infirmities and temptations and "the throne of grace," is the closest imaginable. We come that these infirmities may be pardoned, and we strengthened under them; that we may be delivered from these temptations, and supported under them while they are working together for our spiritual good.

3. **"That we may obtain mercy."** What **"we? We** find mercy!" Surely the apostle slipped in a wrong word here. Had he not obtained mercy? Had he not found pardon and peace? Had not

the Lord Jesus been made precious to his soul? Yet he says, "that **we** may find mercy." What says Mr. Hart? "Begging mercy every hour." O yes. The man that knows he is a sinner, who feels sin deeply and daily, cannot be satisfied with having found mercy once in his life, with having once tasted the mercy of God in his soul. I will tell you those who are so satisfied—those who are **not** compassed with infirmities, those who are **not** tempted nor tried.

But those who are compassed with infirmities, who find themselves little else but one mass of infirmity, and are tempted with a thousand temptations—**their** sins are so great, **their** backslidings are so many, **their** inward iniquities and enormities are of such an aggravated cast, that they want mercy, mercy, mercy. Mercy for every unclean desire, mercy for every foolish, trifling word, mercy for every angry or unbecoming expression, mercy for every look, mercy for every thought, mercy for every prayer; and if ministers, mercy for every sermon: for sin, wretched sin, is so mingled with all we think, say, or do, that we want mercy again and again, again and again, to be manifested and revealed to our souls. But what makes us want it? and where are we to go to get it? Why, it is infirmity and temptation that make us want it, and we must go to "a throne of grace" to obtain it. When then we can look to Jesus, see him with mercy in his hands and love in his heart, find his glorious grace triumphant over a thousand sins and backslidings, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, and rising with its mighty tide over all the workings of our filthy nature, and receive it into our hearts—this is going to "a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy."

4. And not only "obtain mercy," but to "**find grace to help in time of need.**" What! had not the apostle got beyond "time of need?" Surely he must have learnt his lesson very imperfectly. Had he not the 'five points' all well established in his creed? O yes; but he had his "time of need." And how often was that? Once a year? once in two years? or once in ten years? I am bold to say, that his "time of need" never outstretched a day. I should not go too far, if I were to say his "time of need" never

outstretched an hour. What is a "time of need?" Every time that we feel infirmity, every time that we are exercised with temptation. If I feel my infirmities, and know I shall be carried away by them unless grace prevent; if I have temptations, and find they will swallow me up unless grace be in counteraction to overcome them, and deliver me from them, it will be with me "a time of need." So that, the more I am encompassed with infirmities, and the more I feel the weight and power of temptation, the more multiplied my "times of need" are.

But is not this drawing a vast revenue of grace out of Christ Jesus? Those whose "times of need" are very rare do not want much grace. If they have very few infirmities and very few temptations, it is a contradiction in terms to say they want "grace to help." But in proportion to the multiplication of our infirmities, and in proportion to the multiplication of our temptations, will be our want of "grace to help in time of need."

So that would we prize, deeply prize, the sweetness of mercy, we must walk in the midst of infirmity, and be compassed with temptation. Would we find grace, the sweetness of grace, the power of grace, the blessedness of grace, we must have "times of need," in order to bring us to "a throne of grace." Are there not **(to our shame be it spoken)** many times when we seem to need nothing? No exercises of soul, no temptations, no trials, no inward going out of the heart after the things of God? When there are these seasons **(and they are too, too many)** there is no going to "a throne of grace." therefore, there is no "obtaining mercy," no "finding grace to help in time of need." But, on the other hand, when we are compassed with infirmities, exercised with temptations, these are "times of need." Here is a snare I shall fall into, if grace do not prevent: there is a temptation that will carry me away, if grace do not help; here are my sins opening their jaws to swallow me up, if grace do not save me; Satan is alluring me in a thousand forms, and grace alone can deliver me from his wiles. So that I draw forth grace out of the compassionate High Priest, just in proportion to my spiritual

knowledge of infirmities, and my spiritual acquaintance with temptation in its various shapes and forms.

Who, then, are the people who really know Jesus, and have union with him? The proud, presumptuous, unexercised, light, trifling, hard-hearted, dry Calvinists, with a clear, well-defined scheme in their head, but as devoid of grace as the white of an egg is of taste? No; they may talk about Jesus with great swelling words. Christ may be first, Christ may be last, and Christ may be their whole theme; yet an unknown Christ, an unfelt Christ, an unapplied Christ, an unenjoyed Christ; because it is through infirmities alone that we can have fellowship with him who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and it is through temptation alone we come to know him who was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." But would not you, many a time, have for ever done with infirmities, your greatest plague, and with temptation, your sorest pain? Would he not be your greatest friend who would take away all your infirmities, and keep temptation from ever coming into your soul? Your friend, your friend! And have you not thought sometimes you would get under such a ministry, where infirmities and temptations were never touched upon? Your friend, your friend!—your greatest enemy, your greatest enemy!

Take away infirmities, take away temptation, and you take away coming to "the throne of grace:" you take away sweet union to the great High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmity." Take away your trials, your afflictions, your various inward exercises, and you take away prayer out of your soul, sighing and groaning to the Lord, breathing after his presence within, and sweet communion with him. Take away your infirmities and your temptations, and you take away a good part of your religion. Not that religion consists in these things; but the comings in of the mercy and grace of God are so blended with infirmities and temptations, that if you take away the one, you take away the other.

Now do we not see a little of the sweet connection of our text? Here we have the great "High Priest over the house of God," "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin;" and though we are thus infirm, and thus tempted, the Holy Ghost invites and bids us, and at times sweetly draws us, to come to this "throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." So that, while on the one hand, there is every encouragement for the poor, needy, helpless, tried, and tempted, there is not the shadow of a shade of encouragement for those who are at ease in Zion, and have a name to live while dead.

The Lord encourage us from time to time who know these things in our soul's experience to come to "a throne of grace." Though separated in body, we can meet there in spirit. And sure I am, from personal experience, the more we know of these infirmities and temptations, the more we shall go to "a throne of grace." And when from time to time we "obtain mercy and find grace to help," we can bless the Lord God Almighty that ever there should be such "a throne of grace," and such a merciful, loving, compassionate High Priest seated upon it, to comfort, save, and bless our never-dying souls.



## **A Confessing Sinner, and a Forgiving God**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 9, 1846

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
1 John 1:8, 9

Perfection in Christ the Scriptures are full of; perfection in man the Scriptures know not. The whole testimony of God in his word is to perfection in Christ. Every Scripture that speaks of his Godhead declares his perfection: for what is there but perfection in Godhead? And every passage that speaks of his humanity declares his perfection: for if he had not had a perfect human nature, he could not have offered that nature a sacrifice for sin. As the Lamb of God, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, he is "holy; harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26.) If there is any perfection in the church, it is only found in Christ; by her having an eternal and vital union with him. But as to man, that fallen creature, the whole testimony of God's word is to the depth of his apostacy. The Scripture positively declares, "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." (Rom. 3:10-12.) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9.) And lest we should fancy, that when the blessed Spirit had regenerated and taken possession of a man, making his body his temple, then there was some perfection to be found in his heart, the Scripture brings before our eyes the awful falls and sad departures of God's most highly favoured saints—Noah, Lot, Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. These blots are recorded against God's eminent saints, to put down that false notion, that there is any thing like perfection in the creature.

And yet there are those who indulge in the wild dream of human perfectibility. There are those who even boast that they have attained to perfection. And there were such doubtless in John's day. There were, in his time, proud, ignorant, blind, deluded wretches, who said that they had cleansed their heart from all evil, that perfection dwelt in them, and that sin was no more to be found in them. Some of these were Pharisees, completely ignorant of the requirements of God's holy law, thoroughly unacquainted with the depth of man's fall. And others were dry doctrinalists, who could speak much about Christ; but, knowing nothing of the workings of depravity in their own nature, overlooked all the heavings and boilings of the corrupt fountain within; and because they read of the church's perfection in Christ, claimed unsinning perfection to themselves.

Against these characters John deals this heavy blow; against those who claim this perfection he brings out this sharp sword, and cuts them down with this overwhelming stroke, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Talk about your Christianity—talk about your religion—talk about your standing—and say, "I have no sin," you are a deceiver, John boldly declares: "so far from being, as you think you are, a perfect Christian, the very truth is not in you; you are nothing but a deceived, awfully deceived character." But he brings out, with the other hand, consolation for the people of God, who feel distressed on account of their inward guilt and sin. Thus whilst, on the one hand, he cuts down the perfectionist, legal or evangelical—on the other, he raises up the poor, condemned, drooping saint, who is bowed down with a sense of his guilt and shame; and opening the rich cordial of gospel consolation, says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

These, then, with God's blessing, will be the two leading features of my subject this evening.

I.—John's declaration,—*"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* And II.—That *comforting cordial* for poor, bowed down, guilty creatures—*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

I.—Man, in a state of nature, whether he be in profanity or in a profession, knows nothing of the real character of sin. God indeed has not left himself without witness in the human heart; natural conscience, where it is not seared as with a hot iron, bears testimony against sin. But its hideous nature, its awful depths, its subtlety, its workings, its movements, its cravings, its lustings; the heights to which it rises, the depths to which it sinks—no man is vitally and experimentally acquainted with sin thus except that man into whose heart light has shone, and into whose conscience life has come. There is a veil over man's heart by nature—a veil of ignorance, of delusion, of unbelief, of self-deception; and as long as that "veil remains untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament," as the apostle speaks, (2 Cor. 3:14,) nothing is seen of the purity and perfection of God, or of the spirituality and breadth of his holy law, and nothing is known of the deep sinfulness and corruption of the creature. But when the Lord the Spirit takes a man really and vitally in hand; when he truly begins his sovereign work of grace upon the soul, he commences by opening up to the astonished eyes of the sinner something of the real nature of sin. I do not mean to say, he discovers to the sinner at first the whole depth of the malady; he rather deals with him as the wise physician deals with his patient. The patient comes with an incurable disease; the physician sees in a moment the nature of the malady; he knows that death has laid hold of him, and that a few months will close his mortal career. But he does not tell him so at first; he begins to open up the case, wears a solemn countenance, hints to him his condition; but reserves his deeper admonitions for a future occasion, that he may gradually let him into the awful secret, that he may by degrees unfold to him that he is on the borders of the grave, and that the green turf will soon close over his bones. Thus the blessed Spirit, in his first dealings with the sinner's conscience, does not open up

to him the depth of the malady. He makes him indeed feel that the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint; he discovers to him the purity of God, the breadth and spirituality of the law, and, correspondingly, a sense of iniquity in himself; he brings upon his conscience outward transgressions, and lays upon it the guilt of those sins which are open to the eye, and which are the more conspicuous branches that spring out of so deep a root. But, after a time, he begins to take him, as he took the prophet Ezekiel, into "the chambers of imagery," and shows him greater things than these. He not only shows him the huge, high, wide-spreading branches of sin, but bids him look down and see how deeply-rooted sin is in his very being; that sin is not an accident, a faint blot that may soon be washed out; a something on the surface, like a skin disease, that may be healed by a simple plaster, or gentle ointment. He shows him that sin is seated in his very bones; that this deep-rooted malady has taken possession of him; that he is a sinner to his very heart's core; that every thought, every word, every action of man's whole being is one mass of sin, filth, and pollution. And if he attempt, as most awakened sinners do attempt, to purify himself, to ease his guilt, by lopping off a few outside branches; if he attempt to wash himself clean from iniquity, the Spirit will teach him the meaning of Job's words, "Though I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." (Job. 9:30, 31.) Until at last he brings him to this spot, that he is a sinner throughout; yea, that he is the chief of sinners; that every evil lodges in his heart, and the seed of every crime dwells in his fallen nature.

When a man is brought here, he is brought to the place of the stopping of mouths: his own righteousness is effectually cut to pieces; his hopes of salvation by the works of the law are completely removed from under him. Those rotten props, those vain buttresses are cut away by the hand of the Spirit from the sinking soul, that he may fall into himself one mass of confusion and ruin. And until he is brought here he really can know nothing of a free-grace salvation, of the superaboundings of grace over

the aboundings of sin, of God's electing love, of Christ's substitution and suretyship, of his atoning blood, his justifying righteousness, and dying love; he can know nothing of the rich provisions of almighty power and eternal mercy that are lodged in the fulness of a covenant Head. He has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no heart to feel, no arms to embrace a whole Christ, a precious Christ, a Saviour from the wrath to come; who has stood in the sinner's place and stead, made full atonement for sin, fulfilled the law, brought in everlasting righteousness, and justified the ungodly. He cannot receive this precious Saviour who "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," until he has fallen and been buried in the ruins of guilt and shame.

Now, such a character as this will never say, "I have no sin. A man taught by the Spirit, who has a living conscience, who feels the workings of godly fear, who has seen an end of all perfection, who knows the breadth of God's law, never dares to mock God, never dares so deceive himself, as to say, "I have no sin; I have cleansed my heart from iniquity; there remains no more pollution in me; I am pure every whit." No such presumptuous language as this can ever pass out of that heart which God has circumcised to fear his name. None can utter such language but that "generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12); or such as resemble that wretch, of whom we read, "such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." (Prov. 30:20.)

Can we say, then, that "we have no sin" *in thought*? Is not every thought sinful, except such as come immediately from God? Must not every thing which springs from my polluted heart be polluted? If there be a fountain that casts forth salt water, must not every drop of that fountain be briny and salt? If my heart is altogether a mass of sin, then every thought that proceeds from that heart must be deeply tainted with sin. Therefore, we cannot say, "I have no sin," in that sense, when every thought is full of sin.

Nor can we say, "we have no sin" *in word*. Who ever speaks without some sin attending the utterance of his lips? We may speak upon worldly things; is not sin mixed with it? We speak on divine things, does not sin attend it? We talk to sinners, sin is mingled with our speech; we talk to saints, sin is mingled with our words.

Can we say, we never sin *in deed*—we, that have made a profession, some ten, some twenty years,—can we say, that we have never sinned in deed in action? The Lord may have kept us from falling into very great and grievous sins; but who dare say (I dare not), he has not sinned in action? Who has not walked upon the very brink of evil, if he has not actually stumbled and fallen into it? Who can lift up his head before God and before his people, and say, "Since the Lord quickened my soul I have never done any one thing I am ashamed of?" If we say, we have never so sinned, it is to be feared we come under John's condemnation, "we deceive ourselves."

Can we say, we have no *pride*? when we find it continually working. Can we say, we have no *hypocrisy*? when it is continually manifesting itself. Can we say, we have no *presumption*? when it is continually intruding its hateful head. Can we say, we have no *rebellion*? when the feeblest trial will stir up its proud waves. Can we say, we have no *covetousness*? when our heart is often going after the things of time and sense. Can we say, we have no *peevishness*? when a mere trifle will sometimes stir up our evil temper. Can we say, our eyes have no sin? when they are gathering iniquity with well-nigh every look. Can we say, our *ears* are free from sin? when nearly every thing that passes through them contaminates the conscience, and works upon our depraved nature. Can we say, our *lips* are free from sin? when they are continually uttering that which is not for the glory of God. Can we say, our *hands* are free from sin? Can we say, our *feet* are free from sin? Can we say of ourselves, in any shape, in any form, that "we have no sin?"—when it gets up with us as we rise in the morning, and to our shame and sorrow is with us all the day: when it lies down with us, and often

accompanies us in the night season? Can we say, with this daily, hourly, momentarily experience of sin continually defiling our conscience with its filthy streams, can we ever be amongst those who say, "we have no sin?" If we say so, we should have a lie in our right hand. If we said so, we should do violence to our own convictions, and speak against the testimony of God in our own conscience.

It is, then, a mercy to have a negative evidence, if you have not a positive one. It is a mercy, if you feel that you are sinners. Look at those who say they have no sin, who are perfectly free, who have cleansed their hearts, and reformed their lives, and have lopped this wide-spreading tree down to the very ground. What is the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning them? They "deceive" themselves; they are deluded; they are blinded by the god of this world; they know not God; they know not themselves; they know not the evil of their hearts; they know not the workings of their fallen nature; they are altogether under the power of Satan as an angel of light, and there is no truth in them. They know nothing of the power of God, of the truth as it is in Jesus, of salvation by grace, of the Spirit's work upon the heart, or of the dealings of God upon the enlightened conscience.

II.—But, on the other hand, as this bright sword in the hand of the Spirit cuts down all fleshly perfectionists, and lays low in the dust as deceived creatures those who boast they have cleansed themselves from all impurity, how it smiles upon the poor mourning pilgrim here below! Whilst it turns its face clothed with frowns, and menaces wrath and destruction against all self-deceivers who say they have no sin, what a smiling countenance does the same text turn to the poor mourners in Zion, who feel painfully they are sinning every moment, and are sighing and crying by reason of the plague of their heart! To them we turn; for to them especially does the second branch of our subject speak in words of sweet consolation, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

i.—This is addressed to God's people; those who know the depth of the fall, who are mourning and sighing by reason of indwelling sin, and upon whose conscience it often presses as a burden too heavy to be borne. Now look at the difference between these two characters. We will suppose them seated this evening in the same pew. Here is one, who says, "I have no sin;" he knows nothing of the evil of the heart, of the workings of his own corruptions; he sees nothing of the purity of God's character; he knows nothing of the condemnation of the holy law; he thinks himself bound for heaven, and has no doubt of safely arriving there—a vessel fraught for its destined harbour, and never concerning faith to make shipwreck; congratulating himself he is not so bad as others; casting an eye of disdain upon those whom he sees labouring under sin, and the evils of their heart; and flattering himself that he stands high in God's favour because he is so like God. That man, whoever he be, is a deceived wretch; and so far as being on the road to heaven, he is travelling fast down to the chambers of death. But, by his side, hanging his head, drooping in spirit, cast down in soul, is one whose heart God has touched; into whose conscience the blessed Spirit has brought light and life; one who has had the veil taken off his heart; one who knows himself by divine teaching to be a sinner before God. And what are his feelings? "O my sins, my sins! What a burden they are to my conscience! Shall I ever have them taken off? Shall I ever hear the sweet words proclaimed to my soul, 'Go free?' Will my soul ever be landed in glory? Will my sins be for ever a mill stone around my neck; or will they be cast into the depths of the sea, that when sought for they shall never be found?" Look at these two characters. One all joy, the other all sorrow; one all presumption, the other all unbelief; one all confidence, the other all doubting; one all risings, the other all sinkings; the one growing day by day higher and higher, till at last, like Job's hypocrite, his head reaches the clouds, and the other sinking, sinking, sinking in his feelings, growing day by day viler and viler, guiltier and guiltier, worse and worse. Which is the sinner? which is the saint? Which is the heir of heaven? which is the heir of hell? Which is the child of God? which is the child of the Wicked One? Which is the tare? which is the wheat? Which is the sheep? which



is the goat? I leave it to conscience to decide. I know well on which side of the line that poor bowed down sinner stands; that he is on the right side of the line of mercy, and will one day stand at the right hand of the good and great Shepherd, when he shall separate the sheep from the goats.

But for his comfort the Lord speaks by his Apostle John in these words, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But is it so very easy to put this in practice? Very easy in theory, very easy by the lips; but with the heart, O, how difficult, O, how impossible, except God himself is pleased specially to work with divine power in the soul!

There are several things that keep a man, though he feel sin, from confessing it to God.

1. One is, *hardness of heart*. The Lord's family have often to feel very painfully hardness of heart. The law cannot soften, guilt cannot melt, the very pangs of hell in a man's conscience cannot dissolve or break down. They only harden. His conscience may bleed with guilt, and his heart be hard as adamant; and therefore this hardness, (and O what a wretched feeling it is for a child of God to be so hard Godward, so impenitent, so unfeeling, so unable to melt down at the feet of his dread Majesty) this hardness will seal and shut the mouth against confession.

2. Another thing that keeps the mouth from uttering the language of confession is *despondency*. Wherever despondency lays hold of a child of God, he cannot fully nor freely confess: he may feel miserable through sin; he may have the pangs of hell in his soul; but there is no free discharge; there is no flowing forth; his heart is shut up and closed by this stone on the well's mouth; and this stops confession.

3. *Unbelief*—that God does not or will not hear his cries. Doubts and fears of being rejected, and all the sad misgivings, fears, and terrors of an awakened conscience—these are often a great bar

against confession of sin; for unbelief stops the mouth, as well as the utterance of the feelings of the soul.

But yet the Lord does bring his people to confess. Is it not his own promise? "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.) So that the Lord (and the Lord alone) can make the soul really confess its sins before him. And when is that? Why, sometimes the Lord presses this confession out of the sinner's lips by the *very weight of guilt* that he puts upon him. He feels so guilty, so full of shame and sin, that he must confess; he can bear the burden no longer. It is so in nature. How many felons, at the gallows foot, have been compelled by the testimony of conscience to confess their crimes? How many a hidden murderer has been obliged by the weight of his sin to come forward and deliver himself into the hands of justice? Shall natural conscience force confession; and shall spiritual conscience not force it forth? So that when guilt lies very heavy upon a man's conscience, confession flows, because confession is forced out of it.

But still, another thing is wanted, and that is, that confession should be *drawn out* of him, as well as driven. Is not this true in nature? If you have a child, and believe that child has done something wrong, you can sometimes draw confession out of him when you cannot drive. Hard speeches, taking down the rod, and threatening him with punishment, will only shut his mouth; but take him on your knee, and you will then find that you can draw out of his bosom that confession which the fear of the rod only kept closer in his own breast. Is it not so in grace? Does not the Lord draw sometimes confession of sin out of our bosom? Does not the Lord sometimes by the sweet and secret operations of his grace upon the soul draw us to his footstool? Does he not shew us the mercy-seat? and does he not draw forth, by the sweet enkindlings of light and life, the confession of those sins by which our conscience has been burdened and guilty?

But still, there is something more wanting to bring it fully out, to lift it out of the very depths of the heart. Driving may bring out

some, drawing may bring out more; but still there is some remaining, like water at the bottom of a well, which neither driving nor drawing will completely bring forth. Yet there is one thing that can do it, that goes down to the very depth of the well, that sinks into the very feelings of a man's innermost conscience; that is, some discovery of a bleeding, suffering, agonizing Redeemer. And when there is some sight to the eye of faith of a bleeding, agonizing, suffering Jesus, then confession comes out of the very bottom of a man's heart. There is not a single secret that is kept back; there is no reserve made; the heart is emptied down to the very bottom.

But, "if we confess our sins;" that is, if we are enabled under these feelings to tell the Lord that we have transgressed, that we have backslidden, that our idolatrous heart, that our adulterous eye, that our covetous spirit, that our wicked nature has broken forth on the right hand and on the left; if we are enabled thus to "confess our sins," God has revealed for our comfort this blessed promise.

But some may ask this question, "What! am I to confess every sin I have committed?" How can you? How many have you committed? How many millions of moments have you lived?—so many millions of sins you have committed. How many times have you drawn breath into your lungs? How many times has your pulse beat since you came into this mortal state?—so many times has sin been committed by you. And therefore how can we confess *all* our sins? We might as well think, when we walk at midnight, and look up to the bright sky, of counting every star; we might as well dream, when strolling by the sea-shore, of counting every sand, or numbering every pebble, as think of telling the Lord every sin we have committed. But those that lie upon the soul, those that are manifested in the light and life of God's teaching, those which are deeply felt, and which honest conscience bears witness to; those which the Spirit discovers—these we are to confess, these we shall confess, and these we must confess, as God gives us the power. O! however painful, may the Lord ever give you and me, who desire to fear his name,

power to confess our sins to him. I am sure we must, if the conscience is made tender. We cannot go to him with lip service; we may sometimes bend our knee before him, and attempt to confess. But it is hard work; mere labour with the lip that tendeth to penury. But there will be times and seasons when the Lord will so lay the guilt of our numerous transgressions upon our conscience, that we must bewail, cry, groan, and tell him with shame and confusion of face that we are the vilest of transgressors, and of sinners the chief.

Whatever be your confidence of going to heaven, whatever your strong assurance, whatever your knowledge of the doctrines of grace, whatever be the opinions you have formed of yourselves, or the opinion that others have formed of you, I would not pick up your religion if it lay before me in the street, if it know nothing of honest confession of sin. I should as soon think of taking up the dung that lies in the road, or some cast-off shoe, such as we see lying in the canal; I should as soon think of picking up some dirty rag that lies in the street, and putting it into my bosom, as take up a religion that knows nothing of confession before God or honesty before man.

But what a gracious promise the Lord gives to those who confess! "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

1. "*He is faithful.*" Why should John select this attribute? Why should not John say, "He is merciful"—"He is gracious"—"He is kind?" Why should John lay this stress upon God's *faithfulness*? I will tell you: because he desires to lay it upon a very broad foundation. If I wish to erect a very noble, commanding and lofty superstructure, I must have a foundation, a basis, equally broad equally strong, for that building to stand upon. Now God's faithfulness is, if I may use the expression, that broad attribute in the divine majesty on which everything rests. As the Apostle says, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Faithfulness—in other words, truth—is the very character of God. He might not be merciful, but he must be faithful. Mercy in God was not known till

man fell. Ages had rolled away before the mercy of God was known; but God's faithfulness was ever known, and must be known, to the creatures of his hand. It is the very foundation of the Godhead. If he could cease to be faithful, he would cease to be God. And, therefore, when the Apostle would lay a very broad foundation for the poor sinner to stand upon, he does not build it upon God's mercy, though so great; nor upon God's grace, though superabounding; nor upon God's love though everlasting; but he places it upon a greater, wider, stronger, broader foundation than these; and that is, God's eternal faithfulness—the veracity, the truthfulness, the very character of Jehovah, as he that cannot lie. But in what way, and in what sense is God's attribute of faithfulness manifested? In this: God has promised to pardon repentant sinners; God has promised to forgive those that come to him, confessing their transgressions against him. Now it would impugn the divine veracity, it would cast a shade over God's holy character, if there were any repentant sinner whom God rejected; if there were any broken heart which God did not heal; if there were any spiritual confession that did not enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. And therefore, John builds up the soul, not on God's mercy (though all pardon flows from God's mercy), but on God's faithfulness, because what he has said, he will fulfil to the very letter.

2. But this is not the only attribute of God's character that John brings forward. He says, "He is faithful and *just*." O what a word is that! There is scarcely to my mind such a word in the Bible as that; so great, so glorious, so comforting: "He is faithful and *just*." "Just?" say you, "Why I know that God's mercy and God's grace can pardon sinners; but how can God be just, and pardon transgressors? Does not God's justice demand the punishment of sin? Does not God's justice blaze forth in eternal lightnings against the soul that transgresses his holy law? How, then, can it be true, that God can be just, and yet forgive a confessing sinner? But it is true—divinely true—blessedly, eternally true. And in it is locked up that grand mystery of redemption by the blood and obedience of God's co-equal Son. It is locked up in this one word—"*just*." But how? it may be asked. In this way. The Lord of

life and glory became a security and substitute for those whom his Father gave to him. He entered into their place and stead. He endured the punishment that was due to them. For them he fulfilled the whole law by his doings, and by his sufferings. For them he bled, and for them he died. For them he rose again, and for them ascended up to the right hand of the Father. And now justice demands the sinner's pardon, and puts in its righteous plea. And see the difference. Mercy begs, justice demands: mercy says, "I ask it as a boon;" mercy, as a part of God's character, looks down with pity and compassion on the mourning criminal: but justice says, "It is his due; it is his right; it belongs to him; it is his because the Redeemer has discharged his debt, because the Surety has stood in his place, because the Saviour has obeyed that law for him which he could not obey in his own person." So that when we can receive this blessed and glorious truth—that to those who confess their sins, "God is faithful," and not merely "faithful," but also "just to forgive them their sins,"—how it draws out of the bosom of Jehovah a full, free, and irrevocable pardon of all transgressions, and especially of those transgressions that the sinner confesses at his footstool!

Has the Lord made sin your burden? Has he ever made you feel guilty before him? Has he ever pressed down your conscience with a sight and sense of your iniquities, your sins, your backslidings? And does the Lord draw, from time to time, honest, sincere, unreserved confession of those sins out of your lips? What does the Holy Ghost say to *you*? What has the blessed Spirit recorded for your instruction, and for your consolation? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Not merely on a footing of mercy; still less because you confess them. It is not your confessing them, but it is thus—your confessing them is a mark of divine life; your confessing them springs from the work of grace upon your heart. If, then, you possess divine life, if you have grace in your soul, you are a child of God; and if a child of God, Jesus obeyed for you—Jesus suffered for you—Jesus died for you—Jesus has put away your sin. And, therefore, you being a child of God, and Jesus having done all these things for you, God is now "faithful" to his promise

that he will receive a confessing sinner; and "just" to his own immutable and veracious character. And thus, from justice as well as mercy, from faithfulness as well as compassion, he can, he will, and he does pardon, forgive, and sweetly blot out every iniquity and every transgression of a confessing penitent.

ii.—"*And cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" He cleanses our conscience from the guilt, cleanses our heart from the filth, and cleanses our soul from the power; for these three comprehend the cleansing operations of the Spirit upon the heart. We mourn under the guilt of sin; we sigh and groan under the power of sin. Now if the Lord can cleanse by his blood from the guilt of sin; can wash away, by the application of that holy fountain, the filth of sin; and by the power of his grace can deliver and keep from the power of sin; what more do we want? If the guilt, the filth, and the power, is this three-headed monster, this three-fold malady, this thrice-twined cord that holds a poor sinner, then there is blood to purge away its guilt, a fountain to wash away its filth, and grace to deliver from its power. What more do you want? You have all that God can give, all that a living Mediator can freely and graciously bestow.

Look, then, what a frowning aspect upon some, what a smiling aspect upon others, this text in God's holy word casts. What is your state? What is your condition? What are the workings of your heart? Unhumbled, unexercised, unplagued, unsorrowing, unconfessing? O what a frowning aspect do these words of God present to you! The cherubim, with their flaming swords, guarding Paradise, were not more fearful to the terrified sons of Adam, than such a text displaying its awful blazing lightnings, against the self-righteous pharisee, against the Arminian perfectionist, against all, whoever they be, in a profession, or out of a profession in the church, or out of the church—against all who have never, by divine teaching, felt the ruins of the fall, and have never had their conscience enlightened and enlivened to see and feel sin, and have never known themselves lost, ruined and undone.

On the other hand, what a smiling countenance, what open arms, what a tender bosom, what a sympathizing heart, does the text open to God's own mourning sighing, heart-broken, and penitent family! What is your greatest grief? Because your worldly circumstances do not flourish? Because you cannot prosper in the world as you would? Because your body is not healthy and strong? Trifles; trifles! Scars; scars! Flesh wounds, superficial sores! not a deep-rooted malady; not that which penetrates into the very core of a man's being. Sin; the plague of the heart, the corruption of our fallen nature, the evil that dwelleth in us, the pride, the hypocrisy, the presumption, the unbelief, the infidelity, the rebellion, the blasphemy, the carnality, the desperate wickedness of our depraved heart—is not this the greatest trial that you daily feel? Take your other burdens—all of them; tie them together; make a bundle of them; put it in the balance; and put in the other the plague of your heart, the evil of your nature, the hidings of God's face, the workings that pass, day by day, in your chambers of imagery. Does not the one scale, the temporal scale, kick the beam? and does not the other, the spiritual scale, sink as low as the balance can fall? It does; it does, I am sure it does when the heart is made honest, and when the conscience is made tender and alive in God's fear.

But yet, how the text smiles upon such; or rather, how the Lord, the God of all grace, who revealed it (blessings be upon his name!) how he smiles! how he wins! how he embraces in the arms of his mercy and love those who feel the evil of sin, who sorrow, grieve, and groan because of their transgressions; and who, in sadness of heart and sincerity of mouth, are enabled, from time to time, to confess their transgressions at the footstool of mercy and grace! there is free pardon for all such; complete forgiveness; the Lord blots out all their sins; they shall no more be brought against them; and they will one day bless God, that ever they felt their guilt, were ever enabled to confess them, and were ever led to believe that God had freely pardoned and received them, not for anything in themselves, but for his name's sake, whom they desire eternally to love, admire, and adore.



## **A Confidence that is not to be Cast Away**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 24, 1861

"Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Hebrews 10:35, 36, 37

When Jonathan, in the strength of the Lord, attended only by his armour-bearer, went up against the embodied host of the Philistine army, we read that "between the passages by which he sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh." (1 Sam. 14:4.) I have thought sometimes that this narrow passage between the two rocks, Bozez and Seneh, may be viewed as descriptive of the path of a Christian between the two rocks, presumption and despair. I wish you, however, to observe that I do not offer this view as an interpretation of the passage. I am not one of those "eagle-eyed divines," as John Newton calls them, who see deep mysteries in every text of Scripture: as, for instance, the two covenants, Law and Gospel, in the two pence given to the host by the good Samaritan, or the burial of the Law under the cross in the burying of Deborah under the oak at Allonbachuth. (Gen. 35:8.) I am not opposed to the spiritual and experimental, but to the mystical and fanciful interpretation of Scripture, which are two things widely different, though often strangely confounded together. Thus, what some consider great depths of spiritual interpretation, I view as great shallows: and explanations of Scripture which some imagine to be wonderful soarings of a spiritual mind into the lofty heights of heavenly mysteries, I look upon as often little else but the unchecked flights of a presumptuous imagination, and a vain attempt to be great at the expense of exposing to ridicule the experimental interpretation of the word of truth. I hope I am an experimental

preacher of God's truth, but I must say, as such, that few things have cast more contempt upon the spiritual interpretation of the word of God, than the foolish explanations of deep passages such as we often hear. But interpretation is one thing and illustration is another. I use, therefore, the description given of Jonathan's passage between Bozez and Seneh, not as if the Holy Ghost meant to represent by those two rocks presumption and despair, but as an illustration of the narrow path of a Christian between those two precipices, from one or the other of which tens of thousands have fallen to rise no more. O, could we, as the prophet speaks, "go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against the Lord" by these two evils (Isa. 66:24), we should see lying at the foot of one or other of these rocks from which they have fallen, more corpses than covered the ensanguined plains of Waterloo. But the family of God, for the most part, are not tempted to presume: that steep rock they dare not attempt to climb. Rashly to presume upon the mercy of God is rather a sin of the ungodly, of the self-righteous, of the hypocritical, and more especially of the professor of the letter of truth. The temptation of the Lord's people is much more to despond. Every pang of conviction, every ray of the majesty and holiness of God, every accusation of their own guilty conscience, would urge them to despair. By these they are, however, in good measure preserved from vain confidence and daring presumption; and thus the Lord the Spirit, by convincing them of sin, and laying guilt upon their conscience, may be said very much to have cut the roots of presumptuous confidence in their soul. But the very circumstance of his laying guilt upon their conscience gives sometimes a great handle to Satan to work upon their desponding feelings. Thus, though it is true that the narrow path of the Christian lies between the rocks of presumption and despair, yet we may say, viewing the generality of cases, that he is much more tempted to despair than to presume.

The apostle seems to be of this mind in writing to the Hebrews, for though he strongly and repeatedly warns them against unbelief and apostacy, yet he seeks all through the Epistle much to encourage them to believe, and in our text specially bids them

not to cast away their confidence, which, he tells them, "hath great recompense of reward." But if there were no temptation to relinquish their hope, to yield to the suggestions of the tempter, and abandon themselves to the despondency of their own miserable feelings, where would be the pith or pregnancy, force, or indeed meaning of the exhortation? Knowing, therefore, that this confidence, if it were of God, would be deeply tried, he affectionately warns them that they would need patience, that after doing the will of God, they might receive the promise. Yet to encourage them still to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, he reminds them of what was proclaimed in the word of truth, and which had already received a large measure of fulfilment in the coming of the Son of God. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Taking with us this general sketch of the mind and meaning of the inspired apostle, let us, with God's help and blessing, now approach our text and see whether we may gather some instruction or encouragement from it. But in so doing, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First, point out the force of the exhortation, "Cast not away your confidence."*

II.—*Secondly, the reason why this confidence should not be cast away: it "hath great recompense of reward."*

III.—*Thirdly, that though this confidence is not to be cast away, seeing there is such great recompense of reward attending it, it will be tried, and therefore there is a need of patience, that, after "they had done the will of God, they might receive the promise."*

IV.—*But fourthly and lastly, that they will not wait in vain; for "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."*

I.—When the apostle bids them not to cast away their confidence, of course he means that it is a good, that is, a spiritual confidence; because there is a confidence which is not worth keeping, and, as such, the sooner it is parted with the better. He

tells us, as a case in point, in one of his Epistles, of a confidence which he himself once had, and on what that confidence rested: that it was *in the flesh*. The occasion which induced him to describe this vain confidence was the characteristic mark which he had given of the true circumcision, of whom he says that "they worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh*." "Though I," he says, "might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." He then goes on to enumerate a great variety of religious privileges which in his days were very highly valued, and which lay at the foundation of the confidence of the professors of strict Judaism, of which he was one; such as being "circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He enumerates those privileges in order to show that he had every ground of confidence if it could be based upon the flesh, or in any way be built on those privileges which he possessed in so ample a measure. But when mercy reached his heart, and the Person and work, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory of the Son of God were revealed to his soul, those privileges, which once were gain to him, as securing to him, as he imagined, the favour of God, now became in his eyes loss for Christ. He was therefore made willing to part with them; and not only so, but to count all things but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him. (Phil. 3:4-9.) Thus we see that this man of God, who bids us in our text not cast away our confidence, himself once had a confidence of which he was ashamed, and which he was willing to part with and count but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. We need, then, go no further than the example of the apostle himself to see that there is such a thing as a vain, a fleshly confidence, and as such one of the greatest hindrances to the enjoyment of that spiritual confidence which hath great recompense of reward.

i. Let us, then, in order to open up the subject a little more closely as well as a little more clearly, first show what is the

confidence *which we are to cast away*, that we may have a clearer and better view of the confidence which we are not to cast away.

1. A confidence that *stands upon our own righteousness* is certainly one that will not avail us in the day of judgment. John speaks of a confidence which, when he shall appear, we may not be ashamed of before him at his coming. (1 John 1:28.) But a confidence based upon our own righteousness we shall certainly be ashamed of in the great day, for it never can stand the scrutiny of unerring justice, never can appear before the majesty of God, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now can those be said "to know God" who know him not as the God of all grace, or "to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" who are looking for salvation to the works of the law? Will not all such "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe?" (2 Thess. 1:7-10.) If Jesus is to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe, surely all confidence that is built upon our own righteousness must utterly fail us in that day, for what are more opposed than justification by our own works and sanctification by the Spirit of God, or creature obedience and a living faith? All such confidence, therefore, must be utterly cast away even to its last shred, for it must encumber our course in running with patience the race set before us.

2. But there is a confidence *based upon religious privileges*. I have already shown the nature of the confidence once entertained by the apostle, and that it was founded upon those peculiar privileges which he enjoyed according to the view taken of them by a Jewish eye. No one who is called a Christian would build for a moment now upon such privileges as those; but he may have an equally vain confidence as resting upon Christian privileges. These are indeed very suitable to our wants, and,

when blessed of God, are precious means of grace; but they are not to be built upon as a foundation for a spiritual confidence. Thus, to meet together in the house of prayer; to have a mercy-seat before which we may present ourselves; to hold the Scriptures in our hands; to have our lot cast among the people of God; to enjoy the favour of hearing the Gospel preached in our ears, and the truth as it is in Jesus faithfully and experimentally set forth; to share in the ordinances of God's house; to be a member of a Church founded upon apostolic precept and practice: or, if not so favoured, yet to have a name and a place among the sons and daughters of Zion,—these are great and precious privileges, but they are not grace, though they may be made in God's hand conduits of grace. The two golden pipes through which the oil flowed out of the two olive branches (Zech. 4:12) were in themselves, though golden, of no value except as channels through which the golden oil flowed. So privileges are only precious as the oil of God's grace flows through them into the heart. They will not do to build upon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ; and thus if we build upon our Christian privileges, we shall one day find that that confidence is as delusive as the apostle's, when his confidence was built upon being circumcised the eighth day, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, or, as touching the law, a Pharisee.

3. But there is a confidence *based upon the mere letter of God's word*, without any application of that word with power to the heart; and I must say there is scarcely any kind of vain confidence more rife and common in our day than this. But to trust to certain truths contained in the word without any personal interest in them, or spiritual experience of them, is certainly a confidence that is only fit to be cast away, for it is not based upon the teaching or testimony of God in the heart, or on the work of faith with power in the soul.

4. A confidence that *hangs upon the breath of the creature*, which stands only in the good opinion of men, even of the best of men, in the approbation of a minister, or even of some who truly fear God, is certainly a confidence not worth retaining. Have not the

worst of men deceived the best? Was not David deceived in Ahithophel, the disciples in Judas, and Paul in Demas? If, then, we have no better grounds for our confidence than the mere approval of man, who may be deceived in us and by us, it will prove a confidence that will never avail us in the day of judgment; for O how easily may we be deceived ourselves, and still more easily deceive each other. To rest, then, upon the mere testimony of a man, frail and fallible, and to venture into eternity, depending upon the breath of a worm, is indeed to trust to a broken reed, which will run into our hand and pierce us. In fact, a confidence based upon anything but what now I am going to bring forward will prove to be a confidence in the flesh, one of which we may well be ashamed, and the end of which can only be destruction from the presence of the Lord.

ii. I pass on, then, to show what is *the confidence not to be cast away*; for there is a blessed confidence possessed by the Lord's people, by the experience of which they utterly differ from those who have a name to live while they are dead. But though they do possess this confidence, and though the Lord would have them hold fast that which they have received that no man take their crown, yet, through the weakness of their faith and the strength of their unbelief, they are very apt to let it go. In this point they widely differ from those who are wrapped up in a false confidence; for it is with them, as Job speaks of his own righteousness; "My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go" (Job 27:6); nor can you beat it out of their hands. Whilst, then, those who have no real ground for their confidence will not part with it, though their trust is as a spider's web; the children of God, on the other hand, trembling almost at a falling leaf, are apt to give up that good hope through grace which the Lord himself has wrought in their hearts. Thus, while professors are striking in the midst of fair weather upon the rocks of presumption and going down like ships in the deep sea, the children of grace have a tendency through the storms of temptation to fall upon the lee shore of despair. To keep them therefore, from concerning faith, making shipwreck, the Lord encourages them in his word and by the secret whispers of his grace in their soul, not to cast away

any confidence that he himself has wrought with divine power in their breast. I must therefore be very cautious here to lay a good foundation. If I tell you in the name of the Lord not to cast away your confidence, I must speak with all holy wisdom and in the strictest accordance with the word of truth, and the teachings of the blessed Spirit in the heart, that I may not, on the one hand, err in bidding you retain a confidence which God has not given you, or, on the other, reject a confidence which he himself has wrought in your bosom.

1. A confidence, then, which is *based upon God's Word, the power of which has been felt in the heart*, is a confidence not to be cast away. We have this confidence spoken of by the apostle in this very epistle, where he speaks of those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel; which hope, he tells us, is "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." But this hope is based upon two immutable things—God's oath and God's promise, in which it was impossible for God to lie. (Heb. 6:17, 19.) We see there the broad foundation which he has laid for a Christian's hope, and if a Christian's hope, for a believer's confidence, for hope and confidence are twin sisters. But of course this confidence is meant by him to be founded not merely upon the letter of the word of oath and promise, but on them both as applied with power to the soul. In order to show this, let us look at Abraham's case, to which he has especial regard; for the promise and oath which the apostle speaks of as "the two immutable things," were the promise and oath made to Abraham that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed." (Gen. 22:18.) Abraham's faith hung upon God's oath and promise; but was it not upon them as spoken by the mouth of God to Abraham? When, then, "against hope he believed in hope;" "when he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform," his faith did not stand on the mere letter of the word, but on a promise and an oath given by the mouth of God to his heart. So when I lay the truth of God's word as a sure foundation for the Christian's confidence, I of course mean that there must



be a spiritual application of it, an experimental knowledge of it, a living faith in it; otherwise, it stands upon the same basis as the false confidence that I have been describing, which rests merely upon the letter of truth, without any application of the word of life to the heart. In fact, the whole difference between the two kinds of confidence may be summed up in one sentence—that the one is a dead faith in the mere letter of truth; the other, a living faith in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, as made spirit and life to the soul.

2. But again, a confidence which is *based upon any discovery by the blessed Spirit of the suitability*, the blood, the obedience, the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ to the soul, is a confidence not to be cast away. There are many children of God who have not attained unto any large measure, if indeed any measure at all, of the assurance of faith. They cannot say with unwavering confidence, that the Lord is their God; and yet there has been discovered to them, and that by the power of the blessed Spirit, the suitability of Christ. They have had a view by faith of his being able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. They have seen and felt that his atoning blood is able to cleanse from all sin. They have had a discovery of his righteousness as the only justifying robe in which the sinner can be accepted before God. But that atoning blood not being applied to their heart with all the power they want; and that righteousness not being manifested to them with such overwhelming assurance as to cast out all fear, their life is passed in doubt and uncertainty, and they cannot rise up to that sweet certainty of interest in the blood of the Lamb which they long to enjoy. Still, they have a confidence of this kind, that Jesus is suitable to their lost, miserable condition; that he has but to speak to make them perfectly whole; that all their expectation is from him. Thus, in the strength of this confidence, though it does not altogether bring a thorough sense of pardon and peace, they look to him, trust in him, hope in him, cleave to him, and that with purpose of heart. It is, I fully grant, but a small measure of confidence, and yet it is real as far as it goes. It does not rise to any great height, nor does it embrace the Lord with all that certainty of his love whereby with the bride, "it sits under his

shadow with great delight," nor is it "brought into the banqueting house whilst the banner over it is love," but is waiting for further discoveries of the love and mercy of God unto eternal life. Such a faith as this we see much of in the New Testament. It was that of the woman with the issue of blood; of the man who cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" of the Syro-Phoenician woman whose "daughter was grievously vexed with a devil;" of the leper who said, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean;" of the centurion of whom the Lord said, "he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The faith of none of these rose to a full assurance, but was engaged upon the suitability of the Lord Jesus to their various wants and woes, and a dependence upon his power to bless and heal them.

3. But now I come to a confidence which stands upon firmer grounds; one, I mean, that is based upon a gracious and blessed *revelation of Christ to the soul*: a manifestation of the Person and work of the Son of God, so that he is embraced by the arms of faith and affection, made near, dear, and precious, and is received into the believing heart under the work and by the witness of the Holy Ghost. This personal and experimental revelation of Christ to the soul raises up a sweet confidence in him. It goes beyond that faith in his suitability which I have been just describing. The Holy Ghost bears in it a stronger witness; the eyes of the understanding are more spiritually enlightened; a larger measure of faith is communicated; a stronger degree of hope given, and more of the presence and power of the Lord himself is felt in it. This is that "Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ," of which the apostle speaks (Eph. 1:17), and of which he says, "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to *reveal his Son* in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." (Gal. 1:15, 16.) It was this revelation of Christ in him which enabled him to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.)

4. With this comes the highest degree of confidence, which

springs out of the *shedding abroad in the heart of the pardoning love of God*, attended with a blessed application of atoning blood to purge the conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God. Where this is given there is the witness of the Spirit to our spirit that we are the children of God, and a blessed assurance that when death comes, it will be a happy messenger to deliver the soul from the miseries of this present world, and bear it aloft to the mansions of the blessed.

II.—But I pass on to show that this true and spiritual confidence is *not to be cast away* whatever measure may be possessed of it; and the reason is, *because it has "great recompense of reward."*

i. There are many temptations to cast it away, which made the apostle bid the believing Hebrews hold it fast. I will name a few of them.

1. *Persecution*, to which the Hebrews were at that time peculiarly exposed, would be one inducement. This was a "fiery trial," which tried the faith of the early Christians, and whereby many were proved to be but reprobate silver.

2 *Losses, crosses, and afflictions* for Christ's sake, entailing, it may be, the ruin of all our earthly prospects, may, in some cases, be a strong temptation to renounce the gospel.

But as these outward trials do not, in our day at least, touch so closely the core of the complaint. I shall now dwell chiefly on *inward* and *spiritual* temptations to cast away our confidence.

3. The Lord, as one instance, after he has revealed mercy to the soul, often *hides his face*; and what is the consequence? You fall at once into great darkness of soul. All your evidences are buried in confusion, and immediately there arises a temptation to cast your confidence away; for you reason thus, "The Lord would never have left me to my present state of darkness and death, if it had been a real manifestation of his love and mercy. Surely, if

he really had shone into my soul and blessed me with pardon and peace, should I be where I now am; so dark, so ignorant, so unbelieving; so unable to realize anything of his presence and power? Can it be possible that the Lord should ever have blessed my soul with any sense of his love and mercy, and I be what I now am?" Under these desponding feelings there springs up a temptation to cast away the confidence which the soul once enjoyed.

4. But it may be that *Satan has laid a snare for your feet*, entangled you in some sin, and thus got you down and put his foot upon your neck, until it seems almost as if he would crush you into his own eternal misery. Nothing so opens the way for despondency and despair as the commission of sin or the being entangled in any course of backsliding. If anything can damp or destroy your confidence, it is being entangled in the power of the enemy, who first tempts and then assails; first spreads the snare and then glories over his fallen captive. Any breach thus made in conscience so opens the door for a whole army of doubts and fears to ravage and desolate the soul; it gives Satan such strength as an accuser before God; it so encourages the power of unbelief, and adds such poignancy to the desponding sensations of a despairing mind, that there is nothing which a child of God needs so much dread, as to be overcome by the power of sin and fall into the hands of Satan as an accusing foe. O the blessedness of being kept from all evil and all error!

5. But again a *deep sense of the corruptions of our heart*, as influenced by the power of Satan, is another form of temptation prompting us to cast away our confidence. Satan is a most subtle and unwearied adversary. He knows exactly where to thrust in his fiery darts; how to work upon the unbelief, the infidelity, and the corruptions of our depraved nature, and how to raise such a smoke from setting on fire the evils of our heart, almost like that of the bottomless pit, as to hide from view every sign and mark of God's favour towards us. Thus as we are led into deeper discoveries of the sins of our heart, and the corruptions of our nature become more laid bare to our discerning eye, we look

back upon the past dealings of God with our soul, and say, "How could the Lord ever have been gracious to me? Should I be as I now am, and feel as I now feel, if ever his grace had visited my breast, or his fear were deeply planted in my heart?" Thus, there is an investigation made; an examination entered into of the matter; a holding of the weighty concerns of the soul in the balance of the sanctuary; and very often the scale in which sin and corruption are cast seems to sink and the scale of grace to kick the beam. As thus weighed in the balance and proved as it were to be lighter than vanity, despondency makes great head in the soul, and Satan urges it to cast away not only its confidence but its very hope.

6. Many, too, of the Lord's people, without any peculiar or positive guilt upon their consciences, are subject to *great natural depression of spirits*; and this often tempts them to cast away their confidence.

7. A sense also of their miserable *unprofitableness and unfruitfulness* tempts them to cast away their confidence, as fearing they are unfruitful branches in the vine. There are others, but I have named the chief temptations to despond.

Still the exhortation rings in the ears of the saints of God, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." And is not this exhortation very needful for those who are so tempted? For what will become of you if you give up your hope? Where are you if your confidence is wholly gone? Upon a sea of doubt and fear, having utterly lost sight of the Lord, a prey to every gloomy feeling, and lying open to every thrust of Satan. If, therefore, the Lord has ever blessed your soul with any manifestation of his mercy, goodness, and love, ever given you any well-grounded confidence, hold by it, for it is your life; do not give it up, for it hath great recompense of reward.

ii. But what is this recompense of reward which ever attends the maintaining of a gracious confidence? I consider that this recompense has a two-fold aspect; one embracing the *present*,

and the other looking forward to the *future*. I will endeavour to explain each.

What, then, is the *present* recompense? It is the gracious reward which is poured into our bosom now through the medium of this confidence.

1. For instance, look at it as regards the simple act of *calling upon God*. In proportion as this confidence is held, the more power it gives us in prayer with the Lord. Nothing so cuts the hamstring of prayer as despondency. Nothing so lowers the uplifted hands or so weakens the enfeebled knees as dark and despairing feelings making head against a man's confidence; for is not this then the secret feeling of his heart? "What use is there for me to pray? I am a reprobate, a hypocrite, a deluded professor; God will never hear my prayers. By calling upon his holy name, I am only adding sin to sin." As, then, this unbelief works in the mind, it stops the very breath of prayer, and holds the soul down in that prison-house of guilty fear out of which it can only sigh and groan, and sometimes not even that. But when the confidence is not cast away, but is held, though it may be with a weak hand, a measure of boldness is communicated to come to the throne of grace, and the heart is encouraged still to plead with the Lord upon the ground of past mercies, upon the footing of what he has been pleased to do for it in times past. The promise once applied, the words once spoken, the favour once granted, being held fast, hope is enabled to maintain its ground as the anchor of the soul. It was this made David say, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope;" and again, "Let I pray thee thy merciful kindness be for my comfort according to thy word unto thy servant." (Psa. 119:49-76.)

2. But again, confidence mightily encourages that *good fight of faith* which we have to fight if we are to come off more than conquerors. We have a hard battle to fight, a severe race to run, for we have to resist even to blood, striving against sin; we have to wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high paces. Now if we

have no armour, how can we wrestle against these "wicked spirits" (as the margin reads) in their high places of towering pride, whence they fight at an overwhelming advantage against us who are, as it were, struggling on the plain? Where is our armour when our confidence is gone? We have lost our shield—the shield of faith—whereby alone we quench the fiery darts of the wicked. We have lost the sword of the Spirit, whereby alone we can return Satan cut for cut and thrust for thrust. We have no breastplate, for our righteousness is gone; and we have no helmet of salvation, for it has rolled off our head, if our hope has perished from the Lord. To cast away, therefore, our confidence is to expose ourselves without our armour to every deadly thrust of Satan, and to go, as it were, naked into battle, without one weapon, offensive or defensive. But if you are enabled, by the strength and power of the Lord, to retain your confidence, it has, even in this instance, great present recompense of reward; for in proportion as your confidence is strengthened, you will be enabled to resist the temptations of Satan and to wrestle with every form of spiritual wickedness without or within.

3. But again, as we retain our confidence, it so *opens up God's word to our soul*: it makes the promises so clear and plain; the truth so sweet and precious; Christ so near and dear; and the whole scheme of salvation so enjoyed and apprehended; and is not this a *present* recompense and one of ample reward for retaining our confidence? But when we get into a place where confidence seems well-nigh lost, and darkness, doubt, and fear take possession of the mind, the Scriptures are then read in darkness; the veil of unbelief comes over the heart denser and thicker than ever, and the sweetness of God's promises is utterly gone. What are the Scriptures to us if we cannot lay hold of them by faith; or what are the promises if we cannot believe them? We see, therefore, how needful it is that we should not cast away our confidence, because it has such great *present* recompense of reward: the reward in one's own bosom, in still believing in spite of unbelief; in still hoping in spite of despondency; in still pressing forward through the crowd of difficulties, whatever obstacles may intervene or enemies line the way.

But when we look forward beyond the present narrow sphere, and see that besides the present recompense in their own bosom what great recompense of reward there is in *the future* for those who hold their confidence fast, what encouragement is afforded never to let it go. Will not heaven make amends for all? Supposing you could cast it away, I say "supposing," for in fact, through rich mercy, you cannot: the Lord will not suffer you to do so. You may cast away the enjoyment of it, but you cannot cast away the confidence itself. The substance remains, even if you cannot shelter yourself under its shadow. But assume that you could utterly cast away all your hope in the mercy of God, where would you be? Under the wrath of God as a consuming fire; under the curse of a righteous law; in the very hands of sin and Satan, without hope and without help. You see, therefore, we must come to one of these two points: either to retain our confidence and be saved, or give it up and be lost: either to hold fast by Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ is and has manifested of himself to our soul, or to put ourselves under that wrath which burns to the lowest hell. Thus we are compelled by the very necessity of the case not to give up our confidence in the very worst of times and the darkest and dreariest of all seasons. In this we seem to resemble a drowning man holding by the bough of a tree. If he relinquish his hold, he will be carried away by the stream. As, therefore, the stream beats against him, he holds firmly on the bough, because he knows that if he leaves go, he will be swept away to destruction. So the Christian still retains his hold of Christ in spite of the workings of sin and Satan: he cannot let go his grasp, for he knows that to let Christ go is to fall into the very abyss of hell.

III.—But to pass on to our next point. The Lord, who has given us the exhortation not to cast away our confidence, knew well it would be sharply tried: he therefore adds, "*Ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*" There are several points of divine truth and of living experience here which I will try to open.



i. *First, we must do the will of God:* that is a primary matter laid before us as what the Lord expects at our hands. For it is only *after* we have done the will of God that we receive the promise which is given to those who are found walking in the ways of the Lord.

But what is it to *do* the will of God? It is as needful to open up this part of our subject as the foregoing. I must, therefore, endeavour to explain it to the best of my ability. But I must lay this down as a preliminary point that before we can do the will of God, we must *know* what that will is. Where is that will to be found? In the Scriptures of truth. How are we to know what that will is, by which I mean a spiritual and experimental knowledge, for all other is useless and vain? By the blessed Spirit shining upon those Scriptures in which the will of God is set forth, and giving us grace to understand and apprehend it as there revealed. But besides this, we must be taught and enabled to *do* as well as *know* it, for knowledge without obedience will only leave us under greater condemnation, or at least heavier chastisement, for "the servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, was to be beaten with many stripes."

But what connection has this knowing and doing the will of God with not casting away our confidence? I will show you in a variety of particulars.

1. First, then it is God's will that his people should *believe in Jesus*. When the Jews asked our blessed Lord what they should do "that they might work the works of God," his answer was, "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29.). God has sent his dear, his only begotten Son, that his people might believe on him; he has given the clearest attestation to the glorious dignity of his Person, the efficacy of his precious blood, and perfection of his finished work, that we might have confidence in him as having saved us from our sins. Now when we believe on him as God has revealed him in the Scripture, and as the Holy Ghost reveals him to the soul, we are doing the will of God; the will of God being that we should

believe on him unto eternal life.

2. Again, the will of God is, that we should not *cast away our confidence*; that we should believe him to be a faithful God; that we should rest upon his oath and promise; that we should not dishonour him by unbelief; that we should not give heed to the insinuations of the tempter, should not listen to every lie of Satan, but should believe in God as the God of all mercy and truth to those who fear his name, in spite of any suggestion to the contrary. He would have us walk by faith and not by sight, and to hang upon his testimony both in his word, and in our conscience, even when he hides himself from us. If this be not plain to you, let us ask ourselves the question, "What have we ever got by unbelief? Has *that* been our friend or our foe? Have we not got all we have ever gained by believing and not by doubting?" But can we be worse than Jonah when he was in the very belly of hell? Yet even there he says, though cast out of God's sight, "Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple." That look brought him out, for his prayer of faith "came in unto God, into his holy temple;" and when deliverance came he could boldly say "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:4, 7, 9.) When, therefore, we will not cast away our confidence, though Satan bids us do so, but hang upon the Lord, cleave to him, and rest upon his faithful promise, we are doing the will of God. Look at the case of Abraham; what was the will of God in his case? That he should believe the promise that he should have a son by Sarah. Not that he should doubt, or fear, or despond, on account of the infirmities of nature, give heed to the suggestions of sense and reason or to take carnal means to accomplish God's promise; but that he should believe it would be fulfilled in spite of every difficulty. When, then, he was believing, he was doing the will of God. When he was doubting, fearing, and desponding, when he was listening to Sarah's carnal advice and raising a servant into the position of a wife, he was not doing the will of God; he was doing the will of the flesh. But when he was eyeing the promise and nothing but the promise, "being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform," he was doing the will of God. Is not this plain enough? And is not this set before us as a

pattern to all believers, for the promise is made "to that which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." (Rom. 4:16.) So it is now. When you are believing in Jesus, and resting the whole weight of your salvation upon his finished work, you are doing the will of God; but when you are doubting, fearing, and desponding in spite of all the testimonies which God has given you, you are not doing the will of God—that is, the manifested will, but the will of Satan and the flesh.

3. But again, we do the will of God when we still go on in *the use of the means* of the Lord's own appointing, even though he do not appear to bless us through their medium. Thus we are doing the will of God in continually visiting the throne of grace; in ever calling upon his holy name; in reading his word and meditating upon it; in assembling ourselves with his people; in hearing the Gospel; in attending to the ordinances of God's house; in gathering our family around us to present our supplications at the footstool of mercy. We are not to cast away these means of grace because we have not the present enjoyment of the Lord's presence and love in them. All this is for the trial of our faith, to see whether we will serve the Lord or no. Did not the Lord say to Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him?" (Gen. 18:19.) By this he was doing the will of God, as walking in his fear and keeping the way of the Lord. When we are enabled to act in the same spirit and do the same things, we are doing the will of God as he did.

4. But again, we do the will of God when we *abstain from all evil*, even the appearance of it, and do everything that is good; when we come out of the world and are separate in heart and spirit from its pollutions; when we hate the garment spotted by the flesh; when our conscience is made tender in God's fear, to obey his precepts, to hearken to the words of his mouth, to seek to be conformed to the image of his dear Son, to act according to his holy example. A holy life, a godly walk, a conduct conformed to

the precepts of the gospel are things sadly neglected in our day. The very word "holiness" seems under a kind of religious ban, and is scarcely ever heard sounding from the Calvinistic pulpit, though God himself tells us that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

5. Again, we are doing the will of God when our *affections are set on heavenly things*; when we are spiritually minded, which is life and peace; when we abstain from everything that damps the Spirit's communications within, and are diligent and earnest in every good word and work.

ii. But we "*have need of patience*"—that is endurance, to continuance in the performance of all this, and in the various ways which I have been pointing out; for the Lord does not often immediately appear. He hears prayer, but he does not evidently answer it at the very moment we want. He puts our tears into his bottle and writes our prayers in his book; but he does not always appear when we want the tear dried up or prayer answered. Therefore we have need of patience. I have frequently explained that the word "patience" in Scripture means rather "endurance" than patience. This is very evident, from a passage in James, "Behold we count them happy which *endure*. Ye have heard of the *patience* of Job." (James 5:11.) Now, the words translated, "endure," and "patience" are the same in the original; and in fact, the example of Job is given as an instance of the happiness of those who endure. The same word is also used by our blessed Lord, where he says, "He that *endureth* to the end shall be saved." (Matt. 10:22.) We have need then of endurance. As he that runs a race needs not so much swiftness as enduring strength to hold out to the end, never to give up, as long as he can drag one limb before another; as the British soldier must never suffer himself to be beaten; so it is in the Christian race: we must never give up; we must never say "die;" we must never allow ourselves to be beaten by sin or Satan. If God himself seem to thrust us away from his throne, we must still plead and not take "No" for an answer, like the widow with the unjust judge. O what need we have of patience or endurance still to fight, though the battle be against us; still to run, though we may almost fear

to lose the race; and still to press forward, in spite of every discouraging circumstance. But if in this way we do the will of God, as he would have us, and patience is given to us of which we have such deep need, let us not fear but that we shall receive the promise. "Let us then not be weary in well doing; for in due season, we shall reap if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9.) We are bidden therefore to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58.) The promise is certain as to its fulfilment, for it has been given by him who cannot lie; it is in the word of truth; it only waits to be brought to light by the arm of God.

But what is the meaning of the word "promise" here? It does not mean so much the promise itself, as the thing which is promised. It is used in that sense in the passage, "And so after he had patiently endured he obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:15); that is not the promise itself, but the promised seed, Isaac. So again, "these all died in faith, not having received the promises," that is, not the promises themselves, for those they received by faith, but the things promised. (Heb. 11:13.) To receive the promise then is to receive the blessing contained in the promise; and this blessing is eternal life, as the apostle speaks, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2); and again, "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." (1 John 2:25.) Viewing it, then, in this light, we may say, that there is a receiving of the promise *now* and *hereafter*. Eternal life is spiritual life, as the Lord told the woman of Samaria, "The water that I shall give him, shall be *in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.) In the same way spiritual life is eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life;" hath it now, even now in his soul.

1. Viewed then as spiritual life, there is a *present* receiving of the promise, as the fruit of endurance, in answer to prayer, in gracious revivals of the soul, in the carrying on of the work of faith with power; in a word, in the fulfilment of that promise,

"Because I live, ye shall live also."

But there are those although they possess *spiritual* life, have not a clear evidence that they shall enjoy *eternal* life. They must wait then patiently, enduring all their trials and temptations, for there is a doing the will of God by suffering as well as by obeying, and in the end they shall receive even in this life the promise of life eternal. It may be delayed, even to a dying bed; it may not be given in all its full assurance long before the last gasp. In some cases we find that Christians have been held in doubt and fear until almost expiring moments, and then the Lord has broken in upon their soul with the sweetest discoveries of his love and blood.

2. But "the promise," as I have said, is *future* as well as present. We now only receive an earnest, a foretaste, a first fruits; the harvest is to come. This promise then is to be received in all its fulness *hereafter*. Then those who have patiently endured, doing and suffering the will of God even to the end, will inherit the promise of eternal life in its full fruition, when they shall see the Lord as he is without a veil between, be made partakers of his glory, and be eternally ravished with the perfect enjoyment of his love and presence in a land where sin and sorrow are words unknown.

IV.—Now comes the last point, which more particularly points to the conclusion at which we have just arrived, for it is a declaration that the Lord himself shall come to fulfil all his promises: "*Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*"

1. These words are quoted from the prophet Habakkuk, and were, in the mouth of the prophet, spoken in the first instance with respect to the first coming of the Lord Jesus: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. 2:2, 3.) These

words were spoken more than six hundred years before Christ came. So the saints of God had to look through a vista of six hundred years before the vision spoken of was fulfilled; but at the promised time the Lord came; and when fulfilled it was but "a little while." Six hundred years soon rolled away, and then the Lamb of God came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

2. But take the words as they are applicable, not to the first but to the *second* coming of the Lord, and view this both as spiritual and actual: "He that shall come" was the name specially given to the promised Messiah; "Art thou he that should come," John sent two of his disciples to ask Christ, "or do we look for another?" The reference of John was to "Shiloh," which means "the sent." "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh (that is, "the sent") come." (Gen. 49:10.) This was the "rod which was to come forth out of the stem of Jesse" (Isai. 40:1); the promised one of whom it was said, "Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 3:1.) As, then, he came *actually* in the flesh, so he now comes *spiritually* in his presence; for the promise is, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." (Hosea 6:3.) His "going forth," conquering and to conquer every doubt and fear, is as much prepared as the rising of the morning sun; and he will as certainly come unto his people to water their souls with his Spirit and grace as the autumnal and spring rains regularly fell upon the land of Canaan. He will then as surely come into your soul as he came into the world in Bethlehem's stable; but it may be "a little while" first. For a little while, then, what the Lord calls in Isaiah "a small moment," you may have to be doubting and fearing; a little while to be doing the will of God; a little while to have great need of patience; a little while before you receive the promise. You may have to go on praying a little while without answers, begging of the Lord to reveal himself to you, yet receiving no sweet discovery of his love. But "a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." He will not stop one moment beyond his own appointed time, for there is a set time to favour

Zion. The very hour, nay the very moment, is fixed in his eternal purpose, and when that set time is come, which is most for your good and for his own glory, he that shall come will come in his love and mercy into your soul. Let unbelief say what it will; let despondency mutter its gloomy suggestions, and Satan harass you with a thousand fears: he that shall come will come, and will not tarry an hour beyond his appointed time; no, not one moment beyond the period fixed for your deliverance and the sweet renewal of your strength and faith and hope. If you have been held many years in doubt, and the Lord come and bless your soul at the last, you will not think you have waited too long, that you have groaned too much, or suffered from Satan's suggestions too severely. This will all be made up when the Lord's presence is felt and his blood and love revealed to your soul by the Holy Ghost.

3. But there is another sense of the words when they will be more *fully and literally* accomplished; I mean in the second advent of our blessed Lord, when he will come and all his saints with him in the clouds of heaven; when in the twinkling of an eye the sleeping dead will be raised incorruptible, and "he shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Then the church will see what good reason there was that she should not cast away her confidence; then will she reap the blessed reward of her faith and hope and love in the approving smiles of her God, and in the eternal enjoyment of his presence and his glory.

May it be our happy portion to have this sweet confidence in the Lord, and not cast it away at the suggestions of Satan, but to be ever living a life of faith and prayer, and ever waiting at the Lord's feet for his blessing to enable us to believe, and to rejoice in believing, that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."



## Confiding Trust and Patient Submission

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Sept. 19, 1858

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." Micah 7:8, 9

The chapter begins with a note of lamentation: "Woe is me!" This mournful strain is a frequent one with the saints, and more especially with the servants of God. Thus Isaiah, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," cried out, as if penetrated to the heart by a view of the glory of Christ (John 12:41), "Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5.) Jeremiah used the same mournful strain when he said, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." (Jer. 15:10). So Ezekiel's roll was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. (Ezekiel 1:10.)

But what was the immediate cause of this note of lamentation that the prophet Micah put up when he said, "Woe is me?" There were two: 1, one was an *inward sense of his own barren, unfruitful condition*. He says, "I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat." The children of Israel were expressly prohibited going a second time over the olive-yard and over the vineyard: "When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and

for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." (Deut. 24:20, 21.) There was, therefore, more fruit probably left on the boughs in Micah's time and country than now in Italy or France in their corresponding olive harvest and vintage. Still, the best fruit was doubtless gathered first, and what was left was not only scanty in quantity, but poor in quality—hidden, it may be, under the foliage, so that it escaped the eye of the first gatherer, "or two or three berries on the top of the uppermost bough, four or five on the outmost fruitful branches thereof," out of the easy reach of his hand. (Isai. 17:6.) There is no more continual source of lamentation and mourning to a child of God than a sense of his own barrenness. He would be fruitful in every good word and work, yea, would be "filled with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11.) But when he contrasts his own miserable unprofitableness, his coldness and deadness, his proneness to evil, his backwardness to good, his daily wanderings and departings from the living God, his depraved affections, stupid frames, sensual desires, carnal projects, and earthy grovellings with what he sees and knows should be the fruit that should grow upon a fruitful branch in the only true Vine, he sinks down under a sense of his own wretched barrenness and unfruitfulness. It is then this feeling which makes him take up the language of the mourning prophet, "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage." Is not similar language used by another man of God? "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously." (Isai. 24:16.) So also felt Job when he said, "And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me; and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face." (Job 16:8.)

2. But there was another cause for the utterance of "Woe is me!" closely connected with the preceding—*the view which* the prophet

had of *the general state of things around him*. Not only had he reason for mourning over himself, as seeing and feeling the case within so deep and desperate, but the prospect without was as gloomy as the sight within. "The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men." He saw how few there were who really feared and loved God; and looking back to days past when he had had sweet converse with many highly favoured saints of God, men of sincerity and uprightness, pillars of truth and ornaments of their profession, and compared with these godly men the generation of professors amongst whom his present lot was cast, it seemed to him as though the good man was altogether perished out of the earth, and none was upright amongst men. The envy and jealousy, the crafty policy and murderous intents of the professors of his day, as in ours, struck a solemn damp into his soul: "They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."

But if he turned from the professing church to the profane world did he find matters any better? What example of good works was shown by those who clamoured so loudly for them? And how did those in high places act who should at least have kept their hands clean from bribes, as well as from blood? "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward: and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire." And all this under a cloak of hypocrisy: "So they wrap it up," or, as the word might be rendered, "twist it round," entangling and perverting all truth and judgment. It is our mercy to live in a land where justice is fairly administered, and where the judge on the bench or the magistrate in the court cannot be bribed by the rich to give wrong judgment against the poor. The crying sin of oppression is not indeed dead in this land, but publicity has much stifled it from showing its hideous face on the seat of judgment. But what a description does he go on to give of men generally—even of the very best, whether friend or foe, saint or sinner. "The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." His own soul had been so torn and lacerated by some of the best of men—that is, apart from their infirmities which were inherent in and grew out of their

very nature, as prickles in and out of a brier, that he felt to come into close contact with them was to be caught and scratched. Nay, the most upright, honest, and sincere of men had so pierced and wounded him by their words or ways that even they were "sharper to him than a thorn hedge," which is more pleasant to look at in spring than to fall into in winter. It is when we come close to men, get connected with them in business and even sometimes in church fellowship, that we really learn what they are; and we ourselves, let it be borne in mind, may have as many thorns and prickles to scratch and tear them as they may have to scratch and tear us.

But there was a sadder sight still to make him cry, "Woe is me!" There was a breaking up of all mutual confidence in the nearest and tenderest relationships, calling forth that sad and fearful warning, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom." What a state of things is here disclosed when no friend could be trusted, no guide confided in and the secrets of the heart to be concealed from the wife of the bosom. But I cannot enlarge upon this point. If you will read it for yourselves, you will plainly see how his soul was grieved and pained, not only with what he felt within but with what he thus saw without, as some of the worst features of human depravity.

Yet what was the effect produced by all this upon his own soul? To wean him from the creature—to divert him from looking to any for help or hope, but the Lord himself. "Therefore," he says, in the verse preceding the text, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." It is in this painful way that the Lord often, if not usually, cuts us off from all human props, even the nearest and dearest, that we may lean wholly and solely on himself. As, then, he was thus cut off from all other props, a sweet confidence sprang up in the prophet's bosom that God would hear his petitions.

But this brings us at once to our text, in opening up which I shall, with God's help and blessing, call your attention to four leading

features:

I.—*First, the expostulation* that the prophet makes with his enemy: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy."

II.—*Secondly, the confiding trust* which he has in the Lord: "When I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

III.—*Thirdly, his patient submission, and the reasons of it*: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me."

IV.—*Fourthly and lastly, his firm assurance* that all would be well in the end: "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

I.—When the Lord is pleased first to deal with our soul, in those early days of our spiritual youth when we are but little acquainted with the evils of our own heart, or the evils that lodge in other men's, we are often astonished at the sudden burst of persecution that arises against us from most unexpected quarters, and frequently from some of our nearest and dearest friends and relatives. In those days, eternal realities usually lie with great weight and power upon our mind: they occupy our waking and sleeping thoughts; and the whole subject being new, it takes fast hold both of heart and tongue; for we cannot be silent, and as we are made honest and sincere we speak as we feel. The things of eternity pressing with serious and solemn weight upon our hearts, press words out of our mouth, we at the time little anticipating the effect which those words produce upon the minds of those to whom they are addressed. What is that effect? What we little expect—enmity. We anticipate some conviction of the truth which we lay before them, or, at least, some kind and favourable reception of it. We speak it honestly and sincerely, meaning it for their good; but instead of receiving it as we intended, they rise up in enmity and rebellion against us. Why is this? Because their carnal mind, and they can have no

other if they are not spiritual, is enmity against God. A veil, too, of unbelief and ignorance is spread over their heart, so that our meaning is misunderstood, our actions misrepresented, and our kindest words and intentions perverted to evil.

1. The *world*, then, be well and thoroughly assured, will always prove an enemy to the saint of God; nor can the enmity ever be eradicated, for God himself has put it between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; and under the influence of this enmity, "judgment is turned into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." (Amos 6:12.) Be not surprised, therefore, if you have found the world, nay, those of your own flesh and blood, your nearest and dearest friends, turned to be your enemies. It is meant to break off your own friendship with it, that you yourself may not be God's enemy; for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God." (James 4:4.) Yet we may still keenly feel the enmity manifested; the coward flesh may and does shrink from the persecution often so severe, and usually so little anticipated. The servants too of God, such as was Micah, are especially liable to the manifestation of this enmity. The gospel they preach, the faithfulness they manifest, the holiness they display, the separating line which they draw when "they take forth the precious from the vile," stir up the deepest enmity of the profane and professing world; and, by a singular perversion of ideas, they are often viewed and called personal enemies. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" said Ahab to Elijah, viewing him as his personal enemy, because he denounced his sins. When, then, as often happens, matters so fall out as to give the world cause for rejoicing; when any striking reverse in providence, or a painful and sudden calamity falls on the child of God, it is often viewed as a judgment upon him for his temper or spirit; and thus his very distress either of mind or circumstances affords a matter of ungodly triumph to his enemies. It is at best indeed but a blank source of joy, an almost fiendish delight soon to reap its own miserable reward, that any should take occasion to triumph and rejoice in the afflictions of the saints of God; but, such is the implacable enmity of the human heart against God as

manifested in the persons of his saints, that many would rejoice even in their destruction. We certainly see much of this in the scriptures, especially in those Psalms which speak of the persecutions of Christ and his people. How our Lord speaks in his own case, almost in the very words used by his enemies: "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people. All that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Psal. 22:6, 7, 8.) And again: "Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee." (Psal. 69:18, 19.) And so he speaks: "For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou has wounded." (Psal. 69:26.) But the worst cause of their malicious joy which our Lord never gave them, but which we too often give, is when they can rejoice over our slips and falls; when by some unguarded word, or some unbecoming deed, we put before them a sweet morsel on which to feed, enabling them to say, "Ah, ah, so would we have it." This made, and still makes, David "the song of the drunkards;" this lowered the man after God's own heart below the lowest man in Jerusalem, and thrust the exalted king of Judah and Israel among the criminals worthy of death by the law of Moses. May we never give joy to our enemies in this way.

2. But it would be well for the saint of God if he had no other enemy than what he finds in the world, or amidst the ranks of the professing church, or even in the bosom of his own family. He has an enemy more watchful, more implacable, and more continually at hand than they; an enemy who cannot only see outward reverses and slips and falls, but can come to close quarters and attack and harass the mind night and day. I need not tell you who this enemy is, and that his name is *Satan*, which means enemy. Now when the soul of a child of God is cast down, as it often is by seeing the Lord's hand going out against him in providence, or is suffering under his chastising hand for any slip or fall inward or outward, Satan, the enemy, is almost sure to

urge on the calamity. Joining hand in hand with his foes, he cries aloud as the battle word, the signal for a combined attack of earth and hell, "God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him" (Psalm 71:11.)

Now if a little helped and blessed, the child of grace can expostulate, as we find the prophet here, with this enemy: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." The enemy, the arch enemy, will rejoice at anything that causes the soul distress. The sighs, the tears, the sorrows of the saints are the serpent's food. He rejoices to see them in distress, because he hates anything like heavenly joy or spiritual confidence. Thus when the soul mourns he rejoices. Feeling this, the child of God says: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy," which leads us to our second point:

II.—The prophet's *confiding trust* in the Lord: "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

i. The fall here spoken of is not necessarily, nor does the prophet seem to imply, a fall into any gross sin or into any such evil as would make the world rejoice, or gladden our implacable foe. It is a mercy for the saints of God that the Lord for the most part hedges them round with strong restraints in providence, and still stronger in grace; that he plants his fear deep within their heart as a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. But though the Lord's people are for the most part—I will not say invariably, for we have strong scriptural examples to the contrary—preserved from falling into those gross and open sins which open the mouth of the enemy, yet they do fall into many deep, dark, and desolate spots, where the foe seems to rejoice over them.

1. They fall, for instance, into many *afflictions*, into great providential reverses. Now when the world sees affliction after affliction, and reverse after reverse, pursue the saints of God; when they perceive that nothing, as is often the case, prospers with them, but whatever they take in hand a blight is upon it;



that they sink lower and lower in the world, descending from one stage of poverty to another; in this their calamity, their foes rejoice. It is a matter of infernal triumph to them, proportionately as it is a matter of distress to the saint of God; for his mind being in darkness, he misreads these signs, and views these dispensations of God in providence as so many marks against him; or, instead of receiving them as fatherly chastisements to wean him from the world; he rather reads in them the angry frowns of God, or even judgments for his sins and transgressions.

2. But he falls also into many *temptations*, as James says: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." These "divers temptations" into which the people of God fall, include all those multiplied and various trials and temptations into which sometimes suddenly and sometimes gradually they slip and sink. Peter calls them "manifold;" indeed it is just the same word in the original as "divers" (1 Pet. 1:6), and thus points to their number as well as their variety. It is surprising how the trials and temptations of the Lord's people differ. Wherever I go I find them a poor, afflicted, tried, and tempted people; but scarcely any one of them suffering under the same trial with an afflicted brother or sister. Some are afflicted in body, and yet hardly two exactly alike in bodily suffering; some are exercised in mind, and yet widely differing in the nature and degree of their exercises; others cast down with temptations, and yet few with precisely the same. Thus their trials and temptations are manifold, divers—many and various.

But it is more peculiarly when they are under the power of temptation that the enemy rejoices, for he knows that temptation usually precedes a downfall. A man is "tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Then it is that there is a conception and a birth of the monster sin. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished (or accomplished) bringeth forth death." (James 1:14. 15.)

But these temptations are not, for the most part to open sin; there are internal temptations confined to a man's own breast,

such as to doubt the goodness of God, to distrust his mercy, to rebel against his dealings, and be filled with fretfulness, murmuring, and self pity. Now when they sink into those spots where the Lord hides his face, (for he will not encourage rebellion, and "the rebellious dwell in a dry land,") they walk in great darkness and see no light; and thus are often led to question whether there ever was a work of grace upon their hearts at all, and whether their experience has not been a delusion. It is then at these seasons when they fall into these temptations, that Satan begins to rejoice over them with infernal triumph; for he takes advantage of these temptations to aggravate the malady, to increase the distance between God and their souls, to egg them on and incite them, as he did Job, Jonah, and Jeremiah, to burst forth into rebellious and peevish expressions, or may even urge them to such gloomy, wretched extremes as despair and suicide.

ii. But when, from these various causes, they are sunk thus low, and Satan begins to rejoice against them, the Lord will sometimes, as it appears was the case of the prophet, break in upon their minds with a ray of heavenly light, and in that ray of light they feel a sweet persuasion, that though fallen, they are not fallen out of the Lord's hands or heart. In their fears and feelings the Lord's people may fall very low, but they never really sink into despair, for "underneath are the everlasting arms" out of which they never can fall. In their worst extremity there is a "Who can tell?" and their hope, as an anchor of their soul, sure and steadfast, still remains fast and firm within the veil. Nay sometimes they most rise when they most fall, for the more sensibly that they are sunk into a sense of their own wretchedness and misery, the more they fall, so to speak, flat before the Lord, with a deep conviction of their helplessness; and the more they fall into an experimental feeling of their weakness the more does the Lord make his strength perfect in that weakness, so that they can say, "When I am weak then am I strong." This enabled the prophet to dare and defy his enemy, "*When I fall I shall arise.*" You may rejoice against me as falling or fallen; but when I fall—at the very moment when I seem most

sunk or sinking I shall arise. "Woe to him!" we read, "that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." (Eccl. 4:10.) Saul was alone when he fell, for God had forsaken him; so was Ahithophel, so was Judas. They fell therefore, and that without remedy. But Peter was not alone when he fell; neither was Jonah when he fell into the sea, into the whale's belly, and into the very belly of hell. Safe in the heart of Christ, all his saints are safe in the hands of Christ; "Yea he loved the people." There they are safe in the heart of Christ. "All his saints are in thy hand." There they are safe in the hands of Christ. (Deut. 33:3.)

The prophet could also add as a further reason why he should arise: "*When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.*" We often have to sit in darkness. This expression signifies the condition of the soul in the gloom of unbelief, under the hidings of the Lord's countenance, when it loses all sensible enjoyment and all comforting light, as expressed by the prophet Isaiah: "Who is among you, that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light"—that is, no bright light, for the word rendered "light" there means "brightness" or shining, not ordinary light. (Isa. 50:10.) Thus though he sat in darkness it was not unmitigated darkness—the darkness of death, or the darkness of despair, but that darkness which is the absence of bright light—an eclipse or dark thunder cloud rather than a winter midnight. In this darkness the Lord's people often sit; and yet in the very midst of it there is light, and light too the best and most blessed, for it is the Lord himself: "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Now here the saint of God differs from all others. None but he in fact really knows what darkness is, for none but he has light to see it, or life to feel it. It is the Lord's light in his soul that makes him see the darkness with which he is surrounded, and it is the Lord's life in his heart that makes him feel those cold damps which so chill his feelings and wrap him up, as it were, in a misty cloud. Those who walk in the sparks of their own kindling never complain of sitting in darkness. They know nothing of what it is to lose the light of the Lord's countenance, for they never saw or

enjoyed it. A blind man cannot see an eclipse, nor does he know night from day. Those, therefore, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not never sat in darkness, because they never sat in light nor do they know the hidings of the Lord's face, because he has never lifted the light of his countenance upon them. As they have had no drawings near of the Lord to their soul, they have no withdrawals of his gracious power and presence. It is for this reason, that though thousands are in darkness, none *sit* in darkness, that is feelingly and experimentally, but the saints of God. They "*walk*" or "*sit*," both postures implying life, in darkness, but the dead *lie* in it. But when they sit in darkness, the Lord is their light. He not only gives them beams and rays of divine light to illuminate their darksome path; but he himself is their light, it all centering in, and being communicated out of his own divine Person. His word indeed is a light, for "it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path;" but this is more a reflected than a direct light. It is he himself who in a peculiar way is light, for "God is light;" and though "he dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unto," yet he shines upon those that fear his name, even when they sit in darkness, to cheer them in it and to give them a sweet persuasion that they shall come out of it.

iii. But you may perhaps ask, "Why does the Lord permit this darkness to spread itself over the minds of his people?" There are doubtless wise reasons why it is permitted; but take one. It is in this school that we learn our best and safest lessons. We have much pride that needs to be humbled, much self-righteousness to be brought down, much self-exaltation and self-dependence to be laid low, all which are sadly opposed to the life and power of God in the soul. These weeds, then, that overspread the Lord's garden need to be rooted out and plucked up, that the fruits and graces of the Spirit may have room to live and flourish. We, therefore, need to be brought into a place where the Lord only can do us good, and thus become our all in all. We need to have all other wisdom brought to an end but the Lord's wisdom, all other strength but the Lord's strength, and all other righteousness but the Lord's righteousness. Now when we are continually falling into

afflictions, temptations, soul exercises, and in them darkness besets the mind, we begin to see and feel how little we can help ourselves, how little we can help one another. In this hard but salutary school of experience, we learn that the Lord himself, and none but the Lord, must be our all in all. When, then, the Lord becomes our light, faith is strengthened to look unto him, and prayer excited to call upon his holy name. There is a more thorough and decided weaning from self, and a fuller, firmer resting on the promises and invitations of Scripture, clearer views of the Person and work of the Son of God; and all this strengthens our hope to anchor more strongly and actively within the veil. What a need be, then, there is for these trials and exercises, as Peter speaks: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." (1 Pet.1:6.) And does he not give us a sufficient and satisfactory reason? "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:7.) Yes, it is to try our faith, and thus prove it to be more precious than gold that perisheth. The Lord would not put his children into the furnace unless the dross had to be taken away; he would not allow them to sink into depths, unless in those depths to cry, and experience deliverance: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." (Psal. 130:1.) Nor would he again and again allow Satan to triumph over them and rejoice in their misery, unless to show them the strength of his almighty arm, the clemency of his merciful heart, and the freeness and richness of his sovereign, superabounding grace. When we are passing through these dark and dreary things, we cannot usually see the wisdom of the Lord in thus exercising our minds, nor what profitable lessons we are learning, or what useful instruction the Lord is thereby communicating. But when he is pleased to bring us out of this furnace, then we begin to see what valuable lessons we have learnt in this trying path—how much secret self-righteousness and Pharisaical pride were in our mind; how much vain confidence was mingled with our faith, how much of our own strength, wisdom, and self-dependence really worked in us, and

was nurtured by us, but was hidden from our eyes by the pride and self-righteousness of our heart. But being brought into circumstances which gave our enemies temporary cause of triumph, falling continually into some affliction, some soul desertion, some trial in providence, or some exercise in grace, and having from time to time to sit in great darkness of mind, we learn in that school to depend less upon our own strength and wisdom and to hang more simply, more really, more earnestly, and more perseveringly upon the Lord himself. It is thus we learn what the Lord is able to do by his Spirit and grace; thus we see the difference between spiritual and natural religion; between that faith that stands in the wisdom of men, and that which stands in the power of God; between the hope of the hypocrite that perishes, and the good hope through grace that supports the saint of God in the trying hour. And as our Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" as reproach broke his heart; and as he knew, for a time at least, what it was to be forsaken of his God, the soul is thus brought more into communion with its tempted Head, and to have some measure of fellowship with him in his sufferings. Thus, though the soul may have faith to say, even when it falls into affliction and temptation, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise;" and even when it sits in darkness may feel some sweet persuasion that the Lord will be a light unto it; yet when matters are in some measure cleared up by the shining in of the Lord's countenance, it sees that there were also other needs be for walking in this path besides those which I have just mentioned, and another work to be accomplished within, not less for its good and the Lord's glory; which brings me to my next point:

III.—The *patient submission* of the soul to the Lord's righteous dealings, and the *reasons* why it thus submits: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me."

i. The Lord will bring our secret sins to light, and set them in the light of his countenance. And O, what a day and hour is that when the Lord summons up dead and buried sins like so many

gaunt spectres, brings them to mind and memory, and lays them with weight and power upon the conscience. Men conceal their sins, not only from others but from themselves: they are not willing to have them brought forth and laid upon their conscience, so as to feel true repentance and godly sorrow for them. They think repentance is so bitter a thing, and that true sorrow for sin is attended with such guilt and distress, that they are glad to escape such bitter feelings and such a fiery furnace. But the Lord will and does bring forth out of the heart of his people all their secret sins, visibly arrays before their eyes the iniquities they have committed in times gone by—transgressions of their infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood; of heart, and lip, and life. So Job found it: "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." (Job 13:26.) And thus Moses the man of God testified, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." (Psal. 90:8.) Now though painful, this is necessary to true and unfeigned repentance. The great Searcher of hearts must lay it bare before sin is felt, or confession made. There is a covering transgressions, as Adam, by hiding iniquity in the bosom (Job 31:33), as well as rolling it like a sweet morsel under the tongue; but "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil," (Eccl. 12:14); and then "the morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up" (Prov. 23:8), and loathe both it and thyself. But though the Lord sets his people's sins in the light of his countenance, and brings them to bear with weight and power upon their conscience, and thus for a time at least lets them sink and fall into distress and grief, he will support them under the heavy load, that they may not altogether be crushed by it.

I do think, and here I must express my opinion, that if there is one single grace more overlooked than another in the church of God at the present day, it is the grace of repentance. Though it lies at the very threshold of vital godliness, though it was one main element in the gospel that Paul preached, for he "testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), yet how it

is passed by. Men speak of faith, hope, and love; but repentance, contrition, godly sorrow for sin, how much this part of God's work upon the soul is passed by. But the Lord will not pass it by. Books may pass it by; men may pass it by; ministers may pass it by; but the Lord will not pass it by. He will bring out these secret sins and set them in the light of his countenance; and when he lays them upon the sinner's conscience, he will make him feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to have sinned against the Lord.

1. Now when one taught by grace feels the weight and burden of his sins laid on his conscience, and has a spiritual sight and view of the nature and enormity of the transgressions which he has committed against the Majesty of heaven, he will begin to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord." This indignation, thus submissively and patiently borne, is not that fearful displeasure which will one day burst forth and consume a guilty world, for that cannot be borne, as Cain complained and thousands have felt; nor is that "fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" ever directed against the people of God; for fury (or penal wrath) is not in Him to those who fear his name. Where there is all wrath there is no repentance either on the part of God or man. The wrath that burns to the lowest hell, like Tophet's dreadful flame, is ever kindled by the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone. (Isai. 30:33.) The indignation, then, or fatherly displeasure, which is bearable, the soul will, as grace enables, patiently and submissively endure. We see much of this in the third chapter of Lamentations, and especially in that touching inquiry and exhortation: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. 3:39, 40, 41); "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." (Lam. 3:19, 20, 21.) This stilling of complaints under a sense of chastisement for sin; this remembering the wormwood and the gall, being humbled by it, and gathering up hope as a support under it, harmonise with "I will bear the indignation of



the Lord, *because I have sinned against him.*" It is as if the prophet said, "I will submit to it; I will not murmur nor fret nor rebel. I deserve it all, were it ten times more." It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them. As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord's dealings when his hand lies heavy upon us. But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve: that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in providence; but if you feel what you deserve, it will make you water with tears of repentance the hardest cross. So in grace, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God's long-suffering mercy that he has borne with you so long; that he has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell. You will see, too, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastisings; that the rod was dipped in love; and that it was for your good and his glory that it was laid on. When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." You would not escape the rod if you might. As Cowper says,

"Bastards may escape the rod,  
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;  
But a true-born child of God  
Must not, would not if he might."

Thus there is a willingness to bear the rod and submission to the stroke. The saint of God would sooner be chastised with the children than be let off with the bastards, knowing what will be the end with all such. Thus he feels he will bear the indignation of the Lord in this time state.

But even were these strokes ten times heavier, he could bear them with submission, not only because of his deserts, but from a sweet hope, amounting at times to a confidence, that the Lord

will *plead his cause*, that the enemies of his soul shall not always rejoice and triumph over him, but that the Lord himself will interfere in his behalf.

This brings us to the second reason why the prophet says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord" in the confidence that the enemy shall not triumph over him. "*He shall plead my cause.*"

2. How this leads us at once to the advocacy of Jesus at the right hand of God: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This advocacy is here called, as elsewhere, "pleading the cause" of the believer and is connected with deliverance, for such an advocate can never fail: "O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life." (Lam. 3:58.) The figure is taken from a lawyer pleading the cause of a criminal and using his best endeavours to bring him off uninjured. But such advocacy may fail for two reasons: 1, the incompetency of the advocate, or 2, the badness of the cause. But there are no such hindrances to the success of the advocacy of Christ. How he can plead his own sufferings, blood, and obedience. His very Person, as the Son of God, and yet son of man, gives unspeakable value and validity to every plea of the great Intercessor. What validity, then, has his intercession in the court of heaven! It is true that he cannot deny the truth of the charge brought by the accuser of the brethren against his client; but he can present his own meritorious sufferings, and the sorrows he endured for the culprit. On this ground he can stand up as his surety and representative, and plead with his Father that he has suffered in his place and stead. On the firm, solid ground, then, of justice and equity, he can plead on his behalf, "Let him go, for I endured the penalty due to him."

And not only in the courts above, but here below the same all-prevailing Advocate may and often does, in the face of the world and in the face of Satan, so plead his cause as to bring off his client victorious. You may have fallen, for instance, under false and cruel charges; ungodly men or carnal professors, who are often worse, may have endeavoured to calumniate your

character; and you may have sunk very much in your soul under these strokes. We feel keenly when we know we are innocent of charges brought against us. But you bear the indignation of the Lord, because you know that though innocent of those charges, in other matters deeply registered on your own conscience you have sinned against him; hoping he will plead your cause in the face of your enemy, and make it plainly appear that your cause is his own.

3. "*And execute judgment for me.*" This third reason follows necessarily upon the Lord's pleading his cause; for the unfailing Advocate is the Almighty Judge.

O what a grievous thing it is to be an enemy of God and godliness, a foe to the Lord and to his people. All men, though they know and feel it not, are fighting against a God who with a look could crush them into eternal ruin, and will one day sentence them to eternal misery, for he will certainly execute judgment, and pass sentence of eternal banishment from his presence upon all his and his people's enemies. A day will come when the Lord will openly plead the cause of his people, when his saints shall come forth in all their glory, shining like the sun in the sky for ever and ever. At present, he may say, "My soul is sitting in darkness; I feel gathering around me the clouds of obscurity; the Lord does not shine upon my soul as I would wish; things in providence are obscured, and in grace are obscurer still. But will it always be so? Will my sun set in gloom? No," he says, in sweet confidence; "he will bring me forth to the light." This leads us to our fourth and last point:

IV.—The *firm assurance* of the prophet that the Lord will do two things for him: 1, "He shall bring me forth to the light," and as the consequence of that, 2, "I shall see his righteousness."

1. What is this "light?" The light of his own countenance, of his own grace, in the manifestations of his own pardoning mercy and love.

While we are sitting in darkness; bearing the indignation of the Lord, we are not walking in the light of the Lord's countenance. We may see it at a distance. As by the natural eye we may see a ray of light peeping through a dense bank of clouds on some distant object, or the sun shining upon a mountain a great way off, as I remember once seeing the rising sun shining on the top of Mount Snowdon in North Wales before he was above the horizon; so in divine things we may see there is such a thing as the shining of the Lord's countenance, and that it shines brightly on others though not on ourselves. We may have enjoyed it ourselves in days past, yet now our path may be darkness and gloom, and still there may be a sweet persuasion in the soul, "He will bring me forth to the light."

But the words will bear another meaning in full harmony with the general bearing of the text. The Lord will clear up the false charges against you. Though clouds may for a time rest upon your Christian character; though enemies may misrepresent, calumniate, and cast a temporary shade over you, yet if you are right before God, if you are innocent, if the matter is merely one of calumny, and your hands are free from this charge, the Lord will bring you forth to the light. If it be true, you must fall under the charge; if your enemies have any real cause of offence against you, you must acknowledge it and bear the indignation of the Lord for it. But if it be merely a calumny, a groundless accusation, the Lord will bring you to the light and make it plain you are innocent, and that he is on your side. But mind, *he* must do it. It is of no use your justifying yourself, nor even bringing forth evidence to clear up things that may be misconstrued, though it may be right to do so, as enemies will rarely hear it or acknowledge it. Rather patiently bear the indignation of the Lord for having sinned against him in matters not laid to your charge. In his own time and way he will bring you forth to the light and clear up all that is dark against you.

i. He adds, therefore, "*And I shall behold his righteousness.*" What is that righteousness?

1. First, it may signify God's *faithfulness*, for he is a faithful God, and righteousness is used sometimes in that sense. When he afflicts you, it is still in faithfulness; when he chastises, it is in faithfulness. He cannot be unfaithful to his covenant, to his promise, to his oath, to his dear Son, to the work of grace upon the soul. Clouds and darkness may surround his throne, but he is a righteous God still. Bear that in mind. Darkness is ours; he is light. All the unfaithfulness is ours; God is faithful. Let this be engraved on our heart of hearts: whatever takes place God is righteous and faithful still. All these dealings in providence and in grace that you have been so puzzled by, all spring from a God of righteousness. If he has cast you down in providence, if he has deprived you of earthly good, still hold by that truth, that God did it all. It is all of his hand, and in doing, it, he is still a righteous and faithful God. And if in grace you have gone down time after time lower and lower in the view of your misery and wretchedness; if you have had deeper and deeper discoveries of your sinfulness and wickedness, and the Lord has hidden his face more and more from you, may you ever hold it firm that it is done in consummate wisdom, truthfulness, and faithfulness. Now when the Lord brings you out into the light of his countenance, you will bless him for every afflicting stroke, for every temptation, every trial, and every desertion; and you will see in all God's righteousness.

ii. But there is another meaning of the expression, viz., *Christ's righteousness*. You will then more clearly see Christ's righteousness, what a glorious righteousness it is, how suitable to all your wants and woes; and you will be able to hide yourself more and more under its covering protection.

Thus, if we know anything experimentally of the meaning of the text, we see how the Lord's people have to walk in these painful and gloomy paths. There may be those here who have been writing against themselves bitter things, because they have long had to walk in this path. You have rather reason to bless your Lord for placing you in it, because you have learnt in it important lessons. The Lord will eventually show you the reason of these

dealings, and that wisdom and goodness and mercy are stamped upon them all.

## THE CONQUEROR'S INHERITANCE

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 6th, 1845

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Revelation 21:7

The Scriptures, describing the path of the Christian, represent it under various figures, but all implying opposition to the path he takes. For instance, it is sometimes spoken of as a conflict: "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:30). Sometimes as a race: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Sometimes as a fight: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). Sometimes as a struggle: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). Sometimes as a contest: "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5).

All these figures bear upon this one point, that the path of a Christian is one of internal and external opposition. But there is more to be observed than this. It is not a fight without a victory; it is not a conflict without success; it is not a race without reaching the goal; it is not a struggle that ends in the defeat of the contender. A victory is represented as the termination of the battle. "Nay, in all these things," saith the Apostle, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). The Lord, in the Book of Revelation (2 and 3), in each of the addresses to the seven churches, assigns a distinct promise "to him that overcometh." A gracious promise is also contained in the text: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

In looking at these words, my endeavour will be, first, to describe what it is to overcome; and then, if the Lord enable, to unfold the twofold promise which is given to him that overcometh: 1. "He shall inherit all things;" and 2. God will be his Father, and he shall

be God's son.

I. In endeavouring to unfold what it is to overcome, we must premise a few observations. Observe, then, that this overcoming is not by our own strength, by our own wisdom, or by our own righteousness. The kingdom of God is not promised to anything done by the creature. The Apostle lays down a certain rule in the text before quoted: "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). In other words, it is not a bare striving, but a striving according to certain rules. But these rules are spiritual rules, and being spiritual rules, exclude everything of sense, reason and nature. Now man, in an unregenerate condition, whether he be in a state of profanity, or in a state of profession, has no spiritual knowledge of the way by which to overcome. He may strive against his lusts, he may endeavour to overcome those things that conscience bears testimony against, but he is not crowned, because he strives not lawfully. He strives in his own strength, contends in his own wisdom, and trusts in his own righteousness. Such strugglers and such overcomers (if overcomers they ever are) are not crowned, because they strive not according to the rules laid down in God's Word. This at once excludes all creature righteousness, human wisdom and natural strength. This takes the crown completely off the creature, and puts it on the head of the Redeemer.

There are certain rules, then, laid down in the Scripture, according to which we are to fight and to overcome. For instance, the Lord of life and glory is held out in the Word as our pattern: "He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). He fought the battle before us, and He gained the victory, not for Himself only, but for His people; and He has left us here below to walk in His footsteps, and to overcome in the same way as He did; as we read, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). All striving, then, and all overcoming which is not in the steps of Christ, and precisely (in a measure) in the same way in which Jesus strove and overcame, is not the overcoming which is



crowned with God's approbation.

But let us look at a few of the enemies whom the Lord overcame. Remember that His enemies are our enemies; that as He fought we must fight; and that as He overcame we must overcome.

1. First, then, He overcame the world; as He told His sorrowing disciples: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

But how did the Lord overcome the world? Was it by taking up the sword of the conqueror, or by appearing in the majesty of the Father? No; it was by a state of humiliation and abasement; by emptying Himself so as to become "a worm, and no man"; by being made "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" by being buffeted, spit upon, despised, and crucified. Thus He overcame the world; not by taking the world's weapons, but by contending against the world with spiritual weapons—the weapon of obedience to His Father's will, the weapon of sorrow and suffering, of shame and contempt. He overcame the world by not being of it. He did not gain the victory by desolating the world with judgments as a triumphant conqueror, but by setting up a spiritual kingdom of faith, love and obedience.

2. He overcame Satan; for we read, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). And He said to His disciples, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). How did He overcome Satan? Did He meet him upon the battlefield, and (as He might have done, being "God over all, blessed for evermore") crush him with one look? He met him not so, but He passed through the territories of death; and by suffering, by obedience, by the cross, by bowing His head and giving up the ghost, He "destroyed him that had the power of death." He conquered not with a carnal, but a spiritual weapon, even obedience in suffering unto death.

3. He also overcame the law, though He was "made under the law," and subject to it. In overcoming the law, He took away its curse and condemnation; not by putting it aside, but by obeying and fulfilling it, by magnifying and making it honourable. Thus He overcame the curse and the condemnation by being Himself made a curse, and being Himself made a condemnation; enduring in His holy soul and holy body the vengeance of the Almighty due to the transgressors.

I put this example of Christ before you to shew that if we are overcomers, and in overcoming inherit the blessing, we are to walk in these footsteps. Poor vain creatures, blind wretches! we are thinking of overcoming in our own strength, in our own wisdom, in our own resolutions, and in our own righteousness. This is not the way. "The battle is not yours, but the Lord's." We are to do as it was said to those of old: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:17).

Observe, then, the promise is "to him that overcometh." We have enemies to overcome. Who, and what are they? We can scarcely enumerate them all; we will therefore content ourselves with naming a few.

1. There is the world, that great enemy of our soul's peace. How are we to overcome it? The Christian must either overcome the world, or be overcome by it. If he be overcome by the world, he will be condemned with it; but he that overcomes it will be saved by Him that has overcome it for him. In this battle we are losers before we are gainers; we are vanquished before we are victors; we lose our life before we find it; we flee before we shout the song of victory. All this is to teach us our weakness. Could we overcome the world, its temptations, its allurements, its riches, its honours, its praise, and its glory; could we overcome it standing upon the basis of our own strength, our own wisdom, or our own righteousness; we should "sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag." And instead hereafter of singing

"the song of Moses and of the Lamb," we should sing the song of our own attainments, our own strength, our own wisdom, our own righteousness, of our own good hand and our own good sword which had carved for us the victory. But such a sound of creature exaltation will never be heard in the courts above; no notes are chanted there but those of praise to the Triune God. As the clink of the hammer was not heard in Solomon's temple, so the noise of creature praise will never be heard in the courts of heaven. Therefore, if we overcome the world, we must overcome it by faith; as we read, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5). Defeats lead to victories, losses to gains, surprisals to watchfulness, and ourselves being overcome leads eventually to ourselves overcoming. How? Why? That we may learn the grand secret of spiritual warfare; the strength of Jesus made perfect in our weakness. When we experience a little measure of the love of God, taste a little of the beauty and glory of the Lamb, feel the heart melted and watered by the blessings dropping down from above, this purges out the love of the world, and enables us to overcome it by the Spirit of God working in the soul, when we could never overcome it by any resolution, any strength, or any wisdom of our own. What read we? "They overcame." How? "By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11). These were their weapons—the blood of the Lamb sprinkled upon the conscience, the word of His testimony felt in their heart, and a loving not their lives unto the death.

2. Again. There is sin; and every person must be either overcome by sin, or he must overcome it. There is no neutrality in this warfare. It is either being conquered, and being condemned as conquered; or conquering, and being crowned as victors. But all God's children, until they are taught better, fight against sin in their own strength. They know not, at first, the power of sin in them, the power of lust, the power of pride, the power of rebellion, and the power of temper; in one word, the power of corruption. And being ignorant of the consummate craft, skill, and maneuvering policy of this inward enemy, sin, they are sure to be

defeated, because they fight not in the Lord's strength against it. Yet, strange though it may appear, it is necessary to be overcome that we may overcome. Generals have gained battles often by defeats. Defeats have led to victories, where success would only have flushed and led them into the ambush; when reverses have made them wary and skilful. So spiritually, we only know the power of sin by being vanquished, overcome, got the better of, and laid low. This cuts down creature righteousness and strength. And then, when we feel the guilt of sin in the conscience, and its dominion in endeavouring to obtain the mastery over us, we are brought out of self to look unto the Lord of life and glory, that we may receive out of His fulness that pardon which blots out its condemnation, and those supplies of grace which alone can enable us to fight against it. We can never overcome sin but by "the blood of the Lamb," and "the word of His testimony"—"the blood of the Lamb" purging the conscience from the guilt of it, and "the word of his testimony" communicating a secret power to conquer it.

3. But again. There is overcoming one's own spirit. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). What a foe to one's peace is one's own spirit! And what shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit. Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it. The pride of our spirit, the presumption of our spirit, the hypocrisy of our spirit, the intense selfishness of our spirit, are often hidden from us. This wily devil, self, can wear such masks and assume such forms; this serpent, self, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances, that it is hidden often from ourselves. Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all have our enemies. But who is our greatest enemy? He that you carry in your own bosom; your daily, hourly, and momentarily companion, that entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart; that suggests well nigh every motive; that sometimes puffs up with pride, sometimes inflames with lust, sometimes inflates with presumption, and sometimes works under feigned humility and fleshly holiness.

Now this self must be overcome; for if self overcome us eventually, we shall perish in the condemnation of self. God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let self (which is but another word for the creature) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified; it must be put off, that so Jesus may be put on; that in the denying of self Jesus may be believed in; and that in the crucifixion of self there may be a solemn spiritual union with Him that was crucified on Calvary. Now, are we overcoming self? Are we buffeted? What says self? "Buffet again." Are we despised? What says self? "Despise again; retort angry look for angry look, and hasty word for hasty word; 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'" But what says the Spirit of God in a tender conscience? "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

The way to overcome self is by looking out of self to Him who was crucified upon Calvary's tree; to receive His image into your heart; to be clothed with His likeness; to drink into His spirit; and "receive out of His fulness grace for grace."

But what are the weapons in this spiritual warfare? We need weapons offensive and defensive to fight in these battles.

1. One weapon is faith. By faith we stand, by faith we fight, by faith we conquer; as we read, "Through faith they subdued kingdoms." Not by their own strength or wisdom: "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them" (Psa. 44:3). How does faith fight in this battle? By fleeing, all helpless and defenceless, to seek shelter and refuge in Jesus. Faith deals with invisible, eternal realities, with inward strength communicated in a secret way from Jesus who dwells and reigns within the veil. Faith prevails by looking and fleeing to Him, by committing the cause into His hands, by pleading with and cleaving to Him with full purpose of heart, and thus receiving out of His fulness. Faith does not stand upon its own foundation, or

fight in its own strength; if it were so, it would still be self in another form. But faith, like a poor defenceless woman, flies to the Husband for shelter, strength and defence; and thus fights in His wisdom, His strength, and His righteousness.

2. But prayer is another weapon. True prayer is the pouring out of the heart and soul before the Lord; committing all one's cause into His hands who judgeth righteously; panting and groaning after His presence, and venting forth the troubled spirit into the bosom of God. The Lord brings all His people here. He shews them how helpless they are without His help; how hopeless without His hope; how wretched without His consolation; how eternally lost without His sovereign favour! And He kindles and raises up these panting desires after Himself, that He may communicate Himself in all His glorious fulness to the groaning, crying and panting soul.

3. But another weapon is the Word of God. This is the only true blade—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." If we have battles to fight; if we have enemies to overcome; if we have corruptions to subdue; if we have lusts to conquer; whatever conflict, external or internal, we are engaged in, let us never think for a single moment that God will own or bless any weapon but His own Word, "the Word of His testimony," in the heart and conscience; the Word of truth dropped by the Spirit into the soul. We can never overcome temptation but by the Word and the testimony; we can never mortify self but by the Word and the testimony; and we can never receive anything out of Christ's fulness but through the channel of God's testimony.

II. Now the promise is absolute: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Let me ask you two questions to bring matters to a nearer compass. Have you ever had any enemies to encounter? Does your soul know the difficulties, the exercises, and the perplexities of a conflict? "It does," answer you. "I do know," says the living soul, "what it is to have, more or less, a daily, and sometimes an hourly, conflict with sin, corruption, temptation, and the world." Good. Let me ask you another question: "Do you

ever overcome in this battle? You say that you are fighting. Is it all defeat? Is there never any victory? Is there never any success? Is corruption never mortified? Does temper always overcome you, or lust cast you down? Pride, peevishness, impatience, unbelief, hypocrisy, do these always bear the sway in your heart? Surely you are deceived if you think you have a conflict, and find yourself always overcome." Is there a promise merely to the fighter? It is true we must fight, but does the promise belong merely to the battle? Does not the promise belong to "him that overcometh"? Read the Lord's own testimony in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. Is the promise made to the fighter, or is the promise made to the conqueror? "But," say you, and that justly, "I am often overcome." But do your defeats lead to victories? What is the effect when sin overcomes you? When temper, when pride, when lust, when hypocrisy, when corruption, in its various shapes and forms, overcome you, are you cut? are you grieved? are you distressed? are you troubled? Do the eyes overflow with tears of sorrow? Does the bosom heave with convulsive sobs of penitence and remorse? "Yes," say you, "it does." Then you are not overcome. That is the secret of victory. These things shew that there is an internal principle in your bosom that flies out of self, to lay hold of the strength of Jesus. I will tell you when a man is overcome—when he sins and feels no sorrow; when his lusts captivate him, and he is never filled with shame before God; when his pride, his ill-temper, his unbelief, his covetousness, exercise unchecked sway over him. 'There is no conflict then; no tear from his eye, no sob from his heart, no groan from his conscience. But to be sorrowing and mourning, sighing, groaning and panting after the Lord; these are so many victories. They may come to us as defeats, but actually they are so many victories, because they lead us on to conquest. They purge us of self, they overcome our self-righteousness, they empty us of that leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, and they prepare the heart, by meekening the spirit and softening the soul, to receive a glorious and precious Jesus in all His fulness.

Now, the promise runs to such: "He that overcometh shall inherit

all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Let us look at these two promises.

1. "He shall inherit all things." When? In eternity? Yes. But only in eternity? Oh no! In time also. There is a twofold inheritance, though one and the same—one in time, another in eternity; one the first-fruits, the other the harvest; one the earnest, the other the full sum. There is an inheriting here below, and an inheriting above; and he that never receives any portion of his inheritance below will never receive an inheritance above. Now, just in proportion as we overcome are we put in possession of this inheritance. What are we to inherit? Riches, glory, honour, power, praise? These are worldly things; let the world enjoy them. In inheriting "all things," we are to inherit the things of God—the favour of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the glory of God; all that a covenant God gives in giving Himself; peace here, glory hereafter; pardon below, salvation above; the beginning of rest on earth, the fulness of rest in heaven.

Now, whilst we are overcome, there is no being put into possession of this eternal inheritance. Does sin overcome us? Do we inherit pardon in being overcome? No; we inherit shame and confusion, guilt, fear, and wrath. When we consult our own temper, our own spirit, our own pride, our own worldliness, our own profit, do we inherit the image of Christ, the meekness of Jesus, the favour of God, the dew of the Spirit, the compassion of Jehovah? No; we feed upon ashes; the clusters are the clusters of Sodom, and grapes of gall. Let us have our pride gratified; does it put us into possession of a heavenly inheritance? Sorrow, shame, confusion follow. Are we overcome by our lusts? Do we gratify them? Do we fill our carnal heart with the enjoyment of them? What do we inherit? Love, pardon, peace, salvation, bliss? No; distress, shame, remorse, confusion, trouble, fear, doubt, despondency, the wrath of God in the conscience. Do we seek the exaltation of self in its various forms, that dear self may be honoured, admired, gratified, fed? Do we then inherit all things? the favour of God, the testimony of mercy, the consolations of the Spirit, the dew of heaven? No; we inherit nothing but the



inheritance of fools, which is shame and folly. But do we overcome in God's strength, in God's name, in God's righteousness? We begin, the moment that we overcome, to be put into possession of the inheritance. What is the inheritance? Is it not peace and pardon, the image of Christ, the "rivers of pleasure, which are at His right hand for evermore"? Is not this inheritance the goodly land flowing with brooks of honey, milk, and wine? Do we not, just in proportion as we overcome, drink into a portion of the inheritance? Do I overcome the world? Am I separate in spirit from it? Is its love cast out? Are its allurements opened up to me in their true colours? Do I overcome it by believing on the name of the Son of God? Directly I overcome it, I begin to drink into the eternal inheritance, into the kingdom of heaven, which is opposed to and incompatible with the kingdom of earth. I must be brought out of the world in heart, in spirit, in affection, that I may enter into the kingdom of heaven, and partake of the inheritance reserved for the saints. Do I overcome myself? Is self mortified, crucified, subdued, put off? No sooner do I put off self than I put on Christ; I must put off the old man to put on the new. When I put off self, I put on Jesus; and in putting on Jesus, I put on the earnest of an eternal inheritance, which is Jesus in His almighty, glorious fulness. Do I overcome my temper, my pride, my hypocrisy, the inward workings of self in all its hateful forms? Do I return good for evil? Do I turn the left cheek when the right is smitten? Do I humble myself under the mighty hand of God? Do I seek to know His will, and when known to do it? Am I contrite, brokenhearted, tender, softened, looking to the Lord, and to the Lord only? Do I sometimes thus overcome self? The moment that I overcome self, I begin to enter into the inheritance. The inheritance is the image of Jesus, for to that image we are predestinated to be conformed. Then no sooner do I overcome self than I put on the image of Christ; and in putting on the image of Christ I enter into the inheritance. Does sin overcome me, or do I overcome sin? If I overcome sin, it is not in my own strength, or by my own resolutions. I am lost there. But do I ever overcome sin by the fear of God in my soul, as Joseph did? Do I ever overcome sin by looking to the Lord of life and glory to sprinkle His blood upon my conscience? Do I ever

overcome sin by the leadings and teachings of the Spirit in my heart? No sooner do I thus overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of His testimony, than I enter into the inheritance. So that there is a connection, a beautiful, an experimental connection, between overcoming here below, and inheriting here below. But in order to enter into this inheritance, we must be perpetually reminded that we have no strength of our own. And thus our slips, our falls, our backslidings, our frailties (though we would not, dare not justify them), are mercifully overruled amongst the "all things" that work together for our good. They teach us our weakness, and by teaching us our weakness, lead us up to Christ's strength: and by leading us up to Christ's strength, to "inherit all things": for in inheriting Him, we inherit all that He is to God's people.

Those who know nothing of their own heart, of their own infirmities, of their own frailties, of their own inward or outward slips and backslidings, know nothing of the secret of superabounding grace, nothing of the secret of atoning blood, nothing of the secret of the Spirit's inward testimony. They cannot. Only in proportion as we are emptied of self in all its various forms are we filled out of the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Now you, perhaps, (I address myself personally to some poor tempted child of God, that in touching one, I may touch others) are a poor tempted creature, and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble, is that you are so soon overcome; that your temper, your lusts, your pride, your worldliness, your carnal corrupt heart, are perpetually getting the mastery. And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say in the depth of your heart, "Can I be a child of God, and be thus? What mark and testimony have I of being in favour with God when I am so easily, so continually overcome?" Now I want you to look to the end. What is the issue of these defeats? Remember, it is a solemn truth, and one that we learn very slowly, that we must be overcome in order to overcome. There is no setting out with a stock of strength, daily adding to it, weekly increasing it, and

then gaining the victory by our own resolutions, our own innate strength. Such feigned holiness may come under a gospel garb, may wear a fair appearance; but it only more hides the rottenness of the flesh. Then, remember this, that in order to gain the victory, we must know our weakness; and we can only know our weakness by its being experimentally opened up in our consciences. We cannot learn it from others; we must learn it in our own souls, and that often in a very painful manner. But these painful sensations in a tender conscience lead a man more humbly, more feelingly, more believingly, to the Lord of life and glory, to receive out of His fulness. Thus every defeat only leads to and ensures victory at the last. Says the Apostle, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." How? Through our resolutions, through our wisdom? No. "Through Him that loved us." There is no other way, then, to overcome, but by the "strength of Jesus made perfect in our weakness."

Now, in "inheriting all things," we inherit the pardon of sin. But what can we know of the pardon of sin, unless we know what sin is by the rankling of it in our conscience? In "inheriting all things," we inherit the favour and love of God. But do not the favour and love of God flow through the channel of Immanuel's sufferings and obedience? And were not Immanuel's sufferings and obedience for transgressors? for "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12); and it is a faithful saying, that "He came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)—"to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Then, if we are to know the favour and love of God, we must know it as sinners. It is a painful way. We would desire to inherit the favour of God as saints, as holy people, as truly religious characters, as having a form of godliness, as being what is called decidedly pious Christians. But to inherit favour through shame, through sorrow, trouble, perplexity, remorse and penitence, that it is not the path that nature loves to walk in. Yet God's favour and forgiving mercy, through the blood and obedience of Jesus, can flow, and do flow, only into a guilty sinner's conscience.

2. But we pass on to consider the next promise connected with

overcoming: "I will be his God, and he shall be My son." What a promise! That the God of heaven and earth will be our God, our Father, our Benefactor, our eternal almighty Friend; and that we in overcoming shall receive the adoption of sons, shall be manifested as the "sons and daughters" of the Almighty, and receive the inheritance reserved for the children of God! The promise runs in connection with "him that overcometh." If we do not overcome, the promise is not for us. The promise of sonship is connected with overcoming in the same manner as that of "inheritance" is connected with it. Do I want to receive into my heart the Spirit of adoption? Do I want to feel the love of God the Father shed abroad in my soul? Do I want to establish a blessed title to the inheritance that He giveth to His children? How am I to get it? How is it to be obtained? By making myself religious, becoming holy, subduing my lusts in my own strength? This sets me farther from God than I was before. This makes me a god to myself! If I be saved by my own holiness, by my own strength, by my own righteousness, I worship myself, and in worshipping myself I become my own god. This is idolatry, damnable idolatry; so that he who lives and dies in the worship of self will live and die under the wrath of God as an idolater. Then how am I to receive adoption? By overcoming—not in my own strength, but in the strength of the Lord of life and glory. No sooner do I thus overcome than I become manifestly a child of God. How are you to be known as children of God? By base lusts, by pride, by covetousness, hypocrisy, conformity to the world lying in wickedness? Are these the marks, the stamps upon God's sheep? No; honest conscience bears witness. How are you manifested as God's children, as lights in a crooked generation? By wearing the image of Christ. What was the image of Christ—blow for blow, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, revenge for revenge, evil for evil? No; that is not the mind of Christ, that is not the image of Christ. What was the mind of Christ? How did He act? "He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" He obeyed the will of the Father in all things; He gave Himself up wholly and solely into the hands of God, that His will might be done in and by Him. If, then, there is this image of Christ in your soul, if you are a child of God, your pride (and you will have pride to your dying day),

your hypocrisy (and you will never be free from it), and your worldly-mindedness, will be your heaviest burdens. Corruptions do not prove that you are a child of God. But the faith of God's implanting, the hope of God's giving, the love of God's communicating; the meekness, quietness, humility, brokenness, resignation, tender conscience, godly fear, separation of heart and spirit from the world; communion with the Lord of life and glory, tasting His love and feeling His presence; these are the marks of sonship; and as we overcome, we enter upon it. If I am shut up in self, I inherit self; nothing more. If I inherit the world, I have no more than the world. If I inherit sin, I inherit death, which is the wages of sin. Nothing more. But if I overcome, if weak, helpless and defenceless, I yield myself up to the hands of the Lord, as clay in the hands of the Potter; not seeking my own will, but looking to the Lord to make known His will in my conscience, and to work in me that which is well-pleasing in His sight. If I have this, I have an evidence of sonship; and where that evidence is, there will be a further evidence of it in the Spirit of adoption, enabling the soul to call God "Father." And he that calls God "Father" here below, will call God "Father" above, where he will enter into the full enjoyment of it, and bathe in the consolations of Father, Son, and Spirit to all eternity.

Now there are two characters, perhaps more, here. There are those who are fighting in their own strength, and perhaps secretly congratulating themselves they are not as other men. No; they are wise, they are strong, they are righteous, they are holy. Now, be assured that this is not the way to overcome. Your victories are only defeats, and you will find one day, to your sorrow, that all your gain in self will end in shame and confusion of face. There are others here, poor, tried, exercised children of God, who are daily and hourly plagued with the body of sin and death; corruption and sin, carnality and guilt perpetually lurking and working in their heart. You are on the high road to victory; you cannot overcome in any other way. Depend upon it, we shall find out, if we are the children of God, sooner or later, that we cannot overcome in our own strength, or our own righteousness. Happy are we, if we have learned this lesson, though by painful

experience, through a humbling sense of our own helplessness and nothingness. Every feeling groan and cry, under a sense of our own nothingness and worthlessness, to a living and loving Lord, that He would be our "sun and shield"; every tender feeling of affection, and every submissive yielding up of the soul and spirit into His hands and keeping, is a sure pledge and foretaste of certain victory. We shall never be allowed to conquer in any other way; but if we are the Lord's, we shall conquer, we shall overcome; for the promise is made to such; but then, we shall never overcome but in His own way.

God, in mercy, beat out of our hands every weapon but His own. God, in mercy, bring us to that spot where He works in the broken heart and tender conscience. We are safe there. We may doubt, we may fear, we may be exercised and distressed in our mind; we may not see the chariot of the Almighty coming to our relief. But we are in a much safer, in a much surer, in a much better spot than when standing upon the pinnacle of victory in our own strength and wisdom. Do look at the words. The Lord lay it upon our hearts: "He that overcometh." There is no promise to anyone else: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Not one good thing shall fail; heaven here, and heaven hereafter; peace below, and peace above; the image of Christ now in his soul, and the image of Christ hereafter in soul and body. All the love of God, all the bliss of the saints, and all the happiness reserved at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore; all are summed up in that promise, shall "inherit all things." Present sonship, and future enjoyment of it, are also contained in the promise. All are limited to, and belong to, that one character; and that one character, sooner or later, comprehends every ransomed soul: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

## **The Conversation, Mind, and Spirit of the Gospel of Christ**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Evening, Sept. 22, 1867

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Philippians 1:27

Have you ever observed the great stress which in the epistles of the New Testament is laid upon a walk and conversation becoming the gospel? I ask whether you have observed it, for very important points often escape observation until they are forced upon our attention by circumstances, or laid upon our conscience by the power of divine grace. A walk and conversation becoming the gospel flows indeed out of the special operations of God's grace, but is always in harmony with, and is guided by the precepts of the gospel. This should be carefully borne in mind; for Christian obedience and Christian fruitfulness do not consist in a mere strict consistency of life, or a performance of good works, both of which may spring from other motives and be directed to other ends; but are the fruit of the Holy Spirit bringing forth an obedience from the heart in the spirit and not in the letter, and as such, a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Let me then briefly trace out the way in which we are often brought to see the necessity as well as the blessedness of attending to gospel precepts, as well as of believing gospel truths, and experiencing gospel blessings.

1. Let us begin then at the beginning of the divine life, and see how far the precepts of the gospel are, in those days and under that work, observed and followed. As these precepts are the precepts of the gospel, and not legal ordinances, it is very plain that they cannot be understood or apprehended before we know

the truth and power of the gospel. Being under the law, and striving to obey it in our own strength and under the power and influence of a legal spirit, we are still entangled in legal bondage; and therefore the precepts of the gospel are rather burdensome than beneficial, and as viewed in the light of the law are felt a weight upon the conscience rather than a regulator of the life, or an integral part of the glorious gospel of the Son of God.

2. But the time comes when the legal scales drop from the eyes, and, by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, our understanding becomes enlightened clearly to see, and our heart opened to receive and believe the grand and glorious doctrine of salvation by grace. When then we are emerging out of the darkness and bondage of free-will and legal service, and are coming gradually, as is often the case, into a love of gospel truth, we are so taken up with the doctrines of the gospel, we see such blessedness in the truths therein revealed as with a ray of light, that the preceptive part of God's word does not seem to lie with much weight and power upon our mind. Running the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart, feeling willing to make any sacrifice for Christ's sake, and enjoying the power of divine truth, we seem rather led by the spirit of the precept than guided by the letter of it. But not yet being led into paths of much trial or temptation, nor into much exercise of soul, they are not so much neglected by us, still less despised, as overlooked.

3. So also when the Lord has been pleased in some measure to grant us deliverance from legal bondage; when he has made his gospel known and precious, and indulged us with walking in some degree in the sweet liberty of truth, then also the preceptive part of the gospel does not seem to lie with much weight and power upon the mind, because we feel so willing and desirous to do the thing that is right and walk tenderly in God's fear, that positive directions how to walk and act seem almost superfluous. It is not really so, because they are ever needed, and can therefore never be superfluous; but I speak merely according to our apprehensions of them.



4. But there is another state or stage, though rather a descending than an ascending one, in which there is a worse neglect of the precepts of the gospel. When, as is too often the case, we leave our first love; when our heart grows cold and dead in the things of God; when sin revives and begins again to manifest its hideous power; when the world attracts and allures; when our feet get entangled in the snares spread for them by Satan on every side, and we wander, as to our shame and sorrow be it spoken, from the Lord, leaving the fountain of living waters, and hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water; then, too often, we neglect the precepts, because they are felt to be burdensome to us, or perhaps cut our conscience too closely. Under the law we fell into a legal and self-righteous spirit, and now perhaps, partly through ignorance, and partly through wilfulness, sometimes from faulty instruction, sometimes from falling under a wrong influence or wrong examples, we often drop into an Antinomian spirit. This is one of the most dangerous and one of the worst spots into which a child of God can fall.

5. But the Lord will not leave his people here. After a time we begin to see and feel the miserable consequences of not walking tenderly and conscientiously, and not acting consistently with our holy profession. Guilt falls upon our conscience; the Lord withdraws the light of his countenance; much bondage falls upon our spirit, and like the chariot wheels of Pharaoh we drive heavily. Now we begin to see that it is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing to sin against the Lord; that we have not kept the precepts of the gospel as we should have done: that we have not attended to the Lord's direction, written as with a ray of light in the word of truth, with all that strict obedience that we ought to have given to them. As we are thus led and exercised we begin to see a new and fresh light cast upon the preceptive part of God's word; that much blame rests upon us for not paying greater heed to it; and that it would have been well for us if it had been more a lamp to our feet and light to our path. There is thus a mixture of admiration of the precept as a precious part of the everlasting gospel, and of self-condemnation for the neglect of it.

6. And now comes another means whereby it is both seen more clearly and attended to more obediently. This is when the Lord is pleased to smile upon the soul and draw forth faith, hope, and love upon his dear Son, and the grace and glory which shine forth in him. Then we see more clearly and plainly the blessedness of speaking and acting in the fear of God, living near to the Lord, keeping his commandments, doing his will, and walking before him tenderly, humbly, meekly, quietly, and consistently.

Thus by various exercises, some painful, others pleasurable, some attended with bondage, others with sweet liberty, we begin at last to see more clearly and plainly than ever we saw before the nature of gospel precepts, and how imperative it is on all that fear and love God and desire to know his will and to do it, to walk in obedience to them. It is in this way that God is glorified, and the power of his grace manifested. We must indeed read the Scriptures with a very negligent eye, or be sadly under the power of a loose, careless, and unsubdued spirit, if we neither see nor feel the great stress which both our Lord in all his discourses, and his inspired apostles in all their epistles, lay upon fruitfulness in every good word and work. And nothing more clearly shows the low, sunken state of the Churches of Truth in our day than that the precepts of the gospel have been so neglected in their ministry by the professed servants of God, and the path of obedience so shunned by the people, as if to serve the Lord and seek to know his will and do it were miserable legality instead of being the special fruit of grace, and the highest expression of love and gratitude.

With these thoughts in our heart, and I trust some desire in our soul to hear what the Lord may speak to us out of his word in these important matters, let us now approach our text. But before I enter into the mind and meaning of the Spirit in the words before us, let me take a general view of the circumstances under which they were written to the Church of God at Philippi.

They were written from Rome by Paul when he was in bonds. But though his body was in prison, his soul was in sweet and happy

liberty. Having received through Epaphroditus a present from the Philippian church to supply his temporal wants, his heart was melted and softened with a sense of God's goodness and mercy thus displayed to him in his prison-house. And remembering the season when he first preached to them at Philippi, and "their fellowship with him in the gospel from the first day until now," he sends them this epistle to tell them that God was his record how greatly he longed after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ, adding that sweet prayer for them: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:9, 10, 11.)

As regarded himself he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which was far better, nevertheless to abide in the flesh was more needful for them. He therefore says, "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." (Phil. 1:25, 26.) He then adds the words of our text: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

I am not Paul; I have not his grace; I have not his gifts; I cannot walk in the footsteps of this blessed man of God. And yet in my small way, as one who spent many years in your midst and in your service, preaching to you for more than a quarter of a century faithfully I trust, and experimentally, may I not take up in some degree the language of the Apostle before us? Let us then give ear and heart to this exhortation of the man of God, and may the Lord enable me to unfold it consistently with the mind of the Spirit, and give you grace to hear and receive it with humility and love into a believing, obedient heart.

I.—*First*, then, let me show you what is the *Gospel* of Christ, and what is the *conversation which becometh that gospel*.

II.—*Secondly*, what it is to *stand fast in one spirit*.

III.—*Thirdly*, what it is to *strive together in one mind for the faith of the gospel*.

IV.—And I may add, *Fourthly*, may this be so wrought in your heart, and be so brought forth in your life, that *whether I come and see you*, as I hope if life be spared, or else be absent, being taken from you by the providence of God, I may hear of your affairs, and what I hear may rejoice my heart, and strengthen my confidence that the word I preached in your ears many years, not fall to the ground like water spilt, but had, did and still has, a place in your heart by the power of God.

I.—The Apostle does not insist upon a godly conversation based upon legal grounds. He does not speak of our doing this and that moral duty, or performing this or that good work as a means of recommending ourselves to the favour of God, or building up a ladder whereby to reach the skies.

His words are, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." It is the gospel, therefore, which he sets before us—not the law with its curses, but the gospel with its blessings. And our walk and conversation is not to be such as becometh the law and its duties, but the gospel and its precepts; and therefore springing from gospel motives, through the power of gospel promises, and under the influence of a gospel spirit. It is this which makes gospel obedience so distinct from legal service, which is done for the most part in a spirit of bondage and servile fear, and is usually largely mingled with pharisaic pride and obstinate self-righteousness.

But let me, as I proposed, show you, as far as I know and understand it, what is meant by "The Gospel of Christ."

i. The first thing which meets us in this examination is the meaning of the word "*gospel*." It is a good old Anglo-Saxon word, meaning good news, glad tidings, and as such it is a literal translation of the original. But these good news or glad tidings are only so far good and glad as they bring a message of mercy and peace from God to man. Thus, the angels said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. The gospel, then, is a messenger of good tidings from God to man. And O, how condescending it is in the great and glorious Jehovah, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, in whose eyes the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly, to send a message to guilty man; to look from heaven his dwelling place upon rebels, enemies, and aliens, and to send of his own free grace, of his own infinite mercy, to them a message of reconciliation and peace. Now, if we have ever felt our native misery, helplessness, and sinfulness, and our needy, naked, destitute condition has been made manifest to our conscience, how desirable it is that we should listen reverently and humbly to this message of mercy from the skies; and if we have seen any suitability, beauty, or blessedness in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of the Father in truth and love, to look up and say, "Let the Lord speak: here we are to hear. Has the God of heaven and earth sent us a message? Has he sent the Son of his love to bring tidings of peace and pardon to rebels, aliens, and strangers?" We are those rebels; we are those aliens; we are those strangers. Does the Lord speak to such, does he say "Return, ye children of men;" "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help; there is no Saviour besides me; I will be thy King?" Then let us listen to his voice. The first step is for us to listen. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints." The Lord therefore says: "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live." Immediately, then, that we have an ear to hear what the Lord speaks in his word, we are sure, sooner or later, to find something suitable to our state and case, if truly convinced of sin, and we thus are brought to know that the gospel is truly a message of mercy, of glad tidings from God

to man.

ii. But let me now show you why it is called "the gospel *of Christ*."

It is so called, first, because Christ is the grand *theme* of the gospel. The good news of reconciliation, pardon, and peace to guilty man, is so connected with the Person and work, the bloodshedding and obedience of God's dear Son, that it cannot be separated from it. Take Christ away from the gospel and it would be no gospel at all. It would be like taking the sun out of the sky, when the whole face of nature would at once be darkness and night, and all living things would perish and decay. So take Christ, the Sun of righteousness, out of the gospel and all is at once one dark, black night, forerunner and harbinger of the blackness of darkness for ever. But the Son of God, in his grace and in his glory, illuminates the gospel with the beams of this grace and the rays of this glory, and as the sun at noonday fills the sky with brightness and splendour, so the Son of God with the rays of his grace and the beams of his glory fills the gospel with light and blessedness. He is, therefore, the sole theme of the gospel. The gospel tells us he is the Son of God, the Son of the Father in truth and love, and as such, the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person. The gospel tells us that God made a covenant with his dear Son on behalf of a chosen people. The gospel tells us that the Son of God took our nature into union with his own divine person, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and thus became Immanuel, God with us. The gospel tells us that the Son of God travelled through this vale of tears as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and that by perfectly doing the will of God, and by obedience unto death and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, he put them utterly away. The gospel tells us that he did and suffered all this out of pity and mercy to our souls, and that love was the moving cause why he washed us from all our guilt and sin and shame, in the fountain of his most precious blood: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." The gospel takes us to the tomb where the Son of God lay for a while in the bosom of the earth; and bids us wait for the resurrection morn, there to see him by faith rising out of

the tomb in glory and power. It takes us, also, to the mount of ascension, to view him going up on high and sitting at the right hand of the Father, as the Mediator between God and man, the High Priest over the house of God, the great and glorious Intercessor who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and as such is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. Now, as the gospel thus presents him to our view, it says in a still, small voice, "This is the Son of God. In him there is salvation and in no other; for there is none other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved." And as it thus presents him to our view, this voice says to those that hear, "Believe in him, and ye shall have eternal life; for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Not indeed that the gospel of itself can do this, or any part of this, but in the hands of the Spirit, as brought into the heart by the operation of his grace, it brings salvation with it. Well, therefore, may it be called "the gospel" or the good news "of Christ;" for it proclaims pardon through his precious blood, justification through his obedience, salvation through his finished work, and brings this glorious news to rebels, strangers, and aliens. What a glorious gospel, then, is the gospel of Christ. How suitable to our state and case: how glorifying to God, and how, in every respect, adapted to the wants of man.

2. Christ is also the *subject* of the gospel as well as the theme of the gospel. The gospel has no subject but Christ. In speaking of salvation, the gospel speaks of salvation only by the blood of Christ. In holding forth Christ as the subject of the gospel, the gospel tells us that all who look unto him shall be saved, and that all who believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. The gospel tells us there is no wrath in God for those that believe, for their sin is so put away by the sacrifice, blood-shedding, and death of Christ, and they so clothed in his robe of righteousness, that they stand before God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And as Christ is the grand subject of the gospel, so he is the grand subject of the ministry of the gospel. This made the apostle say: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block;

and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:23, 24.) And, therefore, he says "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1:28.) In fact, what other subject is fitting for us to preach or for you to hear? It is the salvation and sanctification of your souls that we desire and for which we labour; and this salvation and this sanctification are to be found only in Christ, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. And Christ is the *object* of the gospel as well as the subject, for he is the grand object of faith. All believing eyes are fixed on him; all hearts hang upon him; all believing hands touch him; all believing feet walk in his footsteps; and every faculty and member, so to speak, with every end and aim, wish and desire of a believing soul, look to Christ, cleave to Christ, and twine round him and him alone, so as to say with the Bride, "I held him and would not let him go."

This then is "the gospel of Christ" so far as I understand it, believe it, feel it, and preach it. Now the question for you to ask yourself is, whether you have received it into a believing heart, and whether it has been made the power of God unto your personal and individual salvation?

This gospel has been preached in your ears. For twenty-six years God enabled me often in weakness of body, more often in weakness of soul, to preach this gospel to you as a church and congregation, and now that I am no longer able from the infirmity of my health to labour among you I call you to witness on my present visit, whether I ever held forth any other way of salvation but through the blood of the Lamb. Did I ever tell you, you could be saved in any other way except through the blood-shedding and death of Jesus and his righteousness? "No," I believe you will answer, "we will bear you witness that whilst amongst us you preached salvation, not by the works of the law, but by the free grace of God through the blood of the Lamb, and preached the



same gospel which we have heard from your lips this day." Now surely you must know whether you received that gospel or not as a message of mercy, as good tidings sent of God to you, for it is not to all places or to all persons that God sends the gospel of Christ. But as he sent it among you, surely you must know whether you ever felt the power of it in your heart; whether it ever came home to your soul as a word from God; whether it ever relieved your fears, comforted your heart, chased away the mists and fogs that gathered over your soul; supported you in seasons of trouble, and you felt an inward conviction that by it you could live and by it you could die? This, then, is the gospel of Christ.

ii. Now, says the apostle, "Only let your *conversation* be as it *becometh* the gospel." What is this conversation? The word means the whole of your walk before God and before man. It is a very comprehensive term in the original, meaning, literally, "Conduct yourselves as citizens." It therefore includes the whole of our spiritual fellowship and daily intercourse with God and man. It thus views us as citizens of no mean city—as citizens, I may indeed say, of a heavenly city, the new Jerusalem; and it bids us walk and speak, live and act, as *becometh* citizens of a heavenly country. This, then, is the meaning of the word "conversation," in our text.

1. By it, then, we are called to *walk with God* as *becometh* this gospel. He has reconciled us to himself by the blood of his dear Son; and when we receive the atonement, or reconciliation, as the word means, then we can walk with God in peace, equity, and amity, for sin, which made the breach, is removed out of the way. So Levi, as ministering at the altar, and those near to God, walked of old. "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." (Mal. 2:5, 6.) This is walking in the light as he is in the light, and so far as we can do this, our fellowship is with the Father. (1 John 1:3-7.) And our

conversation with God, our walk with God, must be as becometh the gospel of Christ. If we walk at freedom with God, in sweet liberty, with holy access, pouring out our heart before him, enjoying his presence, and having some discoveries of his goodness and mercy, then our conversation with God becometh the gospel. The gospel is a message of mercy. When then we embrace that mercy, and feel the power of it; when that mercy reaches our heart, melts our inmost soul, dissolves our doubts and fears, and removes legality and bondage, then we walk worthy of the gospel, as walking before God in the light of his countenance through the power of the gospel. You will find that nothing but the gospel of Christ can enable you to walk before God in the light of his countenance. Whilst trusting to yourself, looking to your own vile heart, casting retrospective glances upon your past life, bondage and legality will shut up your soul, and you will not be able to walk with God, as reconciled and brought nigh by the blood of the Lamb. But when the free mercy, grace, and salvation of God shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ; when you can believe the pardon of your sins through his atoning blood; when you can rest upon his obedience as your justifying righteousness; when you have the witness of the Spirit to your spirit that you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus; when doubt and fear are chased out of your mind, bondage and legality taken out of your spirit, and you can walk before God reconciled through his dear Son, then you have your conversation with God as becometh the gospel of Christ; for if the gospel of Christ is such as I have described it to be, it becometh that gospel when we can take the whole benefit of it, and receiving it as a message of mercy, we accept it as a word from God to us, and come to him in the freeness and fulness of it. God does not send the gospel to condemn us, for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;" and they walk after the Spirit when they have access by him through Christ unto the Father.

Let us never think so meanly and so unworthily of the gospel as to believe it is sent to condemn us. Want of faith in it indeed may condemn us, as the Lord speaks: "For God sent not his Son into

the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:17, 18.) Nor let us think that the gospel is a hard service, or brings bondage with it. It is the law which brings bondage, barrenness, and death; but the gospel brings peace, light, life, liberty, and love. When then we believe the gospel, receive the gospel, and feel the power of the gospel, then we can walk before God in the light of his countenance. This is to have a conversation with God as becometh the gospel. I have spoken all the more fully and freely upon this point, because it is not so well understood as it should be, and for want of it we often walk in much darkness and confusion of mind.

2. We have, also, to walk before the *church*, for they are witnesses of our life and conduct; and as by it we are to glorify God and manifest ourselves as fruit bearing branches in the only true vine, our conversation or walk before the church should be as becometh the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ proclaims pardon to all that believe. When, then, those that believe are baptised, join a church, and thus walk in gospel ordinances, they become manifestly members of the mystical body of Christ; and if their life and conversation become their profession, they are received as pardoned and accepted in the Beloved. Our conversation, therefore, if it become the gospel of Christ, is to walk with them in a spirit of love and affection, because they have been favoured to know something of the goodness and mercy of God, and to receive the love of the truth into their hearts. This is a very comprehensive and copious subject, but I have not time to dwell upon it more now.

3. Our conversation also before the *world* should be as becometh the gospel of Christ. The world knows nothing of Christian motives, Christian feelings, Christian faith, hope, and love, and a living experience of the power of God's truth. All these things are viewed as enthusiasm in the eyes of the world; but they can note the consistent life and conduct of those who profess to be

Christians; they can mark integrity and uprightness of action; they can observe honesty and sincerity in faithfully adhering to engagements, and in the general transaction of the business of life; they know good servants, good masters, honest tradesmen; they see, in every profession, those who act uprightly and honourably: and when they observe one who professes the religion of Jesus Christ acting uprightly, consistently, and honourably, they will say, "We don't like this man's religion; we think him narrow minded and bigoted, and wonder how a man of his sense can be so weak as to believe that there are only a few people like himself going to heaven. But we must admire his upright, consistent, honourable conduct; we can depend upon his word, and trust him as sure not to deceive us, and in all business matters more likely to injure himself than injure us. Say what they will against him, we cannot but admire the uprightness of his conduct, and the general consistency of his life." To have this testimony shows a conversation becoming the gospel before the world.

4. And so with our *families*. As husbands, as wives, as masters and mistresses, as servants, there is a conversation becoming the gospel. A loving, affectionate husband; a tender, obedient wife; children that do their best to please their parents; parents that do their best to bring up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord; mistresses kind to their servants; servants obedient and attentive to their duties,—all these things commend the gospel to those who know nothing of its power. Of those that so walk we may truly say, their conversation becometh the gospel of Christ; and though we are not saved by these things, yet as the Psalmist says of the statutes of the Lord, "in keeping them there is great reward," so we shall find the approbation of God in our consciences, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts.

But now will you let me ask you one question? It may be that sometimes your conversation is not as becometh the gospel; you are entangled, it may be, in trifling conversation; you are drawn aside from the strait and narrow path in mind and spirit, if not in

word and action; the world seems getting fast hold of you, and there is a laxity of thought and feeling, if not worse; a want of that strictness, self-denial, and general consistency which you know one who fears God ought to manifest. How is it now with you in secret? How do you feel when you approach the throne? How do you stand in your feelings before the eye of God, who searches the heart? Do you feel no bondage, no condemnation, no doubt nor fear, no painful misgiving, no shutting up of your mouth in prayer, no darkness brooding over your mind? "O," you say, "indeed I do, painfully so, and I can trace it to that lightness of spirit in which I have been entangled. I can trace my present dark and gloomy path to my being entangled with this or that worldly person, whose company I ought to have shunned. Business and worldly cares have too much occupied my mind; I have given way too much to my temper, and been drawn aside to speak words that I know were inconsistent with my profession. And now I find and feel the sad effects. How lean it has made my soul; what guilt it has brought upon my conscience; how it has clouded all my evidences, so that when I come before the throne, all is dark and dreary, and the Lord seems to hide his face." Now you see that by not walking as becometh the gospel, you bring guilt upon your own conscience, darkness upon your mind, and distress upon your soul; you becloud your evidences and obscure your signs, and thus have to say, "Woe is me that I have not walked more consistently, more tenderly, with more godly fear in my heart, and greater circumspectness in my life and conduct." Do you not see, then, from your own experience, the benefits of the precepts of the gospel, and that they are "profitable for reproof and for correction," as well as "for instruction in righteousness," and see also the blessedness of those who by grace attend to and walk in them? Then think me not legal, think not that I am laying a yoke upon you that you cannot bear, think not that I am insisting upon what the gospel does not hold forth, when I say, "Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." You profess to have received, and to believe, a pure gospel, a free gospel, a holy gospel. Let, then, your conversation be as becometh that gospel. You speak of liberty: then walk as those who are at liberty to serve God, not to serve sin. You speak

of pardon: then walk as those whom God has pardoned freely by his grace. You speak of what Jesus endured to redeem and save your soul: then walk worthy of a Saviour, who sweat great drops of blood for you in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and agonised for you on Calvary's cruel tree. You profess to have your hopes, desires, and affections in heaven, and that, when life comes to a close, you will be for ever with the Lord: then walk as those that are looking for heaven, as the blessed termination of your sorrowful pilgrimage. I am sure if the Lord enable you so to walk, and so to act, you will find the blessedness and benefit of so doing. I have seen or read of the end of many men, good and bad; and I have observed this, that those who live well die well, and those who live badly die badly. I have observed of those who walk during life tenderly, consistently, and in the fear of God, that when they came to a dying bed, God owned them, and blessed them, and spoke words of peace and comfort to them, and they left a sweet and satisfactory testimony behind them. And I have observed of those who walked crookedly and unbecomingly, though I would not cut them off, yet many have had a thorny deathbed, have had to repent of inconsistent conduct when nature was coming to its last gasp, and had to struggle hard with fears of death, because the sting was not yet taken away. If you wish then and hope to die well, the Lord enable you to live well; and by his grace, for it is all of his grace, you will find that if you live, walk, and act in the fear of God, the Lord will never leave you upon a dying bed to grapple with Satan and despair, but will shed upon your soul beams of gospel light and love, and enable you to leave a testimony behind, to be a comfort to your friends, and edification to the church of God. Look at the Obituaries which we often find in the "Gospel Standard," and see how those who loved to walk in the fear of God, have left a blessed testimony that God was with them in life and in death; and as they served God in their day and generation, so he blessed them before he took them to himself.

II.—But let me pass on now to another part of our subject, as contained in the words, "Whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in *one*

*spirit.*" Let us consider this standing fast "in one *spirit.*"

It is a great thing for a church and congregation to stand fast, not to be moved with every wind of doctrine, not to be driven here and there with every gust of error, but to know the truth in its purity and power, and to stand fast by what God has revealed in his word by his Spirit, and in their hearts by his grace. Whatever divine truth God has written upon your conscience, stand fast by it. When you hear the word of truth preached, or when in private you read the word with an understanding heart, and can say, "I have known this, I have tasted this, I have handled this, I have felt this; though I know but little, this I know because it has been commended to my conscience, and been written upon the tables of my heart:" then you will be able to add, "Here I stand; on this I build my hopes of everlasting life." Now stand fast by that. Have you received the grand and glorious truths of sovereign grace into your soul; the doctrine of the Trinity; the true and proper Sonship of the blessed Lord; salvation by his atoning blood; and justification by his righteousness? Stand fast by what you have received as the truth of God, and what you have tasted, felt, and handled of the Word of life! Any deliverance you have received, any manifestations you have enjoyed, any testimonies from God, evidences, tokens for good, answers to prayer, marks of life,—whatever you have received into your conscience from God, stand fast by it. Let not sin, let not Satan, let not ungodly men, let not the gusts of error drive you from your standing. Stand fast by the gospel you have received as being the gospel of the grace of God. But mind this, you must stand fast *in one spirit*. Men may stand fast by the same truths, and yet be all in a wrong spirit. It was so with some in Paul's days. Men preached Christ and preached Christ truly, but in strife and contention, to add affliction to Paul's bonds. They held the truth, but held it in a wrong spirit. They preached Christ, but preached Christ in a wrong spirit. They had not the spirit of the gospel, as well as the letter of the gospel; they had not the sweet dew of the Holy Ghost resting upon them, to move their heart to gospel love, as well as to know gospel doctrines, and to hold forth gospel truths. It is the spirit which is the grand thing; in a congregation, in a church, in the pulpit, and

in the soul, to have one spirit. I believe from what I have seen for many years, during my long profession of the things of God, that the spirit after all is of the deepest importance in the ministry of the word. If there be a good spirit, a true and right spirit, a gospel, loving, affectionate spirit from the pulpit, it will diffuse itself over the people; it will manifest itself in the church. But where on the other hand, there is a legal, narrow, contracted, bondage, or angry, dividing spirit, it will manifest itself among the church and the congregation. Instead of the church standing fast in one spirit, the spirit of love and union, there may be a holding of the same truths, but it will be in a spirit of strife, confusion, and discord. This is not a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ. If we stand fast it must be "in one spirit;" and if we have received the love of the truth, we have received the spirit with that love. Where there is one spirit, how it links together the people of God into one mystical band. How united they are when their spirits flow into each other in affection and love; when they not only receive the truth, but receive it in such love and affection that heart unites to heart, and spirit melts into spirit, and they all feel as one man in the sweet spirit of gospel love. This is that in which you are called upon to stand fast; and I would say to you, in the words of our text, "That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit;" for that is the spirit of the gospel, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of love and power, the Spirit that baptizes every mystical member of Christ into one body, and is diffused through the whole body, animating it and guiding it, like the soul in the body of man.

III.—"With *one mind* striving together for the faith of the gospel." It is a blessed thing when there is "one mind" as well as "one spirit;" when all who fear God see eye to eye in the things of God, and not only feel heart to heart, but as taught by the same blessed Spirit, are united in one judgment. It is only by this union in mind as well as in spirit, that strife and division are prevented, and a church and people walk in the exercise of mutual esteem, love, and affection. There is no more fruitful cause of strife and contention than a difference of opinion in doctrinal points. Can



two walk together except they be agreed? How then can a church or people walk together in sweet union and communion unless they be fully agreed in the grand points of divine truth? Then it is that they strive together for the faith of the gospel; pull together as one man in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints. They do not pull, one one way and another another, but being united together in one mind, they strive together as with a common effort to maintain the faith of the gospel which they have received into their heart. This "mind" is what the Apostle elsewhere calls "the mind of Christ." "But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:16.) It is not therefore their own mind in which they stand fast, but in the mind of Christ, and this they manifest by approving of what Christ approves of, loving what Christ loves, hating what Christ hates, and condemning what Christ condemns. Thus they have "one mind," because they have one Lord whose word guides them; whose Spirit teaches them; whose love constrains them; and whose power upholds them. Nothing can be stronger than this oneness of mind when it is the mind of Christ. It is not, therefore, a mere agreement in doctrine, or in a religious creed, or in a preference of the same kind for books or ministers. All this men may have, and yet know nothing of that oneness of mind by which the people of God, taught by the Spirit, strive together for the faith of the Gospel. Indeed, without this union of mind, there can be no true union of spirit; and if there be no true union of spirit, all mere external agreement in doctrine is no safeguard against internal division, or the introduction of soul-destructive error. It is therefore only as a people are knit together in one mind and in one spirit, that there is any peace of conscience, any true love to the brethren, or any firmness in maintaining the truth as it is in Jesus.

And here we see the connection of a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ with a striving together for the faith of the gospel. If any of you walk inconsistently or unbecomingly, it sadly impairs, if not destroy union in a church. It shakes confidence in a man's religion; it often introduces a party spirit into a people; some condemning, others justifying, the offender; and when once party spirit gets into a church and congregation, farewell to all

future union and peace.

By this union also, in one mind and spirit, there is erected a bulwark against error. When a church and people stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, there is no room for error to creep in. Those winds and gusts of error which carry away other churches from the faith of the gospel blow upon such a people without moving them from their firm standing in Christ; for their enlightened judgment, and their believing heart, reject those poisonous draughts whereby so many are intoxicated in the present day.

Now what shall we say to these things? You will, perhaps, in your own mind answer me thus, or rather speak to the Lord thus: "Lord, we see what is right, and we desire to do what is right, and what has been said upon these points has been commended to our conscience. But, what with ourselves and what with others, what with the perversity of our own flesh and the perversity of even good men and women, we find it very hard to put in practice what our conscience approves of. Though our will be right, we find it very hard to stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. Things occur in the church and congregation, difficulties arise, perplexing circumstances transpire which break that union of spirit, and keep us from standing fast as we should do, and desire to do." It is a good thing to see your shortcomings, to acknowledge them, and beg of the Lord to correct and amend them. The worst spot is to stand out obstinately against these humbling convictions, to have no desire to be led aright and kept in one mind and one spirit; but from obstinate pride, or miserable self-righteousness, or an angry, quarrelsome, contentious spirit, to prefer our own way to the Lord's way, our own wisdom to the Lord's wisdom, and our own will to the Lord's will. And even worse than this, is that licentious Antinomian spirit which despises gospel precepts, and manifests no desire even to walk as becometh the gospel. Wherever we see either of these spirits, and they sometimes go together, it must be a subject of lamentation with those that fear God, and are jealous of his honour and glory.

But I am well convinced, in my own mind, that until men are brought down in their souls before God, to see and feel what the consequences are of not walking as becometh the gospel, and the misery of strife and contention from not being united in one mind and one spirit, there will be no submission to the precepts of the gospel; there will be no desire to glorify God by a life, conduct, and conversation becoming the truth; but there will be a seeking of self-interest and self-indulgence, the consequences of which will be darkness, barrenness, and death, bringing no glory to God, and yielding no profit to man. Be assured that, sooner or later, men will find that as they sow, so will they reap; that those who sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; while those that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

IV.—And now let me say a few words upon that fourth and last point which I intimated that I should bring before you: the *desire* that Paul had of personally witnessing in his coming to see them, or hearing of their affairs when absent, that they thus stood fast in one spirit and in one mind.

Paul felt a great affection for, and a great interest in, the church at Philippi from his personal knowledge of them. Some churches, as that at Rome, Colosse, and Laodicea, he had never seen in the flesh, and therefore wrote to them more from the report of others than from personal knowledge of them. I do not profess to have Paul's grace or the warmth of love and affection which he had towards the saints, whether known to him personally or not; but having been with you so many years, I should be very deficient in every right and gracious feeling, if now that I am separated from you, I should not still take great interest in your spiritual welfare. Of that spiritual welfare I may judge either by coming and seeing you, as I do now, or else may hear of your affairs from those on whom I can depend as speaking the truth in love, neither biased by undue partiality for some or influenced by unkind prejudice against others, sufficiently possessed of judgment to form and give a sound opinion, and sufficiently imbued with a spirit of love

and affection to speak it with kindness and tenderness. It would then gladden my eyes when present, to see, and my ears when absent, to hear of your affairs that "you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." If the truth of God is worth anything, it is worth standing fast by, and if you are bound together as a church and congregation in the faith of the gospel, it is worth striving for, and that together, for union is strength. Much may be accomplished by many which cannot be done by few, and still less by solitary individuals. If you have but grace and strength to put away all division and strife, and see such a beauty and blessedness in the gospel of the grace of God that you are striving for a deeper and fuller knowledge and enjoyment of it, this will induce and enable you to unite with those who are like-minded, and you will strive not who is to have the upper-hand amongst you, who is to be master or mistress, but that the Lord may be exalted, his people edified, and God glorified. And if so taught and led, and enabled so to act, the blessing of God will rest upon you and upon him who ministers stately among you.

I leave these things with you for your consideration and meditation; receive them from my lips in the spirit in which they are spoken, which I believe is a spirit of love and affection. I wish you well; I wish that the blessing of God may rest upon you. If any think that I have spoken pointedly or personally, I would not deny the pointedness, for a sermon, like a sword, is useless if it have neither point or edge. The personality I will deny, for I have no unkind feeling, nor have I any right to have toward any one present; but my prayer and desire for you as a church and congregation is, that the blessing of God may attend you in life and death, in time, and to all eternity.

## A CROWN OF GLORY AND A DIADEM OF BEAUTY

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, February 24th, 1861

"In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate" Isa.28:5,6

We will endeavour, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable, to show:

I. Who the *characters* here spoken to, are; viz., "The residue of his people."

II. What *the Lord is to his people*: 1, a "crown of glory;" 2, a "diadem of beauty;" 3, " a spirit of judgment;" 4, "strength;" and, 5, the time when, "in *that day*."

I. The *characters* here spoken to are the residue of his people. Men speak of us as being a narrow-minded, contracted, and bigoted people; people that think no one is going to heaven but themselves. But are we more narrow than the Word of God allows, when here we have the word "residue," the same word in the original signifying, "remnant," the poor despised remnant? Sometimes, when you go to the draper's shop, the man shows you a remnant of cloth, or linen, or of any other kind or quality of material, at a smaller price or lower rate. "O," says he, "it is a mere remnant; you can have it for little money, as it is a small odd piece left off the whole bale." So here the people of God are represented as a small remnant; and Paul calls them a "remnant according to the election of grace." In another place they are represented as being only like a few odd berries left on the uppermost and outer branches of a tree, and that there is but one of a city and two of a family (or tribe) that the Lord brings unto Zion. Seeing these are scriptural declarations, would it not be much the wiser way in man, instead of venting all his spleen and

malice against those who are enabled faithfully and honestly to declare these things as contained in the Word of God, if they were to ask themselves whether they bore any marks as belonging to such a kind of people, and that, if there are so few for which the Lord has such a special regard, just an odd berry or two on a straggling bough, whether or not they belonged to that few? What man despises, the Lord of heaven and earth has chosen. This you see in his conduct towards the sons of men throughout the Sacred Page; and you may see it now as plainly in every city, town, village, or hamlet where the Lord has a vessel of mercy. In whatever society, they cannot stand on a level with others of their fellow mortals. This difference in time has been irrevocably fixed from all eternity. Men do not see what a sword the Word of God is; because it is in the scabbard; but when a God-taught minister gets into a pulpit to expound or open up Scripture, he either does, or should do (and woe to him if he does not), draw the sword from the scabbard, unsheathe it, and the Lord condescends to own him as an instrument in his hands. It is made sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces even to "the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But whether ministers draw the sword or not, it is there, and men will fall down under its sharp and cutting edge, either in judgment and mercy here or wrath hereafter. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

## II. What *the Lord is to his people.*

1. To this despised remnant the Lord is here declared to be a "crown of glory;" not like the poor crowns made of perishing leaves of flowers, vain baubles, at a drunken feast; but a "crown of glory that fadeth not away." And who is this crown of glory? Why, it is the Lord of hosts, or God of armies.

You have a most beautiful account of this King of glory, and how he is worshipped by all the hierarchy of heaven and glorified spirits before the throne in Psalm 24. When they shouted, so as to make heaven's high arches ring, "Lift up your heads, O ye

gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Then the question is asked. "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is, "The LORD strong and mighty; The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The question is again asked, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer comes again, "The LORD of hosts. He is the King of glory." He crowns you with goodness, mercy, and forgiveness, and you crown him with praise; and if you had a thousand crowns you would cheerfully put them all on his blessed head, as he so richly deserves; and if you had a thousand tongues they would all speak his praise.

2. "And a diadem of beauty." He is the beauty of Israel, even beauty itself. He is beautiful in his Godhead, as equal with the Father in power and glory; he is beautiful in his complex Person as God-man Mediator, God and man in one glorious Person; he is beautiful in his covenant characters, in his finished work, in his resurrection power, in his glorious ascension, in his all-prevailing intercession, now before the throne, and in his own glorification with all the offices he bears, for the sake of and in behalf of all his dear people, though now seated at his own Father's right hand, clothed in majesty and power, there to reign and rule till all his and his people's enemies are made his footstool; and all for the sake of a remnant, or a residue the world despises. They are a highly-favoured few; and when faith is in act and exercise, the soul can then sing, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!" And also, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely." So that this diadem is of greater glory and beauty than any Eastern tissue, however costly it might be decorated; for that would be but a poor perishing thing at the best, a thing which would afford no relief in pain or sickness, and must be parted with in death. But this diadem of beauty you must die to fully enjoy. Faith brings a measure of its enjoyment even now; for there is to be an earnest, a foretaste, a drop; but not the boundless ocean.

And now, poor, harassed, afflicted, tempest-tossed and comfortless child of God, what do you think of the drunken Ephraimites now, with their fat pastures, prize bulls, full purses, and bloated cheeks? Can you join them in their revelry, their toasts and cheers around their bottles and jingling glasses, clothed with a crown of pride, all their conversation showing that they are sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own drag? Do you envy them? I know you do not if you have tasted the wormwood and gall of a wounded conscience and are now living in the enjoyment of the pardon of sin and living in sweet anticipation of a crown of glory; and your joy will far exceed, or at least outlive, the carnal joys of the worldling, though decked out with a fulsome display of pride, which will end in smoke, darkness, confusion, disappointment, and black despair.

3. He is promised also to be "a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment." None but the children of God rightly sit in judgment, especially upon themselves. Well; the Lord is here promised to be a spirit of judgment. A child of God may and often does sit in judgment upon himself, when the Lord at that particular time is a spirit of judgment. Satan is his unwearied foe; and to drive the quickened sinner into despair is his aim, and at a time of darkness of soul he makes that darkness greater by producing despondency. The poor soul is full of confusion, and not a mark, token, or evidence in his favour can the soul perceive. He is full of doubts, fears, and perplexity, arising from the swamps and lower grounds of the soul, through the power of sin and corruption. Then is the time for Satan to take advantage, with his temptations, to drive him to despair. The Sun's rays are hidden from sight and the afflicted soul cannot see its signs. Therefore it is in great need of wisdom from on high, to guide him in this intricate and dark path. A true spirit of judgment, at that time, he has not in himself. Here the Lord is needed, as made unto him wisdom, enabling the poor soul to "consider" in this "day of adversity." Do you not, at times, under the Word preached, feel full of confusion, like poor Job of old? At that time, however, you may be in need of a word of encouragement; you



cannot take it; you cannot steal, you are made an honest soul. "Lord, 'show me a token for good,'" may be your desire. But faith and hope are low; so that you hardly believe or expect such a favour. Now, if these states of soul favours and deliverances were for believing, you would never have such favours; but salvation is all of grace. Your doubts, fears, and despondency no more prevent the Sun of Righteousness from arising upon you than the fogs from the marshes prevent the natural sun coming forth upon the face of creation. There are times when you make too much of your spiritual state as discovered to you by your frames or feelings. At other times too little, casting away all your confidence wherein you had a recompense of reward.

4. Also the Lord is promised to be "strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." In Eastern countries and in all walled towns the enemy always tried to get in at the gates, which, if they did, most probably they would slay wives and children and set the city on fire. So a child of God has often to turn the battle to the gate. There are many gates for the enemy to get in at, as John Bunyan speaks of in his *"Holy War,"* Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate; and what gates these are for the enemy to make inroads as every exercised soul knows to his sorrow: "If I had not seen this and heard that and spoken so unadvisedly at such a time, O what pain of mind I should have been spared!" The enemies within being in league with those without, it is those within that generally cause the gates without to be opened. There is the heart craving, the eye lusting, the feet walking, the hands acting. All forbidden objects!

But in turning the battle to the gate, the believer wants strength; for in himself he is weak and helpless, and there is such a dreadful power in sin that he is obliged to cry unto the Strong for strength, which is here promised; and when the Lord sees that the poor child of his has no power and that there is none shut up nor left, no secret reserve, no squinting and peeping to self, he then comes to the rescue, either by giving him strength to bear up under the temptation or delivering him by breaking the same to pieces, and so enabling the poor child to thank and praise him

for coming in a time so greatly needed, though often driven to the last extremity, in order to the exaltation of his own praise, honour, and glory, in giving help and victory.

5. The time. When? "In that day." What day? Why, in the day that the Ephraimites have their crown of pride and glorious beauty. But the poor saint of God has the best of it at last. Yea, indeed, they are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them; and this victory being an eternal victory, never more to feel defeat.

The Ephraimite's crown perishes before night. What a state many are left to get into just as the night of death approaches after a life of ease, indulgence, extravagance, and sin, their former satisfaction now *A Crown of Glory and a Diadem of Beauty* denied them and no hope as regards the future. How solemn! And thousands are in this state, never having been enlisted under the Lord's banner, never once being engaged in the battle against self and sin, it being their former pride to glory in their shame; but it now perishes, while on the heads of the righteous the crown of glory outlasts time and is ever new and fresh; not a few withering leaves, but a crown of glory that fadeth not away; the earnest of which the Lord is pleased to bestow, as he sees good, on his own poor despised remnant in their present time state, to encourage their drooping spirits and to enable them to hope to the end for the salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. The glorious beauty of these deluded Ephraimites is not to be compared with the diadem of beauty of the poor afflicted family of God, who are made beautiful in him who is the constituted Beauty of Israel. So, my dear friends, ours is not such a hard lot as we often think it is, when, through the power of unbelief, we give way to fretfulness and peevishness and a whole mass of wretchedness that we are so often the subjects of. But let the Lord once discover himself, then does your countenance proclaim it and you feel happy as a prince. You are indeed made kings and priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and he accepts the fruit of the lips, which consists in praise and thanksgiving for his boundless grace and beauty. "This people have I formed for

myself; they shall show forth my praise." Amen.

## Crucifixion with Christ

Preached at the North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, August 19, 1860

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest mystery of divine wisdom and Almighty power, of eternal love and superabounding grace, which could ever have been displayed before the eyes of men or angels. I call it a mystery, not only as incomprehensible by natural intellect, but because the very essence of a mystery, in the Scripture sense of the term, is to be hidden from some and revealed to others. Thus the Lord said to his disciples when they asked him why he spake unto the multitude in parables, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matt. 13:11.) In the same spirit he on another occasion said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that 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." (Luke 10:21.) The cross, then, is a mystery, not only as enfolding in its bosom the deepest treasures of heavenly wisdom and grace, but because the power and wisdom of it are hidden from some, and made known to others. The apostle, therefore, begs of the saints at Ephesus that they would pray for him that utterance might be given unto him that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which he was an ambassador in bonds. (Eph. 6:19, 20.) And again he says, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:8, 9.) Salvation by the cross was of all doctrines

the most offensive, and the most unintelligible. That the promised Messiah should be crucified was unto the Jew, who anticipated a triumphant king, a stumbling block; that a crucified man was the Son of God was to the Greek foolishness, for it contradicted sense and reason. Thus the preaching of the cross was to them that perish foolishness. But there were those whose eyes were divinely enlightened to see, and their hearts opened to believe and receive it. He therefore adds, "But unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18.) Though foolishness to the learned Greek, there were those who saw in the cross a wisdom as much surpassing all other as the midday sun surpasses the faintest star; which made the apostle say, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 8.) This, then, is the mystery of the cross; this is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, that the Son of God, who as God the Son, is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, should take our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature should suffer, agonize, bleed, and die; that by his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death an innumerable multitude of sinners should be redeemed from the curse of the law and the damnation of hell, and be saved in himself with an everlasting salvation. It is not my present object to enter further into the depth of this mystery as a display of the infinite wisdom, love, and grace of God; but I may briefly say that by the cross of our suffering, dying Lord, justice and mercy were thoroughly harmonised; every attribute of God blessedly glorified; the Son of his love supremely exalted; redemption's work fully accomplished; the church everlastingly saved; Satan entirely baffled and defeated; and an eternal revenue of praise laid up to redound to the glory of a triune Jehovah. Well then may we say, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. 3:16.)

But there never lived a man more deeply penetrated, or more thoroughly and inwardly possessed with a sense of the grace and glory displayed in this mystery than the apostle Paul. Such wisdom and power, such love and grace, such fulness of salvation did he see and feel in the cross, that, as a preacher of the gospel, he was determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. United to Christ by a living faith, he could declare, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.) And knowing experimentally what it was to have sacred fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and death, he could speak of himself as being crucified with him, as if he were so one with Jesus in spirit, so conformed to his suffering image, and so baptized into his death, that it was as if Christ and he were nailed to one and the same cross. "I am crucified," he says, "with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

In opening up these words, I shall, with God's blessing, direct your minds,

I.—*First*, to the grand foundation on which the whole of the text rests, as intimated in the last clause—the *love and gift* of the Son of God.

II.—*Secondly*, the effect of that being made known to the soul by a divine power: it causes it to *be crucified with Christ*.

III.—*Thirdly*, the consequence of this crucifixion with Christ; which is not, as we should expect, death, but rather *life*: "*Nevertheless, I live.*"

IV.—*Fourthly*, that *self* has no hand in this divine life; "*Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"

V.—*Fifthly*, that this life is a *life of faith* on the Son of God.

I.—Union with Christ is the grand, I may say the sole source and spring of vital godliness; for union must precede communion; and "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" is indeed the very sum and substance, the very life and power and blessedness of all true religion. What fruit can the branch bear without union with the vine? And is not union maintained as well as manifested by abiding communion? "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John 15:4.)

But the original source as well as the closeness and individuality of this union and communion with Christ are pointed out by the language of the apostle, "*who loved me and gave himself for me.*" He had a testimony in his own breast that the Son of God loved him, and gave himself for him; and it was the sweet enjoyment of this inward assurance of Christ's personal, individual love to his soul, and the flowing forth of faith and love toward him in return, which enabled him to say in the language of holy fellowship with him, "I am crucified with Christ."

Now, many of the saints of God may not be so highly favoured as to take up into their lips Paul's language of strong, personal assurance. They may hope, and at times may rise beyond a hope, into a sweet confidence, by the shining in of the Sun of Righteousness, that the Son of God has loved them and given himself for them. But the strength of Paul's persuasion and the full expression of his confidence so far out-strip both their assurance and their language, that many real saints of God confess they come short both in heart and tongue. Yet their coming short of this blessed certainty as an enjoyed reality in the heart, and as a declared confidence by the mouth—for conscience and tongue must move together where God works—does not affect the fact. Clouds and mists sometimes obscure the sun, but they do not blot him out of the sky. So the mists and fogs of unbelief may obscure the Sun of Righteousness, yet they do not blot him out of the spiritual hemisphere. He still loved you and gave himself for you who believe in his name, though you may

not be able to rise up to the faith of Paul, or speak with the same fulness of assurance. The bud has the same union with the vine as the branch, but not the same strength of union; the babe is as much a member of the family as the grownup son, but has not the same knowledge of its relationship; the foot is as much a part of the body as the eye or the hand, though it has not the same nearness to the head, or the same honours and employments. If, then, you can find any inward testimony, be it but a rising hope of your interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he loved you and gave himself for you, look with me to the three particulars connected with Paul's expression of his confidence:—First, the *Person* of "the Son of God." Secondly, *the love* which he, as the Son of God, bore to his church. Thirdly, *the fruit* of that love, in *giving* himself for her; for that the church was the object both of the love and the gift, is plain enough from the apostle's words, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25.)

i. In speaking here of the glorious Person of the Son of God, I do not wish to enter into the field of controversy. In fact, with me, the true, proper, and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord is not a matter of controversy. I receive it as a most blessed truth, no more to be controverted than the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, or the Trinity itself. Apart, then, from all controversy, looking at the words in the simplicity of faith, receiving them purely and plainly as the Spirit of God dictated them and left them on record by the hand of Paul, I would ask any child of God here present if they do not in themselves afford sufficient proof that the Son of God was the Son of God from all eternity? If any one doubt this conclusion, and I were to ask him "When did the love of Christ begin?" must not his answer, to be consistent with truth, be, "It had no beginning, for his own words are 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee?'" (Jer. 31:3.) And he would rightly add, "It must from the very nature of God, from the eternity of his purposes and the infinity of his perfections, be eternal, for if this love knew beginning, it could know end." But Jesus, as the Son of God, loved Paul; for we read, "the Son of



God loved me;" if, then, this love was eternal, the Son of God must have been eternal, or he would have loved him as the Son of God before he was the Son of God. Thus, without entering into the field of controversy, to seek there for other arguments, in the simplicity and in the strength of faith, as taking our stand upon this one text, were there no other, we at once say, if the Son of God loved his church from everlasting, he was the Son of God from everlasting. But, to bring this to a practical head, to a close and experimental bearing upon our own conscience, how can we know for ourselves that he is the Son of God who loved us from all eternity, unless we have some knowledge of him as the Son of God from all eternity? This makes me say that I have passed beyond the region of controversy—beyond the Arctic Sea ever shrouded in the chilling mists and fogs of dispute and uncertainty into the Pacific Ocean of a southern hemisphere, where we can look at the Sun of Righteousness as shining in the bright, clear sky. Those who doubt or deny his divine Sonship have never seen his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Theirs is not the faith of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16); nor of Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God" (John 1:49); nor of Paul, when straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God (Acts 9:20); nor can they say with holy John, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.) If we are to live a life of faith in the Son of God, we must know him in our own souls to be the Son of God, as John so plainly speaks. If we are to believe that he loved us from all eternity, we must have some knowledge of him as the Son of God from all eternity. But, how can we have this knowledge or this faith unless he is pleased to reveal himself to our soul? As Paul speaks in this very Epistle, "When it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." (Gal. 1:15, 16.) God revealed his Son in Paul's heart, and by this revelation he knew for himself that he was the Son of God; for he received him as such into his inmost soul and into his warmest affections. And

when the Son of God was thus revealed in his soul, the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost; and as that love was shed abroad, it raised up a firm persuasion that the same Son of God loved him, and had loved him from all eternity. For when the Son of God was revealed, love was revealed in him, and with him, and through him. Yea, the Son of God himself came with such power into his soul, shone into his heart with such heavenly beams, and revealed his love and blood and grace so gloriously and so conspicuously that he could say, in the sweet language of assurance, "the Son of God loved me."

ii. But look with me at this *love*. When did this love begin? As I said before, this love knew no beginning; for if this love knew beginning, it might know end; if it knew rise, it might know decline. If you can assign an origin to any thing, you must assign to it a termination; for every thing which in time began to be, may in time cease to be.

1. It was then necessarily *eternal*; and in this consists its peculiar blessedness, that, being from eternity, it will last to eternity; having no beginning, it will know no end. What would heaven be, if it lasted only a few ages, and then an end, a blank, a dissolution, an annihilation, a ceasing of love? What else but a very ceasing to be? for God being love, the end of his loving would be the end of his being. The very thought, the remotest prospect, would change the anthems of heaven into wailings of mourning and lamentation. It would thoroughly damp, if not fully extinguish the joys of the saints, that they could look forward to a period when those joys would cease, and a Triune God, he who is God the Son, would love them no more.

2. But this love was not only eternal: it was *infinite*. We speak sometimes of the attributes of God, and we use the words to help our conception. But God, strictly speaking, has no attributes. His attributes are himself. We speak, for instance, of the love of God, but God is love; of the justice of God, but God is just; of the holiness of God, but God is holy; of the purity of God, but God is pure. As he is all love, so he is all justice, all purity, all holiness.

Love, then, is infinite, because God is infinite: his very name, his very character, his very nature, his very essence is infinite love. He would cease to be God if he did not love, and if that love were not as large as himself, as infinite as his own self-existent, incomprehensible essence. The love of the Son of God as God the Son, is co-equal and coeternal with the love of the Father; for the holy Trinity has not three distinct loves, either in date or degree. The Father loves from all eternity; the Holy Ghost loves from all eternity. The love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as one, equal, indivisible, infinite Jehovah cannot be otherwise but One. We therefore read of "the love of God," that is the Father (2 Cor. 13:14); of "the love of the Son," in our text; and of "the love of the Spirit." (Rom. 15:30.) This love being infinite, can bear with all our infirmities, with all those grievous sins that would, unless that love were boundless, have long ago broken it utterly through. This is beautifully expressed by the prophet. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." (Hosea 11:8, 9.).

3. But this love is also *unchangeable*, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6.) "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. 13:8.) Thus this love knows neither variableness nor shadow of turning: but is always fixed on the same objects, without the least change, the least augmentation, or the least declension. It is hard to conceive love that knows no variation, if we measure the love of God by our own. We are naturally mutable creatures, overwhelmed by infirmities through the fall, and, therefore, ever subject to changes; but he changeth not. Our love to him is ever sinking or rising, as fluctuating as the tides of the sea, as variable as the winds in the sky; but his love to us, whose hearts he has touched by his grace, is as immutable as his own immutable Being.

4. And from this circumstance his love is *indissoluble*. Our love to each other is soon dissolved. How a little strife, a little envy, a little difference of opinion, an angry word, or a reported tale, may alienate our affections from one another! How soon jealousy, suspicion, or dislike may creep into our warmest feelings and sever the closest ties! Were we to review the chains which have bound us at various times to our warmest friends, how many would lie upon the ground with broken links; links, alas! so severed as to yield scarce any prospect of re-union in this time-state. I fully admit that a spiritual union is never really broken; but Christian communion and that sweet intercourse which should exist among brethren are often so interrupted that they seem almost utterly gone. What would be our condition for time or for eternity if the love of Christ to us resembled our love to each other? But one of the sweetest features of the love of the Son of God to his saints is, that it is indissoluble.

III. But, now let us look at the *fruits*, and *results* of that love wherewith Christ loved his church. And what heart can conceive or what tongue express the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of that love? As the apostle speaks, "that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be 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?" (Eph. 3:17, 18.) Could he have afforded a greater, a richer, a clearer evidence of this love than by *giving* himself for us? There is something in this expression which seems to outstrip all conception and all expression. As viewed by faith, there is something so large, so comprehensive, and yet so inexpressibly touching in the words "*gave himself for me*," that I despair of bringing it before your minds as my heart could desire. But let us make the attempt; and in doing so let us first, if the Lord enable, take a view by faith of the Son of God as lying in the bosom of the Father from all eternity as his only-begotten Son. If thus enabled to contemplate the glories of heaven, the bliss and blessedness that fill those celestial courts, the sweet employments ever going on in the worship and adoration of angels, and what far surpasses all human thought, the holy

fellowship and divine intercommunion between the three Persons of the sacred Godhead, and that from all eternity,—shall we then not see what Jesus left in leaving the bosom of God? Now if, lowering our view, we cast a glance at the sins and sorrows of this lower world, what it is in itself, as a mere earthly abode, and what sin has made it with all its dreadful consequences; then to look at the Son of God freely giving himself out of the bosom of his Father and all the bliss and glory of heaven, to come down to this world of sin and grief: we seem for a few moments lost in wonder at love so great, at love so free, at love so self-sacrificing as this. How *broad* to spread itself over such a seething mass of sin and sorrow; how *long* to know neither beginning nor end, but to stretch from eternity to eternity; how *deep* to sink so low as the gates of the grave; how *high* to raise from thence poor lost sinners to the glories of heaven! And when we take a further view of what the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself *unto* as well as gave himself *from*, for we must take both into consideration; when we see by the eye of faith the condescension of his glorious Majesty in taking our flesh in the womb of the Virgin; when we think how he tabernacled here below amid such scenes of misery and abomination as daily met his eye; when we view him in Pilate's judgment hall exposed to the buffetings of the rude Roman soldiers, scourged and mangled, as if he were the vilest malefactor, and then see him hanging upon the cross, and there dying the most painful and ignominious death that the cruelty of man had ever devised; and when we remember that he who bled and suffered there was the Son of God who thus gave himself to redeem us from the lowest hell, how lost we seem to be in wonder! These are the things which the angels desire to look into; for they in heaven beheld his glory before they saw him in the manger, ministered to him in the wilderness, strengthened him in the garden, viewed him on the cross, and watched over his sepulchre. A part of the great mystery of godliness is that "God manifest in the flesh" was "seen of angels" (1 Tim. 3:16); seen by them as the Son of God in heaven; seen by them as the Son of man on earth. To see him, then, with angels' eyes is to look at what Christ came from, and what Christ came unto; what he was in heaven and what he was on earth; the glories of his Father's

house, and the ignominy of Pilate's judgment hall; the bliss of his Father's bosom and the tortures of Calvary's cross; the love of his Father's heart and the hidings of his Father's face; the worship of adoring angels and the shouts of the blasphemous multitude; the glory of the only begotten Son and the bloody sweat of Gethsemane.

And do you not see in the expression "*gave himself*," how freely, how fully, how voluntarily, how unreservedly he yielded himself up to the lowest depths of shame and sorrow! No force but the gentle force of love; no compulsion but the compulsion of grace; no constraint but the constraint of doing his Father's will, which was his delight (Psal. 40:8), moved him to give himself. He could give no more; he would give no less. And all this he did to save our souls from the bottomless pit. Now these heavenly mysteries are not matters of mere doctrine or theoretical speculation, but to be received into a believing heart as a matter of personal and living experience; in a word, they are to be revealed to our soul by the power of God, and made experimentally and feelingly ours by the sealing testimony of the Holy Ghost upon our breast. Now just as we are put into possession of these divine realities by an inward experience of their heavenly power, can we make use of the apostle's language, to which I now come.

## II.—"*I am crucified with Christ.*"

Let us seek, if the Lord enable, some spiritual entrance into the experimental meaning of these words.

i. And take them *first* in their simple meaning, neither adding to, nor diminishing their literal signification. To be "crucified with Christ" is to be nailed to the cross with him. But this could not be *actually* done; for Jesus had no partner in his cross, though there were those who were crucified by his side. It was, then, in the feelings of his soul that Paul was crucified with Christ. This blessed man of God had such a view in his bosom of the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory, that it was as if he were nailed to the same cross with him, as if the same nails that

pierced the hands and feet of the blessed Redeemer were struck through his hands and his feet. It was not in body, but in soul; not in his flesh, but in his spirit, that he was thus crucified with him. In this sense he was nailed side by side, or rather to the same cross, with the suffering God-Man. In this sense, therefore he mystically and spiritually suffered as Christ suffered, died as Christ died; and was thus made conformable to his suffering, dying image.

ii. But taking the words in a wider sense, as applicable to all the saints of God, we may lay it down as a certain truth that there are two senses in which every saint is crucified with Christ: first, *representatively*; secondly, *experimentally*.

Both these senses I shall now unfold.

1. *First*, then, there is a union which the Church of Christ has with her Head, which we may call *representative*; that is, there is such a union between Christ and his Church as exists between the head and its members, between the Husband and the wife; and as this is not a nominal but a real, not a dead but a living union, she has such an interest in all that he did and suffered for her sake, that she may be said to have been one with him in those acts and sufferings. Thus, when he died, she died with him; when he rose, she rose with him; when he went on high, she ascended with him; when he sat down at the right hand of the Father, she was made to sit in heavenly places with him. All these you will remember are scriptural expressions, and are meant to show us not only the intimacy of this union, but its efficacious nature; for the virtue and validity of these acts and sufferings of her glorious Head become hers in consequence of this close, and intimate, and eternal union of person and interests. In the same way, when Christ was crucified, the Church of God was crucified with him; for so intimate is their union, that when the Head was crucified, the members were crucified also. This may seem mysterious and incomprehensible. But why was Christ crucified? Was it for himself? Why did Christ suffer? Was it for his own sins? If a husband go to jail for his wife, or die for her, does she not

mystically go with him to the prison and to the scaffold? Thus mystically and representatively, every member of Christ's body was crucified with their crucified Head.

2. But this is not the only, nor indeed the chief meaning of the passage before us. The apostle was speaking *experimentally* of the feelings of the soul—what he was daily passing through as a living member of the mystical body of Christ; for though there is a representative crucifying of all Christ's members in which all the family of God have a share, even those yet unborn, as united to him by eternal ties, this can only be made known by regenerating grace. There is, then, a being experimentally crucified with Christ, made known to the soul by the power of God; and of this felt, inward, daily, experimental crucifixion the apostle here especially speaks.

iii. But you will observe, if you look at the text carefully, that the apostle uses the word "I" very much through it. And if besides this observation of the letter, you are able to read the text in the light of the blessed Spirit, and understand it experimentally for yourselves by sharing in the same gracious work upon your heart, you will also find there are two "I's" that run through the whole text, and that these two "I's" are perfectly distinct. Thus there is an "I" that is crucified, and an "I" that lives; there is an "I" not worthy of the name, which is therefore called a "not I;" that there is an "I" which lives in the flesh, and that there is an "I" which lives by the faith of the Son of God. These two "I's" are perfectly distinct in birth and being; in beginning and end; in living and dying; in thought and feeling; in word and action; in desire and movement; and they are so essentially distinct as never to unite, but to be at perpetual warfare. There is therefore, a natural "I" and a spiritual "I." These are the two "I's" which look upon us from the text; and whose life and death, history and actions, are faithfully recorded by the pen of one who know them both from daily, hourly intercourse. The solution of this mystery is not difficult. Every believer carries in his bosom two distinct natures; as born of Adam, one nature which the Scripture calls the "Old man;" and another which, as being born of God, the



Scripture terms the "new man." The first is the natural "I," and the second is the spiritual "I;" and it is in the struggle between these two principles, the old man and the new, the fleshly "I" and the spiritual "I," that so much of the conflict in a Christian's bosom consists. How vividly has the apostle described these two "I's" and the conflict between them, Rom. 7.: there we find an "I" which is "carnal, sold under sin;" an "I" which does evil, in which no good dwells; which serves the law of sin, and in which the body of death is ever present. And then we have an "I" which delights in the law of God; which consents unto it that it is good; which serves it and hates everything opposed to it; which cries out, "O, wretched man that I am," and yet thanks God through Jesus Christ. Is there one born of God who does not daily find and feel these two "I's?" Is there a living soul in which they are not ever at war?

There being then these two "I's" in every believer, the question naturally rises in our mind, which "I" is crucified with Christ: the fleshly, natural "I," or the spiritual, gracious "I?" We cannot for a moment doubt which "I" is crucified when we turn to the language of the apostle. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:6.) We have a similar light cast upon the point by another expression of the apostle in this very epistle, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. 5:24.) And again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.) Thus we see, from God's own testimony, that it is the old man, the flesh, and the world which are crucified; so that when the apostle says, "I am crucified," he means his old Adam "I;" his worldly, his fleshly, his sinful, his selfish "I;" in a word, the whole of that native and natural "I" which he derived from our fallen parent. But let us look at these things a little more closely.

1. If we are crucified with Christ, the *world* is to be crucified to us and we to the world. But which world is crucified, for there are two; a world without, and a world within? Can we take the

outward world in our grasp and drive through it the nails of crucifixion? This we can no more do than we can embrace the globe, or drink up the Atlantic. That huge world which lies spread before our eyes is beyond our reach; out of all proportion with our grasp. But we have a worldly "I" in our bosom which is but the reflection of the great world without. For what is the world all around us but an aggregate of human hearts; a motley, mingled multitude of carnal "I's;" so that each individual is but a specimen of the whole, and the whole but a huge collection of individual specimens? It would indeed then be but lost labour to attempt to nail the outward world to the cross of Christ. This is not the task that lies before the child of grace. His crucifixion is *within*. His own carnal heart, worldly spirit, proud, covetous, aspiring mind, it is, which is to be crucified with the Lord of life and glory. For it comes to this, that our worldly "I" must either reign and rule; be pampered and petted; fed and nurtured in pride and pleasure; or it must be crucified, mortified, and subdued by the power of God's grace. The apostle therefore speaks of the world being crucified to him and he unto the world. What attraction would the world, with all its pleasures and profits, have to the eyes of one dying on a cross? Or what charms could he, writhing with pain, groaning in agony, dropping blood from his hands and feet, present to the eyes of the gay and glittering world? The cross killed the world to him; the cross killed him to the world. What was a living world to a dying man? What was a dying man to a living world? Now we cannot be *literally* crucified. Even if we were, that would give us no spiritual change of heart, nor cause us to be crucified with Christ. It is, therefore, not the actual body or the literal flesh—the mere outward material man which is crucified; but it is the worldly spirit in a believer's heart, the proud, selfish, carnal "I," which, by virtue first of his *representative*, and then by the power of his *experimental* crucifixion with Christ is crucified with Jesus, nailed to the cross to suffer, bleed, and die with him. This inward crucifixion of the worldly spirit, of the natural "I," kills the believer to the world. Do you not find this in your own experience? The world without would little attract, influence, or ensnare your mind, unless you had the world within alive to it. As long then as the worldly spirit

lives in you unsubdued, unmortified, uncrucified, your religion is but skin deep. A thin coat of profession may film the surface of the heart, hiding the inside from view; but the whole spirit of ungodliness is alive beneath, and as much in union with the world as the magnet with the pole, or the drunkard with his cups. But, on the contrary, if the world within be crucified by the power of Christ's cross, the world without will have little charm. And this will be in exact proportion to the life and strength of your faith and the reality of your crucifixion. The world is ever the same; one huge mass of sin and ungodliness. That cannot be changed; that can never die. It must be *you* who are changed; it must be *you who* die to it. Now, is it not true that it is the meeting of the two worlds in one embrace, which gives the world without all its power to ensnare and entangle your feet? Let the worldly spirit be but crucified in our breast, then we shall be like the dying man who has no sympathy with the living world. The poor criminal that was nailed to the cross, dying there in agony and shame, could look down with expiring eyes upon the crowd below him, or cast his last glance on the mountains and vales, woods and rivers of the prospect before him. Might not such a one say, "O, busy crowd! O, once fair and beauteous world! I am dying to you, and ye are dying to me. O, world, where now are your fashions; where your maxims; where your lusts; where your vain and gaudy shows; where are ye all now that I am dying here upon the cross? My eyes are sinking into the shades of night. I am leaving you, and ye are leaving me. Here we part, and that for ever. I once loved you, and ye once loved me; but there is between us now separation, enmity, and death." Is not this crucifixion? This at least is the figure of the apostle; and a most striking one, in which he represents the world as crucified to him, and himself to the world.

But you will observe that it is only by virtue of "the cross of Christ," that is, by a spiritual union and experimental communion with Christ crucified that this inward crucifixion can be really effected. There are two things whereby the inward, spiritual, and experimental crucifixion of a child of God is distinguished from that of a Papist, a Puseyite, or a Pharisee. The first is that it is by

"the *cross* of Christ," that is, it flows from a spiritual knowledge of union with a crucified Jesus. "I am crucified with Christ." I do not crucify myself; nor does my flesh crucify my flesh. The second feature is that the *whole* of the old is crucified; it is not one limb, but the *whole* body which suffers crucifixion; as the Apostle says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not sin." (Rom. 6:6.) In the literal crucifixion, though the nails were driven through the feet and hands, the whole body was crucified; so spiritually, though the nails may chiefly be struck through the working and moving members of the old man, yet the whole of him is crucified with them. So not only our worldly spirit, but our whole flesh, with all its plans and projects, with all its schemes, motives, and designs, is nailed to the cross; and especially our religious flesh, for this is included in the "affections" of it, which are crucified. (Gal. 5:24.)

But now arises another question. Is this crucifixion with our consent, or against our consent? To this I answer that it is partly voluntary, and partly involuntary. We may illustrate this by the example of Peter. The Lord said to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wert young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." (John 21:18.) The Lord was here referring to Peter's crucifixion, and tells him that "when he would be old, another would gird him, and carry him whither he would not." Do we not see from this that Peter would shrink from being crucified, but that he would be carried to the cross against his will? Yet we read in ecclesiastical history, that when that time arrived, Peter begged of his executioners to crucify him with his head downwards, because he could not bear to die in the same posture with his crucified Lord. Thus we see in the actual, literal crucifixion of one of the Lord's most highly favoured followers, there was a shrinking from the cross, and yet a submission to it. "The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak." The natural "I" was unwilling, the spiritual "I" was willing. So, it is with us in a spiritual sense. The coward flesh rebels against, and cries out

under the nails of crucifixion; but the spirit submits, and, when favoured by divine help, counts itself unworthy of such an honour and such a blessing. But no man ever spiritually crucified his own flesh. This is God's work, who in so doing spares not for our crying. Perhaps we are hugging close some bosom idol, some secret lust, some rising ambition, some covetous plan, or pleasing prospect. This may be as dear to us almost as our natural life. Can we then drive through it the crucifying nails? Or if we could, would that crucify it? No. God himself must take it with his own hand, and drive through it the nails of crucifixion; yes, and so drive them through this worldly spirit, this covetous heart, this proud, unbending mind, this self-righteous, self-pleasing, self-exalting affection, this deceptive, delusive, soul-destroying, fleshly religion, that it may ever after live a dying life. It is he, not you, who thus crucifies it, that its hands can no more move to execute its designs than the hands of a man nailed upon a cross, and its feet no more walk in the plan projected than the feet of a crucified man can come down from the cross and walk abroad in the world. Here is God taking your darling schemes, your favourite projects, your anticipated delights, so that they become to you dying, bleeding, gasping objects. Have you not again and again experienced this in providence? Have not all your airy castles been hurled down, your prospects in life blighted, your hopes laid low, your projects disappointed, in a word, all your schemes and plans to get on in life so nailed to the cross that they could move neither hands nor feet, but kept dying away by a slow, painful, and lingering death? But did you approve of all this? Very far from it; but you were in God's hands, and could not fight against his cutting strokes. Thus, then, you have a proof in yourself that your worldly schemes and projects were taken by the hand of God, contrary to your wish, for you loved them too dearly to part with them, but were as if torn from your bosom by God's relentless hand, and nailed to the cross, not by you but by him. And yet mercy was so mingled with these dealings, and your heart was so softened by a sense of God's goodness in and under them, that there was a sweet spirit of submission given you, which mingled itself with this unwillingness, and subdued and overpowered it. Thus you were made willing in the day of his

power that God should take the idols out of your bosom with his own hand; you consented generally, that they should be crucified, because by this lingering death only could the life-blood of your worldly spirit be at all drained out of your breast. For crucifixion is a gradual death which drains life and blood slowly away.

So with the *flesh* generally, for the whole of our flesh is to be crucified; for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." And again, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. 8:13.) To mortify means to put to death; and that death is the death of the cross. By his Spirit and grace God gives his people strength at times, to mortify and crucify the deeds of the body, with all the wretched passions and affections of the carnal mind. In this sense they do it; for he fires their soul with a holy hatred of sin, and godly resentment, what the apostle calls "indignation" and "revenge" (2 Cor. 7:11), against its movements and horrid opposition to the will and word of God. So that, in a sense, a believer's spiritual "I," under the influence of grace, drives the nails of crucifixion through his carnal "I." Have you not felt at times that you could with your own hands take vengeance upon that dreadful flesh of yours which has been and is such a deadly foe, not only to God but to your own soul's peace? Could you not almost kill your wicked heart for being what it is? Now, as the grace to do this only flows into the soul from union to Christ as crucified for us, we are in this sense "crucified with Christ." There is no other way whereby sin can be subdued, or the flesh crucified with all its affections and lusts; so that not one, however small, however hidden, can escape the crucifying nail. O, how blessed it is to have a view by faith of the cross of Christ; to derive strength out of that cross, so as to give up our flesh to crucifixion, yield up our bosom idols, and with our own hands crucify our darling lusts, saying to the Lord, "All these evils of my heart are sworn enemies of thee: take them, Lord, and nail them to thy cross, that they may not live in my bosom so as to grieve the blessed Spirit, cause thee to hide thy face, wound and distress my conscience, and bring me into captivity and

bondage." Thus you see that this inward crucifixion is done unwillingly, and yet done willingly. The carnal "I" rebels against the cross, but the spiritual "I" submits to it, sees the will of God in it, and joins with him in the doing of it. We may compare them, perhaps, to the two malefactors who were crucified with Christ. The one felt nothing but the outward agonies of the cross, and rebelled against it to his latest breath: this may be a figure of our fleshly "I." The other malefactor at first rebelled and blasphemed too; but when grace touched his heart and God revealed his dear Son in him, he could bless the Lord for being crucified with him, and counted it his happiest day and his dearest delight, for out of it came salvation and Paradise. I offer this, however, as a figure, not as an interpretation. Yet we cannot but feel deeply the crucifying nails, and cry out under them; but the Lord will not spare for our crying. The Lord has no compassion for our sins, though he has compassion upon our persons. As he would not take his dear Son from the cross, though as a Father he pitied him, so he may pity you as a child (Psal. 103:13), yet not spare your lusts.

The crucifixion of self is indispensable to following Christ, as he himself said:—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The criminal always carried his own cross. To take up the cross, then, is to be crucified by being affixed to it. What is so dear to a man as himself? Yet this beloved self is to be crucified. Whether it be proud, or ambitious, or selfish, or covetous, or, what is harder still, religious self—that dear, idolized creature, which has been the subject of so much fondling, petting, pampering, nursing, to part with which is to part with our very natural life—this fondly loved self has to be taken out of our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to Christ's cross.

Now what can compensate us for this pain and this sacrifice? Nothing that earth can give. But there is a most blessed compensation which earth never dreamt of, but which is the special gift of heaven. And this compensation begins here below; for as the child of grace is thus experimentally crucified with

Christ, the benefits of Christ's cross begin to flow into his soul. Pardon through his blood; peace through his sacrifice; communion and fellowship with him in his dying love; power over sin; victory over the world; subjugation of his lusts, and the subduing of his iniquities, become more or less experimentally tasted, felt, and realised. For as the soul is thus crucified with Christ, and the flesh nailed to his cross, power passes over from the cross into the soul, to give us victory over self; for "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And faith in whom? In Jesus as the Son of God, who came "by water and blood"—the blood to cleanse and the water to sanctify. (1 John 5:4, 6.) How deep, how blessed is the mystery that Christ is of God made unto us "sanctification," as well as "righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30); and that the same grace which pardons sins also subdues it! Who of you can say, "I am crucified with Christ?" Blessed is such a man! Blessed is such a crucifixion!

III.—But the apostle goes on to add, as I proposed to show in the third pace, *"Nevertheless I live."* One would think at first sight that this crucifixion would be his death. To be crucified with Christ! to have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death! How can a man survive such a process? In the same way as the three children cast into the furnace were not burnt by the fire. Crucifixion is not death but life to a child of God. This made the apostle say, "Nevertheless I live." But what "I?" I have shown you that there is a twofold I in the Christian's bosom—the old Adam "I" and the new Adam "I," the carnal "I" and the spiritual "I;" and I have also shown you that it is the old Adam "I" which is crucified with Christ. But as this old Adam "I" is crucified, it is not that "I" which lives, but the spiritual "I;" for the death of the carnal "I" is the life of the spiritual "I." As the old man is put off, the new man is put on; as the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigour in the soul. The believing "I," the hoping, the loving, the praying, the watchful, the broken, the contrite, the humble, in a word, the new "I" lives in proportion as the natural "I" is crucified by the grace of God. Here then, is the mystery, and here is the grand, distinguishing difference between



the living saint of God and the dead in sin or the dead in profession. It is death to a worldly man to take the world out of his breast. Here is a man immersed in business, whose whole heart is in it night and day. Let him get into difficulties, become a bankrupt, ruin himself and his family, be arrested for debt, and shut up in prison; the man dies of a broken heart. Here is another whose whole heart is in his money: it is his idol, his god, his all. Maddened by the lust of gain, he speculates to a large amount. A crash comes; down he goes; and what is his end? He puts a pistol to his head, or drinks a phial of prussic acid, and dies upon a heath. Take another man living in drunkenness, lust, and every other vile abomination. Put him into a penitentiary; shave his head, and feed him with bread and water. He dies from the mere misery of life. Life's pleasures are gone. He only lived for them. Take them away, and he dies for want of them. Take another person. It shall this time be a lady—full of the world, its fashions, its pleasures, its amusements, its company, its enjoyments. Take away from her those delights of her vain heart; her fine dresses, her admirers, her youthful attractions: the woman is miserable; she dies, if not literally yet inwardly, of vexation and disappointment. But let the world, sin, self, and all that he loves by nature be taken from a child of God. Does he die? Die? What, he die? No; just the contrary. He lives all the more for now he lives more unto the Lord. How martyrs in prison have blessed and praised God. A dungeon did not kill their inward life. Being taken out of the world and shut up in a dark prison was not their death, for the world was not their life. They only enjoyed more of the sunlight of God's face. Look at Christians on their death bed, when the world with all its gaudy shows is shut out. Does this kill them? Do they not rather live all the more unto God; so that the more the world is shut out, and the more that self is put under their feet, the more they feel a holy joy, a quiet, tranquil contentment, such as God alone is pleased to shower down upon their breast? Just, then, in proportion as the world and the flesh, sin and self, are crucified, does the life of God spring up in the soul of those who fear God. It was this divine life springing up within which made the apostle say—and can we not sometimes echo back his words? "Nevertheless I live."

Here, then, is the great secret of vital godliness that the Christian lives most within, when everything dies most without; that the more that nature fades, the more grace thrives; the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul. O! blessed death! O! still more blessed life!

IV.—But to come to our next point,—in order to discard all idea that he could do all or any of this—that he had any innate strength or power to carry on this blessed work in his own soul—to dispossess us of any such opinion of his own strength or holiness, he tells us in the most pointed language, "*Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" "O," he would say, "look not at Paul; take not your measure of him as if he were able to do these things in his own strength. Look not at him, but at Christ; in him Paul lives, it is true; but not in his own life, but in Christ's. He fights against sin and self; not however in his own strength, but in Christ's. He stands righteous before God. Not however in his own righteousness, but Christ's. He has both will and action; yet neither is his own, but Christ's; for Christ works in him both to will and to do his good pleasure." This made the apostle say "Not I." It could not be his natural "I," for that was crucified; and he even disclaims any part of the work as done by his spiritual "I;" for though that lived, yet, it only lived by Christ living in it.

But how it may be asked, does Christ live in a believer's soul? By his Spirit and grace; by being formed in his heart, the hope of glory; by blessing the soul with his presence and power; by communicating and shedding abroad his love. Thus, it is not the believer, but the Spirit of Christ in him, by which he lives unto God. Do you not find this true in your daily experience? If we pray with any life or feeling in our soul, with any access to a throne of grace, or obtain any answer; it is not we that pray: it is the Spirit of God praying in us. If I preach anything that may instruct, comfort, or edify your soul, or write anything that may be blessed to build up the Church of God on our most holy faith;

it is not I, but the Spirit of God that speaks in me, and guides my pen. How else could I, or any other man, be made a blessing to the church of God? It is not my abilities or learning, but the dew and unction of the blessed Spirit resting upon me, which glorifies God or edifies the church. Or take me as a private Christian. If I repent of my sins, it is not I that repent, but the Spirit of God giving me repentance. If I believe in the Lord of life and glory, it is not I that believe, but the Lord giving me faith by his holy Spirit. If I watch, he must watch in me; if I live to his praise, he must live in me; if I act for his honour, he must act in me; if I enjoy his presence, it is he who must communicate a sense of that presence to my heart. So it is not I, but Christ himself that liveth in me. O blessed guest! O gracious inhabitant! Who that fears God would not have such a blessed inmate ever to dwell in his bosom? And who that has had him once does not long again and again for his sweet presence, and to experience renewed and repeated manifestations of his love? It is true that those are rare seasons; but the Lord never leaves the heart into which he has ever come. If you have not the felt presence, you are longing for it; and these longings, breathings, and desires manifest more or less of his power and presence. You will also find from time to time how secretly and yet how blessedly the Lord will come into the soul. He will come sometimes in a word of promise; sometimes in a look of love; sometimes in a sweet smile; sometimes in a soft whisper; sometimes in a heavenly touch. How he will melt at one time your heart into sorrow for sin; how he will at another encourage you with a word when much cast down; will shine upon your soul when it walks in thick darkness; will renew your life that seems almost gone, and revive your spirit. And as you will thus find your dependence upon him for every spiritual breath and for every gracious desire, you will learn that it is not you that live, but Christ that lives in you.

V.—But to come to our last point, *the nature of this life*. "*The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*" It is a life still "in the flesh," with all the infirmities, with all the frailties, all the sins, and all the sorrows of a body of sin and death; a life in the flesh and therefore surrounded with

everything that belongs to the flesh. And yet though a life *in* the flesh, not a life *of* the flesh, but a spiritual life in a body of sin and death. Christ in the heart the hope of glory; and yet the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. What a mystery of grace is this! That so holy a guest should take up his abode in the breast of a polluted sinner, and yet not partake of the sinner's pollution; should work in him by his Spirit and grace, and yet keep himself free from all the sinner's filth and folly.

The great blessedness of a believer here below is that he lives a life of faith in the Son of God. But how can he do this unless he has had a believing view of the Son of God as having loved him, and given himself for him, as having risen from the dead, and to be now ever living at God's right hand to make intercession for him? It is, then, as he is pleased to send his Spirit down into his heart to testify of his grace, and to draw up faith, and hope, and love, and every sweet affection to centre in himself that he lives a life of faith upon him. "Because I live," saith the Lord, "ye shall live also;" and we live because he is "the resurrection and the life." Thus as Jesus lives at God's right hand, he lives also in the believer's soul; and as he sends his Spirit down into the believer's heart, and draws his faith and hope and love to himself, he enables him to live a life of faith upon him as the Son of God. Viewing the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, he looks to him for the supply of all his wants. He sees him at one time a kind God in providence; he views him at another as a most blessed and suitable Saviour in grace; he looks sometimes to his atoning blood as cleansing from all sin; to his glorious righteousness as his only justifying robe; and to his heavenly love as the sweetest balm that God can shed abroad in his heart. He desires from time to time to have fellowship and communion with the Son of God; to be conformed to his suffering image here below, that he may be conformed to his glorified image above. It is in this way he comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Christ as his beloved. By his superabounding grace he is recovered and restored from his innumerable slips and falls and backslidings; by his gracious renewings, his youth is renewed like the eagle's; and thus day by day, as the blessed Spirit works in his soul both to will and to do of his good pleasure, he lives by

the faith of the Son of God. And as all this can only be done by the power of faith, by faith he lives, by faith he acts; by faith he walks; faith being the grand moving principle of every action of his soul, and the uniting chain that links his soul to the Son of God upon his heavenly throne. Thus living a life of faith upon the Son of God, he receives out of this fulness grace for grace; and by God's help and strength eventually dies in him, and rising up to the glorious mansions of light, lives with him to all eternity.

Now this is a feeble sketch of the life of a Christian; what we must know something of in our own souls, before we can really believe ourselves to be saints of the living God, by the testimony of the Spirit in our breast. We have to confess that we come painfully short in many of these things; and yet we have every reason to praise the Lord if he has put any measure of this experience into our breasts, for where he has begun that good work he will surely perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

## THE CRY OF JONAH OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 16, 1843.

"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Jonah 2:4

It is a great mercy for God's people that the account which the Holy Ghost has given of the saints in the Scripture is very different from the opinions which men form of them by nature. If we attend to the conceptions that the human heart naturally forms of saints, we should believe them to be a kind of intermediate being betwixt us and angels, far removed from all the frailties, sins and imperfections of humanity, never overtaken by slips and falls, but continually walking in the "beauty of holiness".

But God has not recorded such imaginary saints in the Scriptures; and to beat down these foolish ideas, he has given us an account of the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the unbelief of Abraham, the peevishness of Moses, the adultery of David, the idolatry of Solomon, the pride of Hezekiah, the cowardice of Mark, and the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Ghost left on record these sins and slips of the saints? I believe chiefly for three reasons. **First**, that it might teach us that they were saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners, in the same way as we hope to be saved. **Secondly**, that their slips and falls might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins, as the Apostle speaks, "All these things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition" (1Cor. 10:11). And **thirdly**, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old,

they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Of all the recorded prophets, Jonah perhaps stumbles us naturally the most. His disobedient, rebellious conduct before the Lord so signally chastised him; and his impetuous language after he had received such a chastisement, and such a deliverance, when he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death," have often stumbled those who know neither the depths of the human heart, nor the heights of God's superabounding grace! And yet, I believe, there are many of God's family, who have felt comforted and encouraged, not only by Jonah's rebellious conduct, but also by his perverse and unbecoming words. Not that they dare justify the one, nor approve of the other; but those who really know themselves, and have a deep sense of their baseness and abominable vileness before God, are sometimes enabled to derive a little sweetness from seeing to what lengths God's people who are evidently his saints, and even his inspired prophets, have been permitted to go.

I need hardly, perhaps, remind you, that the words of the text were uttered by Jonah when he was in the whale's belly. It was there he spake them in the bitterness of his soul; it was there that these words of sad despondency, and yet of strong faith, burst from his lips, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple!"

But before we enter upon the words of the text, it may be desirable to trace out a few of the steps by which Jonah came into this spot: and then we shall, if the Lord enable us, see something not merely of the perverseness of a saint of God when left to himself, but we shall also perceive something of the exercises of godly fear in the midst of that perverseness.

We read (Jon. 1:1, 2), "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me."

The Lord here gave Jonah a certain command. What that particular command was, does not very much concern us at present: suffice it to say, that it was contrary to Jonah's fleshly feelings, thwarted his natural inclinations, and was a burden laid upon him heavier than he could bear. What was the effect, then, of this command on Jonah? He disobeyed it. God did not supply him with strength to obey it; it was the Lord's will at that time to teach him another lesson; therefore he withheld from him the strength by which alone he could comply with his command. And that strength being withheld, disobedience was the inevitable consequence. But how did this disobedience work? "Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa" (Jon. 1:3). Now in this very rising up of Jonah to flee from "the presence of the Lord", we see, as I have before hinted, the workings of godly fear in the midst of his perversity and rebelliousness.

What is implied here by the expression, "the presence of the Lord"? It does not mean the universal presence of God, whereby he sees all things in heaven and earth. Jonah knew well that he could not escape from **that**, for "if he ascended up to heaven, God was there; if he made his bed in hell, he was there also" (Ps. 139:8). But by "the presence of the Lord" here must be intended his manifested presence, such as is made known in the assemblies of the saints, and which at that period was manifested at Jerusalem and in the temple.

Often, then, in experience, the first step which a child of God takes, when he cannot, through the perversity of the flesh, obey God's commands, is to withdraw himself from "the presence of the Lord". He shuns and forsakes the places where it is conspicuously manifested, his raw and tender conscience being unable to bear it. He withdraws himself, for instance, from a heart-searching ministry; from any deep or close experimental preaching, such as may lash his conscience; from the company of God's deeply taught and exercised people; from those who are walking in the light, life, and fear of the Lord. The manifestations of God's power and presence in them is a continual reproof to



him; it rebukes his carnality, and checks his worldly plans. He cannot bear the lashes of conviction which this "presence of the Lord" produces, and yet is unable to walk in the path which conscience points out. He withdraws himself, therefore, from the cause of these stings and reproaches, and flees away from this continual source of guilt and condemnation.

But in the midst of all this inconsistency we see marks of life. Hypocrites living in sin can sit under the most heart-searching ministry; they can rest satisfied and contented under the most experimental preaching: their conscience is seared; and, therefore, the sharpest rebukes, and the keenest reproofs cannot touch them. Thus the very withdrawing of Jonah from "the presence of the Lord", instead of being a mark **against** him, is rather a mark **for** him, as it showed that his conscience was not seared as with a hot iron, but that it was still tender in God's fear.

After Jonah then had thus withdrawn himself, as much as he could, from those things which wounded and lashed him, he goes down to Joppa; and finding "a ship going to Tarshish, he pays the fare thereof, to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord" (Jon. 1:3). Thus a backslider buries himself in the world, as soon as he gets away from every thing that stings and pierces his conscience.

But did the Lord leave Jonah there, and let him fulfil his intentions? No! "The Lord sent out a great wind, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." Here was the beginning of Jonah's chastisement, the commencement of the Lord's visibly taking notice of his disobedience. But what effect does it produce on Jonah? Apparently none whatever; he is stupefied. Having withdrawn himself from "the presence of the Lord", his conscience, though not dead, is become to a certain extent callous. The very storm that frightened the superstitious mariners, and made every man cry unto his god, did not alarm him. He was gone to sleep. He did not perceive, and therefore did not tremble at, the first manifestations of God's wrath.

Thus a living soul, when he gets into a backsliding state, and withdraws himself from an experimental ministry and the company of God's family becomes to a certain degree "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin". So that when God sends affliction, and deals out troubles, he at first often does not feel it; like Jonah, he is asleep, and the conscience is callous.

What a strange thing, that the very mariners, who worshipped false gods, and had no religion but a few superstitious ideas, should be more alarmed at the tempest, than the prophet of God himself! So, when our hearts begin to grow hard, and the conscience has lost its former tenderness in God's fear, the very things that frighten others seem to have no effect on us. The judgments of God and the manifestations of his anger, which terrify even those who make no profession of religion, pass us by unfelt, and leave us unmoved.

But time, I see, will scarcely permit me to run through all the steps which eventually brought Jonah into the whale's belly; yet one thing I must just touch on, and that is, the effect which was produced on his conscience, when at length it was effectually aroused. God would not suffer him to continue sleeping on; he causes the storm to become heavier, and the ship-master awakes him out of his sleep. And when they proceeded to cast lots, "to know for whose cause the evil had come upon them", "the lot fell upon Jonah".

God's finger singled him out from all the rest. And now, when his conscience is awakened by this distinct pointing of him out, and the wrath of God is flashing into his soul, he is penetrated through and through with a sense of his disobedience, and he feels the hand of God to be gone out against him. And then what follows? Doubt, despair, and overwhelming despondency. "Take me up," he says, "and cast me forth into the sea". I have sinned against God! Cast me out, "for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you".

And when with much reluctance they had taken him up, and cast him into the sea, God did not leave him there, for he "had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah: and he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights". But in this awful spot, the very "belly of hell", as he calls it, Jonah begins to come to himself. His disobedience, and the consequence of it, the anger of God, were so opened up to his soul, "when the depth closed him round about", that he was overwhelmed with distress.

In Jonah's state, temporal and spiritual, we see marks, not merely of his being a child of God, but of his merciful dealings toward him, in not suffering him to do what he pleased; he would not allow him to "go down to Tarshish", to bury himself in the world, and forsake vital godliness. Nor will God suffer any of us, whose hearts he has touched by his fear, to do so. We may lay down our plans, and say, "we will do **this**, or **that** thing"; but God will disappoint every plan we make, which will not be for our spiritual good, and for his eternal glory.

When every proposed plan, then, is disappointed, and the frown of God is sensibly felt in the conscience, the soul sinks into distress and despondency; and then is the time when the Lord begins to show forth the power of his mighty arm, and to work according to his own eternal purpose.

Without further preface, then, we come to the words of the text, breathed forth by Jonah, when he was in that awful and distressed condition: "Then he said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

We may observe here two leading features.

I.—Jonah's **despondency**.

II.—Jonah's **faith**, working in the midst, and in spite of his despondency.

I.—**Jonah's despondency.** "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight." What do these words imply? What is it to be "cast out of God's sight"? They imply a deep feeling of being cast out from the manifestation of God's presence to the soul. And thus poor Jonah, when he spake these words, uttered them in the very bitterness of his heart; he felt that he was cast out of God's gracious presence.

But he must have known something experimentally of the sweetness of God's manifested presence; he must have tasted that heaven was in it, and that all his happiness centered there. He must have enjoyed this in order to know if God's presence were not felt in the soul, there was but one barren scene of gloom and death; and that to be "cast out of his sight", was the commencement of hell upon earth.

Now here a living soul differs from all others, whether dead in sin, or dead in a profession. The persuasion that in God alone is true happiness; the feeling of misery and dissatisfaction with every thing else but the Lord, and everything short of his manifested presence, is that which stamps the reality of the life of God in a man's soul. Mere professors of religion feel no misery, dissatisfaction, or wretchedness, if God shine not upon them. So long as the world smiles, and they have all that heart can wish, so long as they are buoyed up by the hypocrite's hope, and lulled asleep by the soft breezes of flattery, they are well satisfied to sail down the stream of a dead profession.

But it is not so with the living soul; he is at times panting after the smiles of God; he is thirsting after his manifested presence; he feels dissatisfied with the world, and all that it presents, if he cannot find the Lord, and does not enjoy the light of his countenance. Where this is experienced, it stamps a man as having the grace of God in his heart. And thus Jonah, having tasted the sweetness, and realized the blessedness of the manifested presence of the Lord, when cast out of his sight, cried as if "out of the belly of hell".

And do not all God's people feel a measure of this when sunk deep in distress and despondency? It is not indeed always the fear of the pains of hell, of its sulphurous flames, and ever-burning fire **though these may have their solemn weight and power**, but to be banished from the presence of God, in which their soul desires to find eternal bliss and joy, never to behold his glory, or be swallowed up in the everlasting contemplation and boundless enjoyment of his presence; it is **in this** that much of the anguish of the distressed soul consists. It is not so much the fear of punishment, or the mere pangs of slavish dread, but the feelings of a child banished from his Father's house.

To be cast then out of God's sight, implies the being banished **I do not mean eternally, but in experimental soul feeling** from the manifested presence and enjoyment of God.

But what are the prominent feelings in being thus "cast out"?

1. That of **guilt**. The God-taught soul knows the Lord's pure eyes cannot look on sin, and that he cannot behold iniquity but with abhorrence. Therefore "to be cast out of God's sight", implies a burden of guilt lying on the conscience; that our sins are so numerous, our backslidings so aggravated, our iniquities so dreadful, that we dare not come into the presence of him whose holy and pure eyes cannot look on us with acceptance.

2. Another prominent feeling is, that of **filthiness**. When the Lord by his blessed Spirit opens up the depths of a man's corrupt heart, and takes away the veil of self-delusion that is spread over it by nature, he covers him with shame and confusion of face, and makes him feel that he is too black and filthy, too vile and polluted to be admitted into his sacred presence. Thus we feel "cast out", as being too filthy to come into God's sanctuary.

3. Another prominent feeling is that of **misery and wretchedness**. When Jonah uttered these words, he spake them in the anguish of his soul. Perhaps there is no feeling more bitter for a living soul to experience than to be "cast out of God's sight".

If we are in trouble, and the Lord is by our side, he makes trouble light. If we are passing through heavy scenes of tribulation, and the Lord sensibly lays his everlasting arms underneath the soul, he bears it up. If the body is afflicted, if all things appear to be against us in providence, if there be family trials and sorrows, if the Lord be but present, if he but support the soul, and speak comfort to the heart, all these things can be borne; "for the spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear"?

But when, in addition to all the afflictions and troubles of this mortal life, God himself seems to frown on the soul, when he appears to take no notice of it, and neither to hear nor answer its prayers; and when, instead of pouring oil and wine into the bleeding wounds, it seems as though he were rather pouring into them venom and poison, this is indeed to be experimentally "cast out of God's sight".

But another prominent feeling, is that of **most complete helplessness**. What a different thing it was for Jonah to withdraw himself from the Lord's presence, and for God to withdraw his presence from Jonah. He easily enough withdrew himself from the Lord, but when he would come back, and return to his former position: when he would fain once more bask in the Lord's smiles; when he would once more cry from the bottom of his heart "my Father"; when he would once more enjoy the tokens of adopting love; when he would once more look upon the cancelling of his sins, and the blotting out of his transgressions; when he would once more creep into the very bosom of a covenant God, alas, there was no approach. His helplessness, impotency, and inability blocked up the way; and the Lord not drawing, but rather repelling him, every approach served only to drive him farther and farther back.

Thus, these four prominent feelings, **guilt, filth, wretchedness,** and **helplessness,** were all at work together in Jonah's troubled mind; so that when he spake these words he uttered them full of anguish of spirit. And that which he doubtless felt to be the

bitterest ingredient of all, was, the conviction of that great truth which the Lord afterwards spake by Jeremiah (Jer. 2:17): "Hast thou not procured this to thyself in that thou hast forsaken the Lord?"

Whatever exercises the soul may have to pass through; whatever afflictions may be heaped on our head; whatever trouble the mind may be in, we must come to this, that we must justify the Lord in all his dealings with us, and say to him, "We have deserved all this, and ten thousand times more." We dare not charge God with iniquity, and say to him, "We have not merited this at thy hands." And this is the bitterness to the child of God, that he knows whatever he suffers he has justly and richly merited it all.

And now, my friends, have you ever felt this soul bitterness, and known what it is to be experimentally "cast out of God's sight"? Is this the most painful feeling that you have ever passed through? Did your natural afflictions ever equal the sorrow you have felt from this? Did temporal trials ever weigh so heavily in the balance? Whatever worldly afflictions and troubles a man may pass through, I believe this firmly in my conscience, that they are nothing compared to spiritual trials. I have passed through my share of natural trouble, but I never found any natural trouble like spiritual trouble. Spiritual sorrows, temptations, and exercises so outweigh natural troubles, that they are not to be compared with each other.

Now if you have been companions with Jonah in his **despondency**, you will be able to look at

II.—Jonah's faith. I think the case of Jonah approaches as near to suicide as any instance in the Scriptures. Jonah, it is true, did not throw himself overboard; but he said, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." He was preserved, miraculously preserved, from the damning sin of suicide. But he seems to me to have sunk into as much despondency of mind, as if he had actually leaped from the bow of the ship into the boiling waves; the

difference is, he permitted himself to be thrown in by the hands of others—and God miraculously preserved him; with these two points of difference only did he escape the fatal sin of self-murder.

But in the midst of all his despondency, we find he had faith living and working in his heart: as Hart says:

It lives and labours under load;  
Though damped, it never dies.

This blessed grace of faith was not merely alive, but lively in the midst of all the burdens and exercises that lay upon it; and it was in the exercise of this living faith that he said "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

God's holy temple was at Jerusalem; and this temple was typical, as I observed before on a recent occasion, of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not, then, to the literal temple that Jonah looked. The building of stone could not profit him, as he lay in "the belly of hell", but he looked beyond the temple to what the temple represented. He looked through the natural building to that which was set forth by it. His faith turned toward the human nature of the Lord Jesus, which was to be in due time united, indissolubly united to the Godhead, so as to form one glorious Person, "Immanuel, God with us;" the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and man.

But how did the temple represent the human nature of the Lord Jesus? First, in it God dwelt. As the Lord said, "Whoso shall swear by the temple sweareth by it, and by **Him that dwelleth therein**" (Matt. 23:21). It was in the temple that God dwelt, in the cloud on the mercy-seat; and so in the human nature of Jesus Christ, which is spotless and holy, does God dwell, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". And **secondly**, every thing in the temple was connected with, and had relation to the Lord Jesus, as Mediator between God and man. The mercy-seat, sprinkled once a year with atoning blood,



the holy of holies, the brazen altar on which the sacrifices were continually offered, and in a word, everything connected with the temple, had a spiritual and typical reference to the Lord of life and glory.

Jonah then, in "looking toward the holy temple", looked to all that the temple represented. Thus, in the midst of all the sinking of his soul, and the distress of his mind, he cast a despairing yet believing look **for we may conjoin the two apparently contradictory expressions** towards God's holy temple—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in order to do this, the eyes of his understanding must have been spiritually enlightened by the Holy Ghost. Faith must have been given to him by God himself to look toward this only Mediator; the efficacy of his atoning blood must have been seen and felt; the glory of his justifying righteousness must have been beheld; the dignity and beauty of his Person must have been divinely realized and not only must faith have flowed out toward him, but hope must have anchored on him, and love been firmly fixed upon him.

And thus, however low Jonah sank in trouble, he lost not his acquaintance with divine teachings. Did he go to Joppa? He did not lose them there. Did he fall asleep in the sides of the ship? He did not lose them there. Did the storm rage, the winds blow, and was Jonah cast into the billows? He did not lose his faith there; yea, when he was come into the very "belly of hell", he did not lose it even there. The Lord had given him living faith; and he who first kindled the divine spark in his soul, kept it secretly alive, brought it forth into fresh exercise, and never let the holy flame expire. This living faith keeps the soul from utter despair, however low it may sink in distress and trouble. Faith, hope, and love, formerly kindled and realized in the soul, held it up from utterly sinking in the deep waters. And thus, in the midst of the soul's despondency, and of its sharpest exercises, there is often a blessed "Yet I will look **again** toward thy holy temple."

Now this word "**again**", shows that Jonah had looked there before; that it was not the first time his eye had been fixed by faith on the Person and work of the Mediator; and that it was not the first time his soul had received benefit from Jesus' blessed mediation.

But what is contained in the expression "**look**"? There are various kinds of looking. There is, for instance, the look of mere speculation; but **that** will not profit us. There is the looking by the eye of sense, as the Jews, who crucified Jesus, looked on his bleeding and agonized body; but **that** look did not profit their souls. There is the looking on him as revealed in the letter of God's word, a seeing the name of Jesus in the Scripture, and a reading of many texts that speak of the efficacy of his atoning blood and righteousness; but **that** will not profit us. All this is merely a looking after the flesh; but the Apostle says, "though we have known Christ **after the flesh**, yet now henceforth know we him no more". But the looking that **profits** the soul, that saves it, delivers it, and brings it out of every hole into which it may be sunk, is **the look by faith**.

But Jonah's look was not exactly **that**, It was indeed a believing look; but it was rather a longing, lingering, and almost despairing glance, that did not bring him out of the distress into which he was sunk, nor relieve him from the despondency with which he was overwhelmed. It was as though he would take one last look, as though he could not entirely sink into despair; and as if one look more would keep him from being entirely swallowed up, from being altogether a castaway. It was not then such a confident look as could deliver him out of "the belly of hell"; it was but just sufficient to bring into his heart a little support, and to keep hope and love alive in his soul.

Now, I believe many of God's people are just in that state; they have not sufficient faith to bring them out of their trouble; the Lord does not sufficiently make known the riches of his grace to burst asunder every chain and fetter in which they are entangled. He does not see good to break the neck of every temptation, and

bring the soul out of the despondency in which it is lying; but he gives just sufficient faith to preserve alive his own work in the soul, and thus keeps it looking again and again toward "his holy temple". By this look strength indeed is imparted to support the soul, yet not sufficient completely to deliver it out of the exercises, temptations, and distresses that it may be burdened with.

Now "a full soul" who knows nothing of this inward experience, will not value such a look as this. To be kept on a low diet cannot suit those who would turn away from every table not spread with delicacies: and so the idea of being preserved barely alive will not suit those who know nothing of vital godliness. But when a soul is really taught the grand difference there is between faith and presumption; and the eternal and awful distinction between what a man can do for himself, and what God does in and for him; when it feels the amazing difference between what comes from God as a free gift, and what is stolen by the pilfering hands of the creature—then it begins to find that the communication of God's mercy and grace is not a thing constantly enjoyed in everyday profusion; that the table is not daily loaded with luxuries, but that the soul is kept alive from day to day, and preserved from actual starvation only by those crumbs and drops that God may be pleased to bless it with.

And, my friends, nothing but passing through a measure of soul exercises, temptations, and trials, will teach a man this lesson. There is no means so effectual naturally to teach a man what good food is, as to put him for some time on a starving system: to keep him on a low diet, to shut him up for awhile in a prison, or confine him within the walls of a workhouse. And so, spiritual hunger makes a man value gospel food, when he receives it as an answer to his prayers. When one is kept on short allowance; when God will not smile on the soul when we desire it; when he will not apply his promises when we want them; when one gets only a little here and a little there **according to the Scripture definition, "line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little"**, I say, when a man is brought to this

point, he begins to value and enjoy those things which before he thought little of.

Nothing, I believe, can really comfort a God-taught soul, but the consolations that God alone can bless him with; the only food that can really satisfy a living man, is the bread of life that the Holy Ghost from time to time brings down into his heart; and his heart can only be established and kept at anchor, just as the Lord is pleased from time to time to favour him with testimonies. And these realities are very rare, while counterfeits abound. False Christs, notional religion, carnal security, may be had at every shop, and be picked up in every street; but real testimonies from God, gracious smiles of his favour, gospel food brought down from heaven, you may depend upon it, my friends, that those who know these things experimentally, will say that they are very rare indeed. It is only occasionally that the Lord bestows these favours; it is only when we have been long toiling, and can catch nothing, that we are enabled to cast our net on the right side of the ship.

And the Lord's people learn two things in this school: their own wretchedness without them, and the rarity and infrequency of them. They are unable to procure them for themselves; and yet they are unable to live comfortably and die happily without them. Thus they are brought to see that much that passes for religion is no religion at all; that much that goes for true evidences and real hopes is nothing but lying refuges; that much is palmed upon men for the teaching of the Spirit which is nothing but delusion; that vital godliness is very rare; that there are very few persons spiritually taught of God; that there are very few ministers who really preach the truth; and that Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot be satisfied, except with God's own testimony to his heart. He cannot take up with a religion in the flesh; he cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived long by Satan's delusions. There is a principle of divine discernment in a God-taught soul. However carnal he may be, however buried in the world, he

cannot rest long contented without God's blessing. If the Lord does not communicate some token and blessed testimony to his soul, he can have no solid happiness.

It is this conviction working underground, that mars all his fleshly consolation. It is this secret gnawing of conscience in a living soul that makes it dissatisfied with a religion that satisfies thousands. If his conscience is alive in God's fear, he knows he cannot deceive God, however he may deceive himself. He knows that there will be a solemn day of reckoning, that all shall stand before that great tribunal. He would rather, therefore, suffer a thousand hells here than go to hell at last.

May we not be deceived then, for a deceived wretch is worse than any wretch. May we not be deluded by the devil, or our own hearts. And if we are brought into simplicity and godly sincerity, we never shall be deceived; God himself will not suffer it; for the work of God in a man's heart will teach him the wretched deceitfulness of everything in the creature.

And this work God keeps alive in his soul, so that however low he may sink, however he may be exercised, whatever doubts and fears he may be plunged into, he will look again towards God's temple. He cannot give it up; he cannot cast away his hope, nor throw aside his profession. He holds on, and struggles and stumbles through all to "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul". And when the Lord, by his Spirit, lifts him out of his despondency and trouble, and brings him out of this trying path, he will see that it has been a safe path, and that the Lord has led him in it ultimately to make him a partaker of everlasting bliss.

## THE DAY IN WHICH A MAN LOOKS TO HIS MAKER

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, October 16th, 1842, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 17:7

We are very much, I think, in the dark as to the historical interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament. We are so little acquainted with the various circumstances of the different times and periods, that there must needs be many obscurities connected with the historical interpretation. But I know not whether we are very great losers on this account. There is another interpretation about which we are not so much in the dark, one which is far more suitable to our case as individuals, and, when made known by the Spirit, far more sweet and profitable; I mean the experimental vein that runs through these prophecies.

I shall not attempt, therefore, to explain this morning the historical meaning of this text, though no doubt it has one, but confine myself almost entirely to its spiritual interpretation.

"At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."

We find mention made in the text of a certain "day." This expression occurs very frequently in Isaiah, and the other prophets of the Old Testament. For instance, in Isa. 26:1, we read, "*In that day* shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." So again, 27:1, "*In that day* the Lord, with His sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent," &c. The meaning of this "day," thus emphatically spoken of, we must gather generally from the context. Guided by this clue, we shall sometimes find it to point out a season of great

trial, and sometimes one of great joy. It is not a literal day of twenty-four hours, but *a certain season*, which, whether of joy or trouble, takes place in the hearts of God's people. Which of these days it is generally pretty clear from the context, and therefore we will, with God's blessing, look back a little at the verses immediately preceding the text, in order to discover whether the day of trouble or the day of joy be intended in the passage before us. We will commence with verse 4 of this chapter. "And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. *At that day* shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel." The day spoken of in the text is when "the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean." It cannot therefore be the same day of which we read, Isa. 12:1, where the Church, blessed with a sense of the pardon of her sins, says, "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." But it points to a season of trouble, when the Church is brought down and laid low. The work, then, upon her soul which is carried on in this season is pointed out in the words, "The glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean."

What is this *glory* of Jacob? It is not the *real* glory of Jacob, which consisted in their peculiar relationship to God, which glory could not diminish nor fade; but it is anything in which the people of God (who are pointed out by the word "Jacob") may glory *naturally*—anything in which they may take an idolatrous pleasure, or boast of after the flesh. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." Thus some boast in riches, some in strength, some in learning, some in talents; all of us, more or less, have, or think we have, something in which to

glory—to boast of—to take pride in. But in the case of the elect family of God, a day comes when this "glory is made thin."

1. The Lord here seems to have taken the figure of a person in a consumption or some such wasting disease, all whose strength and comeliness pine away and decline, and all whose flesh gradually falls away from his bones. "In that day," then, when God puts his hand upon him, when He touches his conscience with His finger, when He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, when He sets his secret sins before his face, when He gives him a display of His majesty and holiness, when He brings him to book, and holds a solemn court of judgment in his conscience—"in that day the glory of Jacob is made thin, and the fatness of his flesh waxes lean." If he could take pleasure in his property, when he is troubled about his soul, the glory of it waxes thin. If he could rejoice in his strong health and vigorous body, when the pangs of guilt lay hold of him, he can take no pleasure in them. If he could boast of his talents and ability, or of his acquired learning, when the Lord takes him in hand and brings conviction of sin into his soul, the glory of them all waxes thin. Or if pride in him runs in a different channel, and cradled in the religion of the day, he has amassed a heap of righteousness, it is with it in that day as the Lord describes (Haggai 1:9): "Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it." Or if more subtilly deceived, he glories in the form of godliness without the power; if he is stiffened and buckramed up with a natural knowledge of the doctrines of grace, without a true experience of their savour, "in that day" the glory of all his long profession wastes away. If he prided himself upon his discernment in divine things, in the soundness of his judgment, strength of his memory, depth of his scriptural knowledge, or acuteness in detecting error, his glory in them becomes weakened and worn away. So that, let him look on every side, whatever he gloried in is become wan, whatever he has taken pleasure in wastes away from him, like a man's flesh off his bones in a consumption, and he is unable to gain either satisfaction or pleasure from that in which he once boasted.



2. But we read that not only shall "the glory of Jacob be made thin," but that "the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean." The Scriptures often use the figure of fatness to imply a state without any spiritual trouble. "Their eyes stand out with *fatness*." "Jeshurun waxed *fat*, and kicked" (Deut. 32:15). "I will destroy the fat and the strong" (Ezek. 34:16). Fatness implies the *absence* of all disease—of all hard labour—of all anxiety and care; and the *presence* of all that the flesh lusteth after. Now when the Lord takes a man in hand, when He begins to work on his conscience, and brings eternal realities with weight and power into his soul, this "fatness waxes lean." As we read in Job 32:21, "His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out." The *disease* of sin, the *labour* to make his calling and election sure, and his *anxiety* lest he miscarry eternally, all conspire to wear his fatness away.

3. But the Holy Ghost employs another figure to throw a light on what takes place in "that day." "And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim." This verse in its *literal* meaning seems to point out some desolation to take place which should reduce the number of *the people*. But viewed *spiritually*, it appears to refer to a desolation of the *individual*, for of an individual the text speaks—"In that day shall a man look to his Maker," &c. Under this figure, then, the soul is compared to a field out of which the corn had been reaped. There was once a flourishing crop; the ears stood thick upon the ground; but the harvest-man has been there, and reaped the ears with his arm. So spiritually, in this "valley of Rephaim" (which appears to have been famed for its luxuriant crops) there has grown up an abundant crop of fleshly religion, self-righteousness, and self-esteem; but "in that day," the harvest-man comes with his sickle and cuts down the crop.

4. And yet neither literally nor spiritually should the desolation be full or final. "Gleaning grapes" (that is, the grapes which the gleaner came in search of after the vintage was over, Deut. 24:21) "should be left in it;" a remnant according to the election

of grace should remain; and yet so scanty in number that they should be "as the shaking of an olive-tree" (that is, after it had been shaken for its crop), "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof." And so spiritually, amidst all this shaking of the soul there should be left some few good things towards the Lord God of Israel in the top of the uppermost boughs—the very last place where we should look for them; as, for instance, some reverence and godly fear, some tenderness of conscience, something of the Lord's own implantation in the soul, so that it is not utterly destitute, like the barren fig-tree, of which it was said, "Cut it down—why cumbereth it the ground?"

These things must be taken into consideration in order to enter into the spiritual meaning of the text. "At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."

I. The fruit, then, and effect of this work upon the soul—of this *consumption*, of this *reaping*, of this *shaking*, is that "in that day," or season of deep necessity, "a man looks to his Maker."

1. The word "Maker" may here mean his Maker naturally—that divine Being who formed him in the womb, and gave him a natural existence. He never looked to the God who made him before; he had no spiritual knowledge of Him; the Lord had not made Himself experimentally known to him. But now, "in that day when the glory of Jacob is made thin, and the fatness of his flesh is waxed lean," when all the crop of natural religion is taken away by the harvest-man, he "looks to his Maker"—that is, he is brought to see and know that there is a God that has created him to live for ever, and given him a soul that can never die. Under this conviction he experiences such feelings as he never knew before; and he is thus made to see that He who has brought him into existence, and preserved him to the present moment, has been mocked and insulted by him during the greater part of his life, and that he has lived without God and without hope in the world. He is brought too to see something of the longsuffering of

the Lord in not having cut him down and sent him to a richly-deserved hell.

2. But the words, "his Maker," seem to admit of a further signification. God is not only our Maker *naturally*, but so far as we are the supernatural work of His hand, He is our Maker *spiritually*. The new man of grace is therefore called "a creature," or "creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), and said to be "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

When, then, a man is passing through this work, when judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, he "looks to his Maker" in a spiritual sense, as to "a faithful Creator" (1 Pe. 4:19). He feels if he is to be anything, to have anything, to know anything aright, God must work in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. He is brought to see that all his religion from first to last must spring from God's grace in his soul. If he is to possess a grain of faith, it must be wrought in his heart by God. If there is a spark of living hope to keep him from despair, it must be communicated to his soul by the Divine hand. If he has any love for the Lord or for His people, it must be wrought in him. But until his glory was made thin, and the fatness of his flesh waxed lean, he never really looked to his Maker in that way. He took his religion for granted; held it upon trust; received it from the letter of the Word; esteemed himself a Christian and passed as such, without having ever been instructed by God Himself, without having had his religion wrought in the soul by a supernatural power; without having ever been convinced and pierced through and through by a sense of his guilt before God; without any deep-rooted conviction that he was utterly unable to produce one spiritual thought in his own soul. But when the glory of Jacob waxes thin; when he looks upon his limbs, and finds them emaciated—*then* he is brought from sheer destitution, from the real necessity of the case, from experimental feelings, not from mere doctrinal knowledge, to look upwards to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And he is taught as a personal thing, an individual reality, to wait upon the Lord who hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and to look for Him (Isa. 8:17).

Now a man may go to the summit of doctrine and of the letter of experience in his judgment, and to the greatest self-denial and consistency in practice, and yet never have been brought thus to look to his Maker. He may have discernment to see who is right and who is wrong, and yet never once have been brought to spread himself out as a guilty sinner before the Lord, or fall down before Him as a ruined wretch. And why so easily and so fatally deceived, but because "the glory of Jacob has not been made thin, nor the fatness of his flesh waxed lean?" The harvest-man has not been and reaped the crop of his natural religion; the gleaner has not swept away the grapes; nor the rod of the olive-gatherer beaten down the olives (Deut. 24:20). But in that day when the Lord takes a man in hand, he will "look to his Maker," and not all the powers of hell, not all the workings of unbelief, not all the opposition of the world, not all the fears that his heart may be exercised with—none of these, though all conspire, no, not the flattery of false friends, nor the persecutions of open enemies, will be able to prevent this tried and tempted man from "looking to his Maker."

If we revert for a few moments to the figure which I spoke of as contained in the fourth verse of this chapter, it seems to throw a light on the way in which these internal exercises sometimes come on. We do not there read of a sudden work, as though there were no other way, but we find the figure of a consumption made use of, that begins slowly and imperceptibly, yet gradually wastes away the flesh, and terminates in death. So spiritually; these internal exercises creep upon some by degrees. Some conviction that they are not right; some secret arrow lodged in the conscience, though they can scarcely tell whence it came; some alarm and terror commencing perhaps almost imperceptibly yet making gradual progress, and slowly wasting all their strength, wisdom, and righteousness away, until it issues in a death to all legal hope. I believe there are many in this state who cannot clearly and precisely trace out how this work began in their souls, and yet when we look at the fruit and result, we cannot doubt the result of the work. We see them brought down

into a state of helplessness and condemnation, cut off from all confidence in the flesh, and in sincerity and godly fear looking wholly and solely to their Maker.

II. But we read also that "in that day a man shall not only look to his Maker, but also that *his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.*"

The Lord Jesus is pointed out in the words, "the Holy One of Israel." It is His peculiar title, and as such is often connected with His other name of "*Redeemer.*" "Thus saith the Lord, your *Redeemer*, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 43:14), and with His title of "*Saviour*"—"I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy *Saviour*" (Isa. 43:3). Even devils acknowledged Him as "the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). He is "the Holy One of Israel" as God and man, being holy in underived Deity, and holy in sinless humanity; and He is "the Holy One of Israel" as God-man, the object of Israel's worship and love.

But the text shows that, till a man has experienced more or less of this wasting and consuming work in his soul, he never "has respect to the Holy One of Israel." Jesus is to him as a root out of dry ground; He has no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty that he should desire Him. Go where you will, you will find in this day many bright professors who talk much about Christ. His name is continually in their lips, but their heart is far from Him. They think they know Him, but they do not. They know Him doctrinally, after the flesh, in the letter, not in the manifestation of Himself to their souls. And depend upon it, a man neither will, nor can know anything experimentally of "the Holy One of Israel," until he is brought into circumstances of deep poverty and thorough destitution so as absolutely to need Him. "In that day" then, when the flesh is wasted from his bones, when he looks to his Maker, and sees little but wrath in prospect, and finds no strength nor help in self, "his eyes," under the Spirit's heavenly teaching, begin to have "respect to the Holy One of Israel." The Spirit of God, whose covenant office it is to take of the things of Jesus and show them to the soul, will often in that day shed a sweet, soft,

and yet powerful light on the things spoken of Jesus in the Word. He bears testimony to His blood as cleansing from all sin; to His righteousness as a justifying obedience; to His suitability to all a sinner's wants; to His condescension towards the vilest and worst; to the dignity of His glorious Person, and to the efficacy of His finished work. These things, as the Spirit begins to make them known to the soul, and brings a savour and taste of them into the heart, are looked upon with new eyes, heard with new ears, and received with new feelings. The man begins now to look to the Holy One of Israel as he never looked before. When he was "rich and increased with goods," he lacked the spiritual "eye-salve," whereby alone he could see Him. But when guilt is brought home to his conscience in order that Christ's blood may cleanse him, when he is made naked that Christ's righteousness may be his justifying robe, when he is stripped of all creature strength that the Saviour's strength may be made perfect in his weakness, robbed of his wisdom that Christ may be "of God made to him *wisdom*," as well as "sanctification and redemption;" then the Spirit begins to cast a sweet light into his heart, and to shed a savour of Jesus' name into his soul. He anoints his eyes to see, He opens his ears to hear, and touches his heart to feel. And now "his eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel." The expression means that his eyes shall look towards this Holy One, as a dependent on His bounty and favour, as we read Ps. 123:2, "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." And as this humble dependent looks toward and upon this holy and only Mediator, his faith brings in a sweetness such as he never felt before, hope springs up in the heart, the fears which disturbed him begin to give way, he receives strength to go forward, and in going forward he finds access to the presence of Jehovah. "In that day," then, the man who looks to his Maker, and whose eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel, receives such a sense, such a taste, such a sight, such a knowledge of the Person, blood, work, grace, and righteousness of Jesus as he never had before the Lord took him in hand, and made "the fatness of his flesh wax lean."

In the very name, "the Holy One of Israel," there is something the sweetness of which melts his heart. For what is he in himself

as a fallen child of Adam? A filthy, defiled, polluted wretch, unfit for the presence of God. And what can fit such an unclean, unworthy, deformed sinner for the eternal presence and enjoyment of the Triune Jehovah but such a Saviour as the Holy One of Israel, whose blood, as a holy fountain, cleanseth from all sin? The soul that stands in Him stands complete, without spot or blemish. And must not his heart leap and dance when with a measure of faith he is able to lay hold of this Holy One of Israel? Must it not needs bring relief to the wretch who feels himself nothing but a mass of filth and guilt in the eyes of a just God, to receive the Holy One of Israel with something of sweetness and power into his soul? It is the spiritual belief in, and inward reception of this Holy Mediator, that produces communion with all the three Persons in the Godhead. But this living faith in and spiritual reception of the only Mediator between God and man cannot exist until a man is brought into circumstances in which he needs the Holy One of Israel. Until he is emptied and stripped of all creature strength he cannot truly understand how, nor really desire that the strength of Christ may be made perfect in his weakness. So with Christ's wisdom, so with His righteousness, so with His blood, so with His love, so with His gracious presence—all are mere words, loose and floating ideas, dim, dreary conceptions, until poverty and need lie hard upon the soul, and the blessed Spirit makes known "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as so many experimental realities. It is this gracious discovery which endears to him the Holy One of Israel. And so I might trace it all through, and point out how in this man's experience there was no divine faith, no going out of hope, no flowing of affection toward the Holy One of Israel, till "that day," when he had no one else to look to, no hope in the creature; till all his righteousness failed him, and he felt that he must be saved by free grace, or eternally perish.

The verse immediately following the text is so closely connected with it, and so sweetly shows the fruits and effects of this work upon the soul, that I shall just drop a few remarks upon it before I draw to a conclusion. "And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers

have made, either the groves or the images."

1. We have here, as I have just hinted, some of the effects spoken of that follow a man's "having respect to the Holy One of Israel." "He shall not look *to the altars*, the work of his hands." "The altars" here spoken of point to a man's natural religion, which is the work of his hands, erected by creature wisdom and fleshly piety,—not God's workmanship, but manufactured by human industry. He was looking to these altars, the work of his own hands, on which he was daily offering sacrifice, or burning incense. God allowed the children of Israel but one "altar of burnt offering," which was anointed with the holy oil, and was "an altar most holy" (Exod. 40:10), and typical of Jesus, the only true altar (Heb. 13:10), and the only true sacrifice. All the heathen altars were to be utterly destroyed (Exod. 34:13). But fleshly religion is ever building altars, and "looking to them" as propitiating the favour of God, until that consuming and wasting work takes place of which I have spoken. "In that day a man has respect to the Holy One of Israel." Then he can no longer look to the altars, the works of his hands. He can no longer look to those offerings which once he could with pleasure and satisfaction bring before God. His righteousness is become filthy rags, and his prayers stink in his nostrils, his alms-deeds are polluted, and he can no longer thus have confidence in the flesh.

2. "Neither can he have respect to that which his fingers have made." With whatever skill his fingers may have moulded idols, built castles, hewed out cisterns, laid out earthly Edens, painted "pleasant pictures," this work upon his soul brings him from having any respect to them. His own fingers pollute all they touch and render them unclean, so that he can in that day no longer look on them with delight or pleasure.

3. "Nor can he look to *the groves*," those dark scenes of heathen pollution. "The groves," in ancient times, were the scenes of those pollutions which accompanied the worship of Baal, and of those bloody sacrifices in which parents offered their children to Moloch. God commanded the children of Israel to cut them down



and burn them with fire (Deut. 7:5; 12:3). Thus spiritually, "the groves" seem to point to the dark haunts of indulged sin, which always accompany the idolatrous worship of self. Sin and self-righteousness are inseparable companions. But in that day when the altars of self-righteousness are overthrown, and "the eyes have respect to the Holy One of Israel," a man cannot look to these groves with delight, nor practise those secret deeds of iniquity in which he could willingly indulge while he had a name to live but was dead.

4. Neither can he look to "*the images,*" for he must have God Himself. The natural representations of God, the self-imagined shape and form of godliness, the vain and delusive superstitions which the carnal mind bodies forth, the imitations of grace, faith, and godliness—all these "images" which thousands worship, "in that day" a man no more looks to. He can no longer be satisfied with the image; he must have the reality, and that experimentally felt in his own soul.

If this be a correct interpretation of the text and context, we see how it gives a man no reasonable ground to believe he knows anything savingly in his soul, who has not experienced this work upon his heart; who has not seen, more or less, all his creature religion cut down to the very stump; who has not felt all religion taken away except that which stands in the sovereign power and operation of God in the soul, an operation which leaves nature not a single thing of which it can boast; which takes away all creature hope, and does not even leave it a sherd to take water from the pit. Do not the words decisively show that until a man is brought to have "his glory made thin, and the fatness of his flesh to wax lean," he has never yet looked to his Maker, nor his eyes had respect to the Holy One of Israel, that he has never turned his back upon the altars of creature religion, nor cast his idols to the moles and to the bats?

The grand question to be settled is whether our religion tallies and coincides with this divine pattern. This cannot be always measured by the depth and clearness of the experience. A man

may experimentally know what I have been attempting to describe, and yet his experience shall seem so confused, he shall be so little able to trace out to his own satisfaction how this work commenced and was carried on, with its present fruits and results; it may have been so much by fits and starts, and there may have been so much carnality and sin, pride and hypocrisy mingled with it all, that he shall be much puzzled to decide that he has really experienced it. And yet when we come to examine the fruits and effects of this experience which so puzzled and perplexed him, we shall see in him a sincerity, a humility, a breathing after communion with God, a crying out for salvation, a sight and sense of his own misery and wretchedness, and, accompanying these things, a faith in, and a hanging upon, the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, which we shall in vain look for among many who speak boldly and confidently of their standing and security. For after all, the point we must come to is this—*what are the effects?* If we say we are God's people, and profess to believe the doctrines of grace, our profession is idle and vain unless we have come unto the knowledge of truth in a right way; and if so, there will be certain marks of this heavenly teaching. Are these marks to be found in us? Has our glory been made thin? Has the fatness of our flesh waxed lean? Has judgment been carried on in the secret court of conscience? And has the effect been to make us look to our Maker, and cry to Him with sighs and tears, convinced that nothing but His almighty hand can deliver us from the lowest hell? And have we been brought "to have respect to the Holy One of Israel?" To feel there is in Jesus what we never saw before, and to discover in Him a beauty, glory, and preciousness which we never knew before? The way in which these things were made known may at times not seem to be very clear; but was there not a time when you began to feel that much, if not most, of your knowledge was mere head knowledge? your profession mere pretension before men? When thus stripped and wounded you began to seek the Lord as you never sought Him before; did not Jesus begin to show Himself to you as He never did before? Was there not a going out of hope, and a stream of spiritual affection toward Him? And what has been the effect of falling out of conceit with self,

and falling in love with Him? Has it not been to forsake the altars you have made; to turn your back upon creature religion; to give up those things God hates; to have no respect to that which your fingers have made; to abandon the dark groves, and all the images you worshipped, that there may be allowedly none but the Lord Jesus?

Here, then, is the pattern to which our religion must be conformable, if we are to see God in glory. If a man cannot lay his religion down side by side with this, what evidence has he that God has been at work in his soul? Wherever the Spirit of God has been at work, there will be more or less conformity to the pattern which God has traced out in the Scriptures. If a man's religion is not conformed to this, he will find it will let him down one day to the lowest hell. The people of God cannot take their religion upon credit; they cannot be satisfied with the endorsement of this or that good man. They must have their religion wrought by God Himself. They are often exercised as to whence their religion came. Do you not find it so, and that your religion costs you many exercises? If, for instance, you are cast down, you are exercised whether it springs from godly sorrow for sin. If you are comforted, you cannot take the comfort for granted; you must have it weighed up in the gospel balance. If you meet with providential deliverances, you cannot take them as so many certain evidences that all is right with your soul. So that every step you take you have to examine, and weigh it whether it be of God. The dead professors, the hypocrites in Zion, never have their religion tried and weighed up in this way. They know nothing of these inward exercises. They take things for granted; they nestle under some good man's wing, or get their religion endorsed by some minister, and are satisfied. But the people of God must have testimonies from the Lord Himself; and they will often be sharply exercised whether they have that work in their souls which will stand in the trying hour. And if in answer to their cries the Lord is pleased to shine into their souls, and raise up clear tokens that it is, it fills their hearts with gratitude, sinks the things of time and sense, and lifts up their affections to that blessed fountain whence these testimonies came down. Thus

those very things which seem against them are for them, and they derive their sweetest consolations out of their heaviest afflictions. Their trying path they would not change with all its bitter things for the smooth, flowery path in which they see thousands walk, knowing that a religion without trials and temptations will only lead the soul down into a never-ending hell. Thus at times they feel good can spring out of their exercises, and would rather be all their days a tempted, tried people, and bear those things which God inflicts, than walk in a path which seemeth right in the eyes of a man, and at the end find eternal destruction. They would rather have those chastisements which prove they are children and not bastards, than walk in a flesh-pleasing way of which the end is eternal damnation.

## The Day of Power

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Allie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 7, 1844

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 29:18, 19

What a picture does the Holy Ghost draw in this chapter (Isaiah 29) of a professing church "having a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof!" And with what a solemn woe does it open: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" Ariel means "the light of God," and is the name given to Jerusalem, as being the place where the Lord specially manifested himself; for "out of Zion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:3.) But the Lord saw into what an awful state Jerusalem had fallen; and therefore, though the Holy Ghost still calls her by the name of Ariel, "the light of God," viewing her according to the position in which he had originally placed her, yet he pronounces a woe on her, because that light was become dim, and burnt not as brightly as when David dwelt there. He therefore says, "Add ye year to year"—go on still in your dead and lifeless profession; "let them kill sacrifices"—let all the forms still be observed, but think not that these things are acceptable in my holy eyes, or that I can be satisfied with the *form* while the *power* is wanting.

The former part of this chapter is obscure, and probably contains much that remains to be fulfilled; but the latter part is sufficiently plain. God the Spirit files in it an awful bill of charges against the professing church. Let us see what they are.

We read, then, of a *general sleep*. (v. 10.) "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered:" and the

effect of this general slumber, which the Lord thus solemnly declared to have proceeded from himself in a way of judgment, was, that neither the learned nor the unlearned knew the power of God's truth. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." The learned could not read the book, for it was "sealed;" and the unlearned could not, because they were "not learned:" and thus, secondly, the effect of general sleep, was *general ignorance*.

The third charge which the Holy Ghost files against the professing church, is *general hypocrisy*. "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me; but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." The first step then, in the apostasy of the professing church, was judicial sleep; the second, as its effect, general ignorance; and the third, as the fruit of general ignorance, was general hypocrisy; they drew near to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him; and their fear was not the godly, filial fear which is a fruit of the Spirit, but a base counterfeit, taught by the precept of men.

The fourth charge is *general perversion and confusion*: "Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay." Right and wrong, bitter and sweet, good and evil, light and darkness, were all confounded; truth was perverted, and error substituted for it; and thus universal confusion prevailed.

The fifth charge is that of *general rebellion*. "For shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he hath no understanding?" The creature dared to arraign God's *power*, "He made me not;" "My own will and power made me a Christian;" and to doubt God's *wisdom*, "He hath no understanding;" "Man's wisdom outshines the Lord's."

See, then, what an awful bill of charges the Holy Ghost here files against Ariel, the professing church of God—general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion. Can we find a counterpart to this picture? Do you think that any church ever existed since that time resembling the one which the Holy Ghost has here described? Yes: the professing church of the day in which we live presents a perfect counterpart to the picture here given; nor could we have a portrait of it more minute in all the details, or a more graphic, vivid, or powerful description of what the professing church is in the day and generation in which our lot is cast. Are not the five marks I have mentioned now so plainly stamped on its forehead, that he who runs may read?

Has God, then, abandoned his people? Has he forsaken his church? Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" No: he has reserved to himself "a remnant." Therefore we read in the text, "*In that day,*" (that day of general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion), "*in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*" We see here a gleam of sunshine breaking through the black cloud that overspreads the earth; the Lord still appears on behalf of his people, whom, that they may not be here mistaken, he here describes by peculiar marks.

If we look, then, at the words of the text, we see four characters mentioned in it—the *deaf*, the *blind*, the *meek*, and the *poor*; and we find certain promises addressed to each and all of them: the "deaf shall hear," the "blind shall see," the "meek shall increase their joy in the Lord," and "the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

In speaking, therefore, from these words, I shall attempt to trace out, as far as the Lord shall enable me, the characters mentioned, and the promises addressed to them. And as it might create confusion if I were to separate the character too far from the promise, I shall endeavour to take up the text as it lies before me, and, following God's order, examine the separate clauses as the Spirit has here revealed them. And may he give me "the tongue of the learned," and you the ear of the wise, and crown the whole with his special savour and blessing to my and your consciences.

I.—The text commences, "*In that day.*" It cannot have escaped your observation, if you are an attentive reader of the Scriptures, that the phrase, "in that day," is much made use of by the prophets, and especially by Isaiah, and that great and glorious things are usually connected with this day. Now, if you will look carefully to the connection where the phrase, "in that day," is used, you will find, for the most part, that two distinct things are spoken of as taking place in it; and that it is either a day of trouble, or a day of joy. For instance, we read (Isa. 2:11), "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, for the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." This day, we read, is to be "upon all the towering cedars of Lebanon, the lofty oaks of Bashan, the proud ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures;" and the effect of that day is, that "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." Again, we read (Jer. 30:7), "Alas! for *that day* is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." We read also of "the day of the Lord" sometimes as a day of darkness, as Amos 5:18-20, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" But, in other places, we find "the day of the Lord" spoken of as a day of deliverance, and therefore connected with joy, praise, and thanksgiving. "*In that day* shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." (Isaiah 26:1.)



"*In that day* thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wert angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isaiah 12:1.) But some might ask, "How comes it to pass, that the same expression, "that day," can refer to things so opposite? Why does the Holy Ghost speak of *one* day, when the things that occur in it are so completely different? How can darkness and light, sorrow and joy, affliction and consolation, all happen in the same day?" It is not so. That is not the meaning of the Holy Ghost. But by the expression he means a *day of power*. It is not the same day as to *time*, but as to *operation*; "the day of the Lord" is different from every other day; for it is the day in which the Lord stretches out his hand, makes bare his arm, and conspicuously appears. The same expression is therefore used when the Lord lays low, or when he raises up; when he makes poor, or when he makes rich; when he condemns by the law, or justifies by the gospel. Each is "the day of the Lord," because it is a day of power; either power to kill, or power to heal; power to pull down, or power to build up. When, therefore, we find the expression, "in that day," or "the day of the Lord," we may assign to it this meaning—a *day of power*, because it is a day which the Lord calls his own.

But which of these two meanings does it bear in the text? Evidently a day of deliverance—a day of mercy for the church of God. "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book."

II.—We come, then, at once to one of the characters before hinted at as descriptive of a living soul, and to a promise suitable to such. But what are we to understand by the expression, "*deaf*?" Whom does it represent? I think it describes the elect of God in two points of view—what they are *before*, and what they are *after* the quickening work of God the Spirit on their consciences. The elect, in common with all men, before God gives them spiritual life, have no ears to hear what the Lord speaks; are utterly inattentive to all he has declared in his word of truth, are deaf to his providences, promises, warnings, and precepts. But the promise runs, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book." "The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isaiah

35:5); and then, and not till then, have they ears to hear what God speaks.

But there is another sense, and that which I think the Holy Ghost means here, in which a person is called "deaf," and that is feelingly and experimentally so, according to those words, (and striking words they are,) "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." (Isaiah 43:8.) What a strange people must these be. Blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. And they are to be brought forth conspicuously as a strange and peculiar people, that they may be "men wondered at." Naturally it would be a contradiction, and they would be monsters; but spiritually, no contradiction exists, for they feel their blindness and yet see, and feel their deafness and yet hear.

Now, it is with us spiritually, as it was with Paul literally and actually—the first entrance of light makes us feel blind. Did not the light from heaven which shined round about him as he was journeying to Damascus blind him and was he not three days without sight? So spiritually, we never feel ourselves blind till we begin to see: as long as we think we have light, we are in darkness, but immediately that we begin to see, we begin to feel blind; and when we begin to hear, we begin to feel deaf. The reason of this is, that a new faculty is given us to see and hear with; and this faculty being as yet weak and feeble, and yet we being able to see and hear with no other, are made to feel how blind we as yet are to the blessed truths of the gospel, and how deaf to hear anything for our peace, joy, and comfort.

Now, the Lord says, "In that day," the day of power, when he stretches forth his hand, to do his own work, "shall the deaf," the feelingly and experimentally deaf, "hear the words of the book." What is "the book" here mentioned? It is the book on which I now lay my hand, the sacred Scriptures, the revelation of God's mind and will to the children of men. In this book are "words;" and those words the experimentally deaf are brought to hear, "in that day" when God the Spirit unstops their ears. But what are the

words which the deaf hear? The expression "words" has a very comprehensive signification; for in God's book are words of thunder, and words of a still small voice; words that terrify and alarm, and words that comfort and console; words from Mount Sinai, and words from Mount Zion; words like a two-edged sword, and words that drop like the dew and rain into the parched soil. "The deaf shall hear the words of the book." And the first words which they hear are from Mount Sinai; those words which when the people heard them, they "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for they could not endure that which was commanded; the words that manifest the spirituality of God's law, the holiness of God's character, the sinfulness of sin, and the vengeance due to the transgressor." These words of the book the deaf hear "in that day" when the Lord puts forth his hand, and unstops their ears. And they find, as king Josiah did, when the book of the law was discovered in the temple, that they are "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" and have a power "to pull down and to destroy," according to one branch of Jeremiah's commission. (Jer. 1:10.) But the words of the book which the deaf hear "in that day" are for the most part comfortable words: for they are usually quick enough to hear all that makes against them, but are deaf to what makes for them. The words, therefore, which they want to hear are those which bring peace, pardon, love, and salvation into their conscience; and because they cannot hear these words of the book to their soul's comfort, they feel to be deaf. How often has the case of the poor, tried child of God been described from the pulpit, and yet he could not receive the testimony to his soul's comfort! How often have the very invitations and promises suitable to his case been laid before him, and yet he could not hear them for himself, because he felt his need of the power of God to apply them to his conscience.

But, "in that day," the day in which the Lord speaks, "shall the deaf hear the words of the book;" the book of divine revelation, that shews forth the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the book where God has unfolded his love in the Person and work of Jesus; the book gemmed and studded with promises, like the

stars in the midnight sky; the book written for the consolation and edification of God's living family. "In that day," that day of general profession and darkness to the church, but of power to God's people, "in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book." And when they hear the words of the book, so as to have them sealed on their conscience and applied to their heart, they find a new Bible, a new God, a new heaven, and a new salvation. To "hear the words of the book," coming with divine power into their souls from the lips of God becomes all their desire. It is not eloquence, nor wisdom, nor learning that they care to hear, but the words of the book sealed with a divine power. Let God only speak out of the book, it is enough, for "where the word of a King is there is power." A promise is sweet, if he but speak it; a rebuke is felt, if he but apply it; a precept is obeyed, if he but lay it on the conscience; and every truth is precious, if he but make it known.

III.—But another character is spoken of in the text, and another promise is connected with that character, "The eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." What a strange thing it is, that, according to the Lord's words, "those who see not shall see, and those who see are made blind." (John 9:39.) What a strange display of God's sovereignty that all professors nearly think themselves right but the people of God, many of whom are harassed with fears lest they be wrong altogether. What a strange display of divine sovereignty, that many who think themselves going to heaven are going to hell, and many who fear they are going to hell are going to heaven; that many who think themselves wise and in the light are in ignorance and darkness, while many who feel themselves ignorant and foolish have true knowledge and wisdom.

But what a painful thing it is to feel ourselves blind; to want to see, and find a vail over our eyes; to walk in darkness, and not see those things which we most desire to behold. How the soul at times groans under felt darkness and blindness. How it longs to look into, and thus realize the precious things of Jesus. Now those who thus groan and sigh under a sense of felt darkness and blindness, are the people to whom the promise is applicable, "The

eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

You observe two expressions here made use of, "*obscurity*" and "*darkness*." Some of God's people are in "obscurity," and some are in "darkness;" "darkness" being a deeper shade of "obscurity," and "obscurity" a lighter shade of "darkness." Thus, some of God's people are as if in early twilight, or the first faint dawn of day; others "walk in darkness, and have no light;" they have not yet reached obscurity, that being a midway term between light and darkness, the breaking up of the night, the first symptom of the morning.

But what do those in "obscurity" see? After God the Spirit has made them feel their lost and ruined state, the first thing which they see is, *the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour*; how God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." After they have seen "light in God's light," so as to feel and know the thorough wreck and ruin of creature righteousness and false religion, they see out of obscurity, in the light of the Spirit, the Person of Christ, as the Intercessor between God and man, "the Mediator of the new covenant," and, flowing out to him, they see "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." But these views are at present feeble and dim, enough to break the darkness, but little beyond; enough to draw on, but not to satisfy; to see where the sun is, but not sun-rise. Many of God's people are here; they have seen and felt a sweetness and suitability in the blood and righteousness, love and grace of Jesus; but these have been like objects seen in the twilight, not perceived clearly and distinctly, the eyes being still in obscurity. Others, again, of God's people are in darkness, so as not yet to know and feel the way of escape from the wrath to come, or how God can be just, and yet save their souls. But the promise is given to each; their eyes (and if they have eyes they cannot be blind) shall see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." As God the Spirit brings the precious things of Christ near, and drops a savour of these eternal realities into the soul, the eyes see, and the heart tastes the sweetness of the things presented to the sight. And what a wonderful thing it is to see, in

the light of the Spirit, the way of escape from the wrath to come, pardon for the guilty, and righteousness for the sinner. What a glorious sight, when the eyes of the blind are first opened to see the way of salvation through the intercession of the Son of God. It is indeed at first "out of obscurity:" they see dimly but truly, the glorious Person of Christ, in whom all the perfections of Jehovah harmonize; the blood of Jesus, as the blood of the Son of God, atoning for the most aggravated offences; his glorious righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" and they see that those who are accepted in his Person, washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness, shall assuredly escape from the wrath to come. These things they see not in their judgment, or by the exercise of their natural intellect, but in the light and teaching of God's Spirit, making it known to their consciences. Now this is the only light that can satisfy a man who feels himself blind. Thus the sensation of blindness makes him prize spiritual eye-salve; the feeling of ignorance makes him value spiritual knowledge; groaning under darkness makes him prize the least gleam of spiritual light. And thus, in God's mysterious dealings, previous darkness and obscurity make the light dear to the eyes, and the things presented in that light sweet and precious to the soul.

How suitable are such promises to those who stand in need of them. Do I feel myself a poor deaf creature that can hear nothing to my soul's comfort but what God speaks with power? Do I find all that drops from the mouth of man to be utterly powerless to do my soul good? Do I want the Lord to preach his own gospel to my heart, and proclaim his own mercy, grace, and truth to my soul? If I were not often thus deaf; if I could hear every voice, listen to every word, grasp every promise, close in with every invitation, I should not want God to speak. It is, then, because we feel our deafness, that we want a supernatural voice to speak to us; and we thus learn to prize the words of the book, when God the Spirit is pleased to speak them home to the heart. Again, should I want spiritual eye-salve, to have my eyes opened, to feel the veil taken off, if I did not often feel blind? If I never walked in darkness, if I had no obscurity; if I could see what I pleased and

when I pleased, what interest could I have, what interest could I wish to have in a promise like this? Is it not, then, worth being deaf to have an interest in such a promise? Is it not worth not hearing a single word for years, if God speak at the last? Is it not worth groping for the wall like the blind for months together, if at the end God fulfil the promise, and give the blind to see out of obscurity and darkness? These lessons, my friends, we cannot learn from man but from the special teachings and leadings of God; and that is one grand reason why the Lord permits his dear people so often to feel deaf and blind, that he may have all the honour of giving them ears and eyes; for he will not give his honour to man; he will not share his glory with the creature; he will have it all his own, for he is "a jealous God." Is not this the reason why you so seldom hear with power? Is it not to teach you what power is? Why do we often painfully feel ourselves to be such blind ignorant wretches? Is it not because we are deaf to every voice but his, and blind to every sight but the light of his countenance, and the revelation of his blessed Spirit? It is very profitable, then, to feel thus deaf and blind. There are some here perhaps who have been hearing ministers for years, and yet have never heard to their soul's joy. But is not this far better than to hear any body and every body? Now you cry to God, "Speak, Lord, to my heart through thy servant, or him whom thou shalt send; let the whole earth be still, and thou alone speak; do speak, Lord, for thou knowest my case." And perhaps, there are some here that have been sighing and groaning day after day for months, who feel there are none that can exceed them in ignorance and folly; and of all who have made a profession for years, they think none can have made so little progress in divine things as themselves. But these painful exercises make us prize the Lord's light; and what a sweet and cheering thing light is, when it comes with divine power into the conscience!

IV.—But we pass on to the next verse of the text, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." There is a very sweet and experimental connection between the two verses of the text: "the meek" and "the poor" are closely connected with, and in fact are

the same people as "the deaf" and "the blind." But what is it to be *meek*? It is not to be meek by nature (for such there are), but to be meekened by God's grace, by the dealings of the Spirit in the conscience. To be meek, a man must be brought down in his spirit, made humble, broken, and contrite before God; his proud thoughts must come down, his towering spirit be laid low in the dust, and his heart be softened by the grace of God. Two things work together to make a man spiritually meek—a knowledge of God, and a knowledge of himself; a sense of his own deafness, and God making him to hear "the words of the book;" a feeling of his own blindness, and the Lord enabling him to see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." Do you think there is a greater pride to be found anywhere than the pride of knowledge in one, and the pride of profession in another part of the outward church? You may find greater heights of worldly pride, but not more towering castles, not stronger bulwarks, than those of dead religious profession. But until these two castles are laid low in the dust, we shall be proud of our understanding, and of our attainments; of our gifts, or of our profession; and the more we walk in this path, the prouder we get. In order, then, to meeken us, this pride must be abased; and how better can this be done, than by being made to feel how deaf we are when God does not speak, and how blind we are when he does not give light? Suppose I, or any other minister, could always go into the pulpit with light and life, power and feeling, thoughts and words at our command, would it not make us proud? How humbling, then, are barren and unfruitful seasons! But when the Lord gives light to see out of obscurity and darkness the things that do our souls good, this enlarges and strengthens our hearts. Do not, then, these alternations and changes meeken the soul? Can pride live in such an atmosphere? Can the pride of profession, of knowledge, of piety, and so on, those great sins of the professing church, live and reign in the heart where deafness and blindness are felt alternately with God's power? If these things are but known in the conscience—our deafness, and God speaking in that deafness,—our blindness, and God giving us light in that darkness,—they lay the pride of profession and of knowledge low.



But what a blessed grace the grace of meekness is—to feel meek and soft in spirit before God. There are many persons towering I know not where, above all darkness and ignorance, but do we find meekness in them? The Lord give you and me meekness before him, for he delighteth in such: let them enjoy their vain confidence, "He dwelleth with the lowly." But what a great deal of discipline it takes to bring down our towering pride, and at all meeken our heart. What a series of sorrows, trials, temptations, and afflictions do we need to break us down. What a succession of spiritual dealings is necessary to bring true meekness into a man's conscience, to soften and humble his spirit before God. Now you will observe these meek have their peculiar joy, "the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord." We know nothing of joy in the Lord, till we know this; for what communion can there be between a proud professor and a broken-hearted Jesus? or what fellowship between unhumbled, uncircumcised hearts, and the "Man of sorrows" groaning in Gethsemane's garden? There can be no communion with him, no participation of his spirit, till we are brought down in meekness and contrition to his feet; and then there will be a sacred joy in the Lord, which we can know nothing of till we are meek, humble, and broken-hearted, and till we feel that we have nothing and are nothing. Until we feel ourselves the vilest of the vile, and as such creep to his cross, and lie humbly there, we can know no "joy in the Lord." We may joy in our knowledge, in our profession, in our attainments, in our vain-confidence; but we can have no "joy in the Lord" till he reveals himself, manifests his love, discovers his glorious perfections, and makes known his atoning blood. And until we are meekened, we are not fit for it; the vessel must first be emptied of its poisonous contents, its venomous ingredients, before the real wine of God's grace can be poured in. So that the meek who "joy in the Lord," can only joy in him as they are brought down into a resemblance to him. They must be meekened before they can feel his presence, taste his love, or know the power of his resurrection; and in proportion as they are thus meekened, do they enter into these things, and realize their sweetness and blessedness. And it is observable, that these meek and broken-hearted ones, who have some joy in the Lord, (it is

not defined how much) are connected with, and indeed are the same persons as those who are deaf, and yet hear the words of the book, and the blind who see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

But it is said that "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." They may not have much joy, but if they have any at all, it is "in the Lord:" it may be little, but it is real. Now you know, if we are honest men naturally, we would rather have one real piece of gold, one sovereign from the mint, than a thousand counterfeits. So our "joy in the Lord" may be feeble and weak, but we cannot take up with any base imitation of it, can rejoice in nothing else, cannot take pleasure in sin, or in having a name to live while dead. If we ever have any joy, any sweet sensations, any meltings of heart, any thing to comfort or encourage our souls, it is "in the Lord," and not in ourselves; in what he has done for us, and not what we have done for him.

V.—*"And the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."* What a strange expression is this,—*"the poor among men."* How can I better illustrate it than by what is now before me? Here is a congregation of people; but all here present are not poor, naturally or spiritually; yet there are poor among them. So *"the poor among men"* point to a remnant out of a multitude, a few berries on the top of the uttermost bough. The professing church, as a body, is buried, as I before observed, in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion; and among these *"men"* the poor seem scarcely worth a thought; among those heroes and giants in their own opinion, what room is their for the *"poor,"* who are nothing and have nothing in themselves but felt guilt, ruin, and wretchedness? But the Lord has promised, that *"the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."* And who is this *"Holy One of Israel"* but the Lord Jesus, for he is *"the Holy One chosen out of Israel,"* the Holy One who died for Israel, the Holy One in whom all Israel is justified and shall glory. *"The poor among men"* cannot rejoice in themselves, for they have nothing to rejoice in; and having nothing in themselves to rejoice in, they rejoice in *"the Holy One*

of Israel," who of God is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Until men are made experimentally poor, they will never rejoice in "the Holy One of Israel." Take it naturally. The wealthy man rejoices in his wealth, in the luxuries and pleasures that wealth procures; and the more wealth he has, the more scope there is for all that money commands. But the poor man cannot rejoice in these things; he has no luxuries, for he can scarcely get necessaries, and therefore he cannot rejoice in what he has not. So spiritually; some professors rejoice in their great knowledge, but "the poor among men" have none: others in their consistency, but these cannot glory in theirs, for they find sin tarnishing every thought, word, and action; others rejoice in a long course of good deeds, and active exertions; but these cannot, for alas, alas, they are poverty-stricken, they have never done anything that they can call good, and they can no more rejoice in their poverty than a poor man naturally can rejoice in the want of all the necessaries of life. But when the Lord is presented to their view, in all his glorious offices and covenant characters, as "mighty to save;" when they see Jesus by the eye of faith, and can embrace him in the arms of affection, feel a clinging to him and a looking up to him; if they rejoice at all, it is in such a Friend, such a Mediator, such an Advocate, such an Intercessor. But till they are made to feel themselves poor, they will rejoice in every thing but him; nor can they rejoice in him till they have ceased to rejoice in themselves. See then how intimately these characters are bound up together in the bundle of life, with the Lord the Lamb. The Lord give you and me to feel that we are spiritually such.

Let me, then, by way of summing up, notice, that these characters, the *deaf*, the *blind*, the *meek*, and the *poor*, all meet in one person; and if God be our Teacher, we shall have the feelings of these characters internally and experimentally wrought in us. We shall be often "deaf," yet sometimes hear the words of the book with power in our conscience; sometimes we shall feel the reality and weight, and at others the sweetness of the words of truth; and shall only want the Lord to speak to hear glorious and comforting words that shall raise us up, revive our heart,

draw up our affections, and advance us heavenward. Can we find we are this character? Then we shall find the next also in our heart, for they all meet in one person, and we shall be "the blind" brought to "see out of darkness and obscurity." Are our evidences, then, often obscure, and have we "to grope for the wall like the blind," not seeing our paths plain or clear, and yet sometimes have sweet views of Jesus as the only way of salvation; see his outstretched arm, his atoning blood, dying love, and something of his preciousness, beauty and glory? And what as to "meekness?" What do we know of that? It is a part of meekness to feel and mourn over our pride, for the proud do not know it, nor are grieved about it. Are there, then, any seasons when we feel broken down, meekened, and softened before the Lord? And as to the fourth character, "the poor among men," surely we can come in there. If the Lord be our Teacher, he has certainly brought us there, to know that we are poor and needy, having nothing and being nothing, and can find nothing to rest upon or boast in, but "the Holy One of Israel." Do we not sometimes feel a solemn joy and sweetness in looking to the "Holy One of Israel?" Are we wholly destitute of love towards him? Is there any joy in our souls that he should be the "Holy One of Israel?" Would we wish him to be any other than Holy, and love his holiness, though we are all polluted and filthy?

These, then, are the characters exempted from the general woe, "Woe to Ariel, woe to Ariel, the city where David dwelt," the woe pronounced in God's word against the professing church which is wrapped up in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion.

If the Lord has done this much for us, given us ears to hear when deaf, eyes to see when blind, meekened our spirit, and given us to rejoice in the "Holy One of Israel," he pronounces no woe against us; he has exempted us from the threatenings denounced against the professing church; he has made us a peculiar people, and promised us every blessing that we truly need, though utterly undeserving of them. And what he has promised, will he not make good?

## THE DAY SPRING FROM ON HIGH

Preached on Sunday Morning, July 13, 1845, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78, 79

Unbelief is a damning sin where it reigns; but not a damning sin where it exists, and is opposed. In other words, it is the **dominion**, not the **existence** of unbelief in the heart, that excludes from the kingdom of heaven. The reprobate are an instance of **the former**; for they live and die under the power of unbelief; as the Lord said, "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). And the quickened elect are an instance of **the latter**.

We can scarcely find recorded two more striking instances of the existence of unbelief in the hearts of God's people than that of Thomas, and of Zacharias. Yet the very unbelief of Thomas, in whose heart the spirit of infidelity worked so powerfully that he would not believe that the Lord had risen from the dead except he should "see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side," was doubtless overruled not only for the good of the church in all time, but for the good also of the unbelieving disciple, when his infidelity was effectually overcome by the power of the Lord communicating faith to his soul through the words, "Be not faithless, but believing." His belief became all the stronger for having been so powerfully assailed.

And so, doubtless, it was with Zacharias, who, as the penalty of his unbelief, was shut up for nine months in mute silence. For when the Lord loosed his tongue, "he was filled," we read, "with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied" in that blessed hymn of praise

which we have recorded at the end of the first chapter of Luke's Gospel.

The question, then, is not whether we have unbelief in our heart, but whether this unbelief is resisted. If we have nothing there but unbelief, woe be to us! But if this indwelling unbelief is by a principle of grace opposed, resisted, and struggled against, the conflict will end eventually in victory.

We may notice three things in the text;

I.—A **declaration of a most blessed fact**—"The day-spring from on high hath visited us."

II.—**The source and origin of that blessed fact**—"Through the tender mercy of our God."

III.—**Its divine fruits and consequences**—"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace."

I.—In looking at these three points connected with, and springing out of the text, I shall rather invert their order; and consider, **first, the original spring and source** of the blessings mentioned in the text. This is set forth in the words, "**Through the tender mercy of our God.**" Mercy is the source and fountain of all our spiritual blessings. And O, how sweet, suitable, and precious is that divine attribute, mercy, to those who know and feel themselves sinners! There is no attribute, no perfection in the Godhead so suitable, so acceptable to those who are stung with guilt, as, that the Lord is "merciful and gracious" (Ex. 34:6); and that "there is forgiveness with Him that he may be feared." But we must ever bear in mind, that we can enter spiritually and experimentally into this divine attribute only in proportion to our felt need of it.

**"Mercy is welcome news indeed To those who guilty stand;"** but to no others. Before, therefore, we can see the

depth, feel the sweetness, and drink into the preciousness of mercy, we must know by heart-felt experience that we are sinners before a holy and just God. And the deeper we are sunk into a knowledge of our state as sinners before God, the more are we in a situation to prize that blessed attribute, **mercy**.

But what is mercy? It embraces several particulars.

1.—It embraces a feeling of **pity and compassion**. But pity and compassion do not fill up the whole idea of mercy; for we read, that God's "tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). Thus the Lord, in sparing Nineveh, "remembered even the cattle" (Jon. 4:11). And when he caused the waters of the deluge to assuage it was because he "remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark" (Gen. 8:1). There is in the bosom of their Creator mercy and pity even for the brute creation. As full of mercy. He also "relieveth the fatherless and widow" (Ps. 146:9); and "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. 10:18).

2. We must, therefore, add to the idea of pity and compassion, another mark, that of **pardon**, in order to show what mercy is as extended to the family of God. For the Lord's people are **sinners**; and as such, being transgressors of God's holy law, need pardon and forgiveness. This, then, is the Lord's own description of himself; "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**" (Ex. 34:6, 7).

3. But in order to complete the full description of mercy, we must ever view it as flowing **through the blood and obedience of Immanuel**. Mercy was not, like creation a mere display of an attribute of Jehovah. If I may use the expression, it cost the Godhead a price: "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). It was not in the Father the mere exercise of compassion; it cost him the gift of his only-begotten Son. It cost the Son his own agonizing sufferings and death. It cost the Holy Ghost this price: that he should come and take up his abode in the heart of

sinner, and should "bear with their manners in the wilderness." Thus mercy is not simply pity and compassion, nor is it the mere pardon of sin; but as flowing through the channel of Immanuel's precious obedience, it cost the Three-one God an infinite, unspeakable price.

But there is an expression in the text that heightens, and casts a sweet light upon this mercy. It is there called **tender mercy**; literally, as it is in the margin, "**bowels of mercy**." Not mere mercy; but "tender mercy." Not cold and naked mercy; but mercy flowing forth out of the bowels of divine compassion. Now nothing but "tender mercy" could ever look down with compassion upon the sons of men, or pluck out of the depths of the fall such ruined wretches.

How little do we know of what we really are in the sight of a holy God! We so swim in the element of sin; it is so our natural atmosphere, that we have no conception what it is in the eyes of a pure Jehovah, who live above this atmosphere. I will endeavour to convey my meaning by an illustration. We might be called to go out of the pure bright air into the dissecting room of a hospital, or to visit the cell of a prison, or, what is perhaps far worse, to dive into some of the haunts of poverty and misery that abound in this metropolis. What a sensation of disgust and recoil should we feel at witnessing the filth and stench! But the inhabitants feel it not; the pestilential atmosphere which they inhale in their cellars and garrets is not perceived by them; custom has rendered them insensible to it. It is the contrast with the pure air that makes us so susceptible of the change. So, the holy Three-One God dwells in an atmosphere of an infinite and eternal purity, which no finite being can comprehend; for the scripture says, "He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). But we sunken wretches, the loathsome spawn of a fallen parent, are so cradled and bred in an atmosphere of impurity; sin is so our element, which we draw in with every breath, and we are so habituated to it, that we by nature are as insensible of the pestilential atmosphere in which we dwell, as the fever patient of the smell of his close apartment.



Thus, we cannot fully enter into the breadth, the length, the depth, and height of the tender mercy of God because we cannot fully enter into the depth of our fall. The deep precipice, the awful gulph, the bottomless abyss of man's corruption can never be fathomed by the line of the creature. But just in proportion as the Spirit of God affords us some dim and feeble views of divine purity; and contrasts that divine purity with the filth and impurity of our debased nature, do we begin to learn a little of what that mercy is which stooped so low as to under-bottom the depth of the fall, and place the everlasting arms beneath our polluted souls to extricate them from eternal perdition.

But to view mercy in its real character, we must **go to Calvary**. It is not sufficient to contrast the purity of God with the impurity of man. That indeed affords us some view of what mercy must be to reach the depths of the fall—a side-face of that precious attribute. But to see its full face shining upon the redeemed, we must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Ghost, to see Immanuel, "God with us," grovelling in Gethsemane's garden. We must view him naked upon the cross, groaning, bleeding, agonizing, dying. We must view Godhead and manhood united together in the Person of a suffering Jesus; and the power of the Godhead bearing up the suffering manhood. We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and blood, and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the sight, in order to enter a little into the depths of the "tender mercy" of God. Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart. Law and terrors do but harden, All the while they work alone; But a sense of blood-bought pardon Soon dissolves a heart of stone.

Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance, will not soften or break a sinner's heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel, and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him—this, and this only will break his heart all to pieces. Thus, only by bringing a sweet sense of love and blood into his heart does the Blessed

Spirit show a sinner some of the depths of the tender mercy of God.

II.—But we pass on to consider that solemn declaration, that blessed fact contained in the words—"**Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.**" There is a connection, you will observe, betwixt the "tender mercy of God," and the visiting of "the day-spring from on high." The "tender mercy of God" is the fountain, and the "visiting of the day-spring from on high" is the stream.

Let us then endeavour, if God enable us, to unfold the mind of the Spirit in the words.

**First.** What is meant by the expression "**day-spring**?"

By "day-spring" is meant the day dawn, the herald of the rising sun, the change from darkness to light, the first approach of morn; in one word, the **spring of the day.**

But what is this "day-spring" spiritually? It is the intimation of the rising of the Son of righteousness. It is not the same thing as the Sun of righteousness; but it is the herald of his approach; the beams which the rising sun casts upon the benighted world, announcing the coming of Jesus, "the King in his beauty." This expression was singularly applicable in the mouth of Zacharias. The Lord of life and glory had not then appeared; he was still in the womb of the Virgin Mary. But his forerunner, John, had appeared as the precursor, the herald of his approach, and was sent to announce that the Son of righteousness was about to arise. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6-8). All nations at that time lay in darkness, "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2). But when the Lord of life and glory was about to appear upon earth, when he had already taken the body which was prepared for him; (Heb. 10:5), the

very flesh and blood of the children (Heb. 2:14), which he was to offer as a propitiation for sin, "the day-spring from on high" had begun to dawn. God's mercy, in the face of his dear Son, was just visiting the benighted world.

But there is another, an experimental meaning, connected with the words. "The day-spring from on high" is not to be confined to the approach of the Son of God in the flesh; but it may be extended to signify the appearance of the Son of God in the heart. I cannot be benefited by the appearing of Jesus in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, unless he come and dwell in my soul. "The day-spring from on high" which visited the benighted Jewish church will not profit us, except that same day-spring visits our benighted heart. "The day-spring from on high" is the manifestation of God's mercy in the face of the Saviour. And when this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul, it is the first intimation, the dawning rays of the Sun of righteousness in the heart.

Now, "the day spring from on high" visits the soul with the very first divine intimation dropped into the conscience respecting the Person, work, love, and blood of the Son of God. Until this day-dawn beams upon the soul, it is for the most part ignorant of the way by which a sinner is to be saved. It has tried perhaps works of righteousness; and has toiled and striven to produce such holiness as God may be pleased with. But what has been the success of these endeavours? Have they issued in peace to the soul? Have they not rather plunged it more deeply into guilt and shame? Have they not proved the spider's web, the hypocrite's hope, a garment too short, and a bed too narrow? And yet this very striving and toiling to work out a righteousness has wrought a profitable effect: for being fully convinced by painful experience that it has none of its own, the soul is prepared to receive with faith the righteousness of the Son of God.

But the first "day-spring from on high" which usually visits the soul is from a view by precious faith of **the glorious Person** of Immanuel. Until we see by the eye of faith the glorious Person of

"Immanuel, God with us," there is no day-dawn in the heart. Now we may see the doctrine of Christ's Person in our judgment long before we see it in our soul. There is a peculiar teaching of the Spirit in making the Person of Christ inwardly known. There is a holding up of his beauty and loveliness to the eye of the spiritual understanding; a removal of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which by nature covers the heart; a raising up of a living faith to go out of itself unto Him; a heavenly affection breathed into the soul whereby it clasps Jesus in the arms of holy embrace, and says, "whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." This will be attended with melting of soul at the solemn sight, with admiration of his beauty, with adoration of his glorious Person—with the confiding of body, soul, and spirit into his keeping; with a solemn committal of all we are and have into his gracious hands, as able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day—the day of his appearing. When the heart is thus opened, the affections thus drawn forth, the spirit thus softened, and the whole soul melted at a believing sight of the glorious Person of the Son of God, "the day-spring from on high" has visited the sinner.

But, in looking at the glorious Person of the Son of God, we catch a faith's view of **his atoning blood**, and see it to be of infinite dignity. We see its unspeakable preciousness,—that it is the blood of the Son of God—that it is the holy blood, precious blood, sin pardoning, conscience-cleansing blood—that it is the only sacrifice offered to, and accepted by God the Father—that it is the only propitiation for sin—that there is no other way of salvation, and no pardon for sin, or true peace of conscience, but that which flows from its personal application. This leads the soul to look to, hang upon, trust, and confide in it, and to seek more and more after a spiritual manifestation and experimental springing of it. We thus discard our own righteousness, trample upon our doings, go out of self, and cast a longing, languishing eye towards that blood which "cleanseth from all sin."

So also with respect to the **glorious righteousness** of Immanuel. When we can see by the eye of faith that it is "the

righteousness of God," because the righteousness of Immanuel, God with us; when we can realize how perfectly and completely Jesus has fulfilled the law, what a spotless obedience he has rendered to it, that he has magnified it and made it honorable, fulfilled all its holy requisitions and spiritual demands;—when we can catch a glimpse of this righteousness as "unto and upon all them that believe" and lay hold of it as all our justification in the eye of a holy God—when **this** is seen and felt, the "day-spring from on high" hath visited us.

Every manifestation of mercy, every testimony from God, every mark and sign in our favour, every evidence that our spot is the spot of God's children, every promise applied with power, every holy affection, every tender sensation, every filial dependence upon God's faithfulness, every breathing out of the heart at the footstool of mercy, either is, or is connected with, the visiting of this "day-spring from on high." Every ray of spiritual light, every sensation of divine life, every feeling of humility, every emotion of godly sorrow; whatever there is in the soul heavenly, holy and God-like, all arise from "the day-spring from on high" that hath visited us.

But what a sweetness there is in the expression, "**visited** us!" What is conveyed by it? One idea contained in it is, that it is **the act of a friend**. If I have a friend, and I visit him, my visit is a mark of my friendship and affection. Thus the word implies that there is a tenderness and affection in "the day-spring"—that it comes to us in a friendly manner, that it is not the wrath of God to destroy, but the mercy of God to save.

But another idea connected with the word "visit," is that of **unexpectedness**. Is it not so sometimes naturally? We have an unexpected, visit. We may have been looking for our friend to call; but the time passes away, and no well-known rap is heard at our door. We wonder why our friend delays his coming so long. But perhaps, when we are least expecting it, the form of our friend appears. So spiritually. We may be longing and languishing, hoping, and expecting the visit of "the day-spring

from on high;" but it does not appear; the Lord delayeth his coming; there is no intimation of his appearing, no putting in of his hand by the hole of the door, no looking in through the lattice, no glimpse nor glance of his lovely countenance. But perhaps, when least expected, and least anticipated; when the mind is so deeply sunk as scarcely to dare to hope, so shut up in unbelief as hardly able to vent forth a sigh, "the day-spring from on high" will visit the soul, and be all the more precious for coming so suddenly and unexpectedly.

III.—But this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul to **produce certain effects**. Two of them are specified in the text. "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death;" that is one: "to guide our feet in the way of peace;" that is the other.

1. **"To give light to them, that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death."** Is this what "the day-spring from on high" visiting us is to do? Must we not then know something of the experience here described to be blest with the visit? Must we not feelingly know what it is to "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," that we may receive those heavenly visitations which preserve our spirit? Let us see if we know anything about the matter. Never talk of God's visits to your soul, or of the precious manifestations of the Son of God, if you have never known what it is to "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." For these visits are only designed for such. They are the only characters that a precious Lord in mercy visits. And if we have never been there, all our hope is delusion, all our profession but a name.

But let us look at the words a little more closely. "To such as sit in darkness." What is the darkness here spoken of? Is it merely what I may call moral darkness? natural darkness? No; it is not the darkness of unregeneracy; it is not the darkness of sin and profanity; nor is it the darkness of a mere empty profession. These things are indeed darkness, gross darkness; but those who are thus blinded by the god of this world never sit experimentally in darkness. They are like the Jews of old, who said, "We see;

therefore their sin remaineth." 'We dark? we ignorant? we scorn the idea.' Such is the language of empty profession. But the Lord's own quickened, tender-hearted family often painfully know what it is to **sit** in darkness.

But whence does this darkness arise? Strange to say, it arises from light. Darkness as darkness is never seen darkness as darkness is never felt. Light is needed to see darkness; life is required to feel darkness. There are children in Hungary born and bred at the bottom of a mine. Do these children ever know what darkness is, like one who comes down there out of the broad light of day? Were they not told there was a sun above—did not some tidings of the light of day reach their ears, they might live and die ignorant that there was a sun in the heavens. So spiritually. Man, born and bred in the depths of nature's mine, does not know that he is dark; but when divine light enters into his soul, **that** discovers to him his darkness; for it is the light which makes manifest all things; as the Apostle says, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest by the light" (Eph. 5:13). Thus, it is the light of God's teaching in a man's conscience that makes him know his darkness; and divine life in his soul makes it felt.

But what does darkness imply? The absence of every thing that brings light and peace into the heart. To have all our evidences beclouded; not to be able to see our signs; unable to trace out the way by which the Lord has led us; unable to realize the existence of the grace of God in our heart; unable to feel the actings of living faith upon the Son of God; unable to cast the anchor of hope within the veil; not to enjoy the inshinings of his gracious presence in the manifestations of his goodness and love—this is darkness. And O, how most, how the vast majority of the people of God thus walk in darkness, and have no light! I may venture to say, that ninety of God's people out of a hundred walk more or less in darkness; and I may venture to say, that the feeling sensations of life, light and peace, compared to deadness and darkness, are nearly in a similar proportion.

But there is one word in the text which conveys to my mind much, that is, "**sitting** in darkness." They are not represented as **standing**; that might imply a mere momentary transition from light to darkness. They are not represented as **running**; that might imply they would soon get out of the darkness. They are not represented as **lying down**; that might lead to suppose they were satisfied with their darkness. But they are represented as **sitting** in darkness. Then surely they are not dead. Nor do they sit at ease and at rest; but are in that posture, because they can neither move backward or forward, nor turn either to the right hand or to the left.

In ancient medals that were struck when Jerusalem was led captive by the Romans, she is represented as sitting on the ground. The same thing is intimated in Ps. 137:1, 2. "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."

Sitting was with the ancients the **posture of mourning**. Job "sat down among the ashes;" (Job 2:8); and his friends "sat down with him upon the ground." (Job 2:13) "Her Gates," says Isaiah (Isaiah 3:26), "shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit on the ground."

Sitting implies also a **continuance** in the state; a waiting, a watching, a desiring, a looking out for the light to come.

But again. There is another word added, which throws light upon the character of those who are visited from time to time with "the day-spring from on high." They sit not only in darkness, but **in the shadow of death**. How expressive this word is—"the shadow of death!" There are several ideas, in my mind, connected with the word.

We will look, first, at the idea contained in the expression "**death**." Death with respect to the family of God wears two aspects. There is death **experimental** in their hearts, that is,



deadness in their frames; and there is death **temporal**—the separation of soul from the body.

Each of these kinds of death casts at times a gloomy shadow over the souls of God's people. The word is very expressive. They are not sitting in **death**: were they sitting there, they would be dead altogether; but they are sitting **in the shadow of death**. Observe, death has lost its reality to them; it now can only cast a shadow, often a gloomy shadow, over their souls; but there is no substance. The quickening of the Spirit of God in them has destroyed the substance of death spiritually; and the death and resurrection of Jesus has destroyed the substance of death naturally. Yet, though the gloomy monster, deadness of soul, and that ghastly king of terrors, the death of the body, have been disarmed and destroyed by "Immanuel, God with us;" yet each of them casts at times a gloomy, darkling shadow over the souls of those that fear God. Is not your soul, poor child of God, exercised from time to time with this inward death? Deadness in prayer, deadness in reading the word, deadness in hearing the truth, deadness in desires after the Lord, deadness to every thing holy, spiritual, heavenly, and divine? Do you not feel a torpidity, a numbness, a carnality, a worldliness, that seem at times to freeze up every desire of your soul? I do. O how this cold, clammy monster death seems to wrap its benumbing arms around a man's soul! I have read of a voyager, who, whilst looking for shells on a desert rock, was suddenly caught in the arms of a huge polypus, a sea monster. The sickening sensation produced by this cold and clammy monster clasping him with his huge suckers, and drawing him to his jaws to devour him, he describes as being unutterable, and he was only rescued by the captain's coming to his aid with a knife. I may compare, perhaps, our frequent deadness of soul clasping its arms around every desire of our heart, to the clasping of this poor man in the clammy arms of the sea monster. How it benumbs and paralyzes every breathing of our soul Godward! How all prayer, all panting desire, all languishing affection, all spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, all solid worship, all filial confidence, all the fruits and graces of the Spirit are blighted and withered by the deathliness that we so

continually feel! Yet it is but a **shadow**. Write not bitter things against yourself, poor tempted, exercised child of God, because you feel such deathliness and coldness from time to time in your heart. It will not destroy you; nay, it is life in your soul that makes it felt; and the more the life of God has been felt in your conscience, the more painfully the deathliness of your carnal mind is experienced. Do you expect that your carnal mind will ever be lively in the things of God? What is it but a lump of death, a huge mass of ungodliness, which, like some Behemoth, upheaves its broad flanks continually in the heart? Yet the people of God are very often troubled in their minds by the gloomy shadow that this death casts over their souls. But this trouble is a mark of life. If I were dead, could I feel it! The worst symptom of the dead in sin is, that they do not feel it. But, whilst we feel it, whilst we sigh on account of it, whilst we hate it and hate ourselves on account of it—though it may pain and grieve, it never can destroy. It has lost its substance, though it casts its gloomy shadow.

But there is another death, which though it has lost its substance, casts a gloomy shadow also over many a Godfearing heart; that is, **death naturally**, the severing of body from soul. In seasons of darkness, when our hopes sink to a low ebb; when faith is almost expiring, and love has altogether drooped its head; when the Lord hides himself, and we cannot feel a sweet testimony of interest in his love and blood—what a gloomy shadow does death then cast over the soul! It is feared, it is dreaded; it becomes a king of terrors. And though a believer may have a sense of interest in the love and blood of the Son of God, yet he knows not how it may be with him in that solemn hour.

But do not we sometimes want dying faith before dying moments? And is it the Lord's way to give us a stock of faith in hand? Perhaps we look at death; and our souls shrink within us. We think of the anguish of our poor dying body; we view the sufferings of a sick bed; we reflect on a dear wife and family, of their providential circumstances, and a thousand things to distress and harass the mind; and we have no faith at the time to

believe that God will so overrule and appear in these things, as in these miseries to manifest his mercies. But how is this? Why, we want to have dying comforts before we are brought into dying circumstances; and we want the Lord to favour us with a stock of comfort in hand, that we may live upon it before the time of trial. But it cannot be so. There would be no trial of faith, if it were so. When the souls of God's people come into that dark valley, his rod and staff will comfort them; "and their strength," according to the promise, "will be equal to their day."

Now, it is for those who "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," that "the day-spring from on high" has come. They are the only persons who need it. How strange, that those who need it not, are the first to claim it; and that those who need it, are the last to believe it for themselves! What a strange mystery is the professing world!—that those for whom all the blessings are designed, whom God loves with an everlasting love, and designs to bring to glory, should be usually the last persons who can lay hold of God's mercy; and that those who have but a name to live while dead, a form of godliness whilst they deny the power, should be the first rashly and daringly to rush in and claim with sacrilegious hands those blessings which belong only to God's poor tempted people! Well might John, Revelation 17:6 when he saw the mystery of the scarlet woman, wonder with great admiration—well might he marvel, to see the true church driven into the wilderness, and the professing church in scarlet raiment, sitting as a queen; and saying, she should "see no sorrow:" But only as we are brought to "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," does "the day-spring from on high" visit us. And O, how sweet, precious, and suitable, is every dawning of hope, every day-star of mercy, every appearance of the Son of righteousness, to those who "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death!" None others will have it; none others will prize it. Would we then drink of the sweetness contained in it, we must walk in that dark and dreary path. Would we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, and taste in our souls the precious consolations of the Son of God, we must be brought to walk in

that path of darkness, dreariness, and the shadow of death to which His consolations alone are suited.

2. But there is another word added, another result of the visiting of "the day-spring from on high"—"**to guide our feet into the way of peace.**" The way of peace! Does not that comprehend all? Do those that fear God want anything but peace? What do we want? The way of war, of enmity, of rebellion, of restlessness? No. We want the way of peace.

But what is implied in the expression? Peace implies two things. It implies, first, reconciliation from a state of enmity; and secondly, the felt enjoyment of this reconciliation in the heart. By nature we are at war with God. Our affections are entirely alienated from him. Enmity is the very element, the very breath of our carnal mind. We wander away from him, and far from the way of peace. Now when the Lord first begins to open up to us what **we** are, and what **He** is, and manifests the darkness of our minds, the enmity of our hearts, and the total alienation of our affections from him, he usually kindles in our heart also a desire to be at peace with him. We want to have peace with God; for we know that if we live and die his enemies, eternal perdition must be our portion. And I do believe from what I have felt in the matter, that one of the most cutting sensations of a child of God is, to fear that he is the enemy of God. Oh, where can he hide his guilty head, if he be God's enemy? O what a painful sensation, to think that the hand of God is against him! If so, the very brand of Cain seems set upon him. But when the Lord draws him to his throne, opens his heart, and gives him power to pour forth his soul in earnest breathings, how he longs to have reconciliation proclaimed, and pardon and peace sweetly enjoyed! Now, this reconciliation between an offended God and offended man could never be brought about but by the mediation of the only-begotten Son of God. The Son of God came forth from the bosom of the Father, where he had lain from all eternity, to reconcile the elect unto God, to lay down his life for them, that he might, by putting away their sins, bring them near to God.

But there is peace to be enjoyed in the soul, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" the dying legacy of a dying Lord, "Peace I leave with you; my peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). A sense of reconciliation, a testimony of favour, a basking in the smiles of a covenant God; a holy calm, a blessed tranquillity, experienced through the application of atoning blood and dying love—is not this the way of peace? But Jesus is the way; for he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Do we wish to walk in the way of peace? We must walk in Jesus; for there is no other way. "He is our peace who hath made both one." "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian comes into the land." He is the peace-maker and the peace-speaker. But by nature we cannot find the way of peace. It is said expressly, "The way of peace they have not known" (Rom. 3:17). Ignorant, alienated, dark, blind, we cannot, untaught by the Spirit, place our feet in the way of peace. But "the day-spring from on high hath visited us;" the holy, harmless Lamb of God, has died, and offered a propitiation for sin, has fulfilled the law, has brought in everlasting righteousness, has satisfied infinite justice, has reconciled the before apparently jarring attributes of God, and made way for peace and pardon to flow into the hearts of those that fear his name.

But we want **guiding** in the way. And when "the day-spring from on high" visits the soul, it guides the feet into the way. There is something very sweet in the expression. It does not drive, does not force, but opens a door, and enables the soul to enter in; discovers the way, and gives the soul faith to walk in it. Thus it guides the feet of the poor desolate, disconsolate pilgrim by heavenly teachings and divine leadings into the way of peace. It guides him into the knowledge of Jesus, into faith in his blood, into love to his name.

And where there is peace with God, there will be peace with one another. Where the love of God reigns in churches, there will be peace in churches. Where the love of God rules in Christians, there will be peace between Christians. It is our evil heart, our

proud spirit, our rebellious nature, the workings of our carnal mind, that bring jealousies, jarrings, and strife. God the Spirit is not the author of confusion; and he only can guide our feet into the way of peace.

And all this flows out of the tender mercy of a covenant God; Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the son, and Jehovah the Spirit, the Three-one God of Israel. Then it excludes all our good doings, nay more, it excludes all our misdoings. It opens a path for the wretched and worthless, for the poor and needy. It opens a way of salvation for the lost, pardon for the guilty, and peace for the weary. Can we expect it to flow into our souls through any other way? What was it that moved the divine Father to send his own Son into the world? Was it not the free mercy of God flowing forth from his bosom to his family? Then, what merit, what claim can his family ever have? Their misery is their claim. Their worthlessness, their sunken state, the depth of their fall—these things call forth God's compassion. It is not what I have done for the glory of God; not what I am doing or trying to do; not my wisdom, my strength, my resolutions, my piety, my holiness. No; my misery, my helplessness, my worthlessness, my deeply sunken state, my fallen condition; which I feel only because of interest in the blood and love to the Lamb—this it is that makes me need God's mercy; and this it is that qualifies me to go to God through Jesus to receive mercy; for "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Are you sifting in darkness, and the shadow of death—far from the way of peace, troubled, perplexed, exercised, confused? You are the very characters for whom Jesus came. Are not unutterable mercies locked up in the bosom of God for you? What is to exclude you? Your sins? No; God has pardoned them. Your worthlessness? No; there is a robe of righteousness prepared for you. Your demerits? No; the merits of Jesus are upon your side. Your unholiness? No; He of God is made to your sanctification. Your ignorance? No; He of God is made to your wisdom. These are no barriers. I will tell you what is a barrier self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, pride, hypocrisy, presumption; a name to live, a form of godliness, being settled upon your lees, and at ease In Zion—

these are barriers. But helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, misery—these are not barriers; they are qualifications; they show, when felt, that your name is in the book of life, that the Lord of life and glory appeared in this world for; and sooner or later, you will have the sweet enjoyment of it in your heart; and then be enabled to adore him for his grace, and bless his name for glorifying his love and mercy in your free and full salvation.

# **THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH**

## **PREFACE**

When the following sermon was preached by me at Zoar Chapel. Great Alie Street. London, I had not received the slightest previous intimation that there was an intention to take it down from my lips, and put it into a more permanent form than as it issued with fleeting breath. When however, I learnt that it had been taken down, I did not consider it right to object to its publication, as I indulged a hope that it might thereby be blessed beyond the immediate occasion on which it was delivered.

Though from various circumstances, chiefly connected with health and other engagements, I am not now able to accept repeated invitations to occupy the Zoar pulpit as in former years, I still bear in affectionate remembrance the days gone by, to which some allusion will be found in the following pages. I did not wish to speak of myself, still less in any self-exalting manner: but old associations so came over my mind when I entered the pulpit and looked round upon the congregation, that I could not but give them expression, and make some allusion to the sermons which I had preached there in times past, and which have become so widely spread. My feelings on this point are these. Let all that man says or does be passed by in deserved silence: but let not any of the words and works of the Lord be forgotten. I have had many testimonies, and frequently receive them still, that the Lord has graciously condescended to bless the sermons which I formerly preached at Zoar. Let him have all the glory. I never sought or desired their publication, as it was commenced and carried on without consulting me, beyond submitting them to my revision. I never derived any pecuniary profit from them; I have never moved a finger to spread them except, as a mere matter of convenience, supplying a few friends at home who wished to have them. If the Lord blessed them, I was thankful. He alone enabled me to preach them, supplied me with every gracious thought and



feeling found in them, and gave me a door of utterance to deliver with my lips what I believed and felt in my heart. I often feel that they are not mine—at least not anything in them that is truly spiritual and gracious. All their failings, infirmities, deficiencies, shortcomings,—I will not add errors, for I would not knowingly permit the least error to go abroad in them,—are mine. To me belongs all in them that is deficient, and all that is objectionable. To the Lord belongs everything in them that is truly spiritual, edifying, instructive, reproofing, or consoling to the Church of God.

I sometimes seem to see in my own mind what true preaching should be; how pure and clear in doctrine, how sound and deep in experience, how firm and faithful in precept. I have a view before the eyes of my enlightened understanding what the ministry of the Spirit is, as distinct from the ministry of the letter. I see that there is a power, a savour, an unction, an authority, a weight, a reality in the ministry of men taught and sent to God, as distinct from the ministry of men untaught and unsent, as the miracles of Moses were distinct from the miracles of the magicians, or the preaching of Paul from that of the seven sons of Sceva. Let none here mistake my meaning. I do not wish to—nay, I dare not set up my preaching as that which I see the ministry of the Spirit is or should be. I desire with all my heart that it should be such; it is enough to make me quake and tremble with fear to think it is not so; for there are no half ministers, as there are no half Christians. An almost minister is as far from the ministry as an almost Christian from Christianity. If God has not sent a man to preach, he can no more profit his people (Jer. 23:32), than if God has not called a man by grace, he can obtain a crown of glory. I am not saying what I am, or what others are; I leave all personalities; I am merely speaking God's truth as I see it in his own inspired word, and as I feel it in my own heart. Let the word of God be the standard, not my word, nor any man's; though what we believe in accordance with that word we may freely speak (2 Cor. 4:13). And following still the same unerring testimony, I believe that the sovereignty of God is as much displayed in choosing ministers to preach as in choosing men to

be saved. If, in the exercise of that sovereignty, the Lord has seen good not only to call me by his grace to fear and love his great and glorious name, but has also called me from academic halls and seats of lettered ease, which once were as my life blood, to preach his truth among his despised people, he surely had as much right to do so as to call others of his servants from the loom or the plough. What we, what any of us are worth being, what we have worth possessing, what we feel worth enjoying, what we know worth proclaiming, and what we preach worth hearing, we are indebted for to sovereign grace, and to sovereign grace alone. On this point I will yield to none. Let some of my brethren in the ministry have more grace, others a deeper experience, others more ministerial ability, others more unction and savour, others a more godly, devoted life, I will willingly yield to them in all these the palm so far as I see and feel they are thus blessed and favoured: but I will not yield to them in one point, that we are what we are only by sovereign grace. On this ground we may safely meet. Here Ephraim envies not Judah, nor Judah vexes Ephraim. Here pride and self-exaltation fall; here strife and contention cease; here self drops into its right place—the dust; and here Jesus is exalted to his rightful place as Lord of all.

I did not mean to write a preface, still less so long a one, but there being a blank page or two before the sermon, I was asked to contribute a few lines to fill up the vacant space. This I have done; and now I cannot arrest my pen without commending the following pages to the blessing of that most gracious Lord whom I desire ever to serve, and whose name I wish ever to be exalted and glorified.

J.C.P. Stamford, Sept. 13th, 1858.

**THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH**

Preached at Zoar Chapel. Alie Street. London, on Thursday evening, July 29th, 1858

"Through the tender mercy of our God. whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78, 79

If I use the words without any irreverence to the Sacred Majesty of heaven, I might, in standing here this evening, almost adopt the language addressed by the Lord to Jerusalem by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (Jer. 2:2). May I not almost say, "I remember thee, O Zoar, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals," in those days, some seventeen or eighteen years ago, when I used to stand up in this pulpit, for six Lord's Days at a time every summer, and the Lord seemed at times to fill this house with his presence and his glory; when every corner was filled with a listening congregation, and among them, doubtless, many who feared God, and believed in his dear Son?

I wish ever to speak of myself, and all I have or am, say or do, with the deepest self-abasement, for I know I have nothing in myself by nature but sin and death, filth and folly; but I cannot forget that for several years nearly all my sermons preached in this place were taken down from my lips, and that these have, in the providence of God, been spread far and wide, and been, I trust, made a blessing to many. From that circumstance, therefore, were there no other, I shall always affectionately remember Zoar. And now that, in an unexpected manner, I am come once more to this place, I hope, though I see a great alteration, and that for the better outwardly, that inwardly it may be old Zoar still. Though you have painted the chapel, and given us more light, though the air of heaven comes in rather more freely than in those dark and dingy days when I have gasped for breath in your crowded house, yet may it be old Zoar still, with the same good old doctrines, the same old life and power, the

same presence of "the Ancient of days," and the same blessing from him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Though I miss many old familiar faces, though many a young and many an aged head is now laid low, and many a dear saint of God is now before the throne, blessing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who used to hear me and the servants of God years ago in this place, yet Jesus lives, whoever dies: Jesus abides faithful, whoever declines: and where two or three are gathered together in his name, he has promised his presence and blessing. May we realise this this evening, and to him will we freely ascribe all the praise, honour, and glory.

The words of our text were spoken by Zacharias, the father of John, when he "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied," and had a view of the grace and mercy of the Lord God of Israel in "visiting and redeeming his people." Addressing, therefore, his infant son as he lay in his mother's arms, he spoke to him in the language of inspiration, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins." Then follow the words of the text, "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

In opening up these words I shall, with God's blessing,

I. **First**, endeavour to describe who the people are that are spoken of as "**sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.**"

II. **Secondly**, what "**the dayspring from on high**" is, of which our text speaks;

III. **Thirdly**, how this dayspring from on high "**visits**" them, and what it does by its blessed visitations—it "**gives them light,**" and "**guides their feet into the way of peace;**"

IV. and **Lastly**, the **source and spring** of all these blessings; all are "**through the tender mercy of our God.**"

I. How shall I clearly and faithfully describe the state and condition of the people here represented as "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death?" But comparing scripture with scripture, and taking a broad survey of the children of men as they everywhere stand before an enlightened eye, we may view them **first** as descriptive of **the general condition of man.**

i. Man, then, viewed generally, looked upon in his fallen condition, as "dead in trespasses and sins." as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart" (Eph. 2:1; Eph. 4:18), is sitting in darkness and in the very shadow of death. He is sitting, as the posture implies, at his ease, quiet and unconcerned, in all that the word "**darkness,**" as a scriptural term, means or implies. Does darkness mean **ignorance** of God and godliness, of sin and salvation,—ignorance of all that it is light and life, grace and glory, holiness and happiness to know? In that darkness he sits, surrounded by it, wrapped up in it, as in a dark night, without moon or star, a forlorn wretch, meditating suicide, may sit on the steps of London bridge, with the gloomy river flowing before his face. Does darkness mean **sin?** In **that** he sits up to his neck, diving ever and anon into its hidden depths to pluck up some root of sensual delight. Does darkness mean or imply "**the blackness of darkness for ever?**" He is sitting in what will prove its certain forerunner, unless grace deliver him from those terrible chambers of woe, for he is sitting in the very "**shadow of death.**" Death in sin is even now casting over him its killing shade; soon death of the body will prove a substance of which the shadow is already stretched over his head; and then over body and soul will the eternal wrath of God cast that shadow of wrath and despair, out of which he will never come.

ii. But looking at the words in a spiritual and experimental sense, I shall view them rather as **descriptive of the saints of God** when they are brought, by the entrance of divine light and life, to see and feel their real position as sinners before the eye of infinite Purity and Holiness. It is true that all men are really sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. But who see it, who know it, who feel it? Not the dead, but the living; for the dead know nothing, see nothing, believe nothing, feel nothing, and therefore neither know nor see, believe nor feel that they are sitting in such darkness and in such a shadow. But the quickened family of God, like "the living creatures" whom holy John saw in vision, are "full of eyes within" (Rev. 4:8), and by these eyes see their state nature.

"God is light;".... he dwelleth "in the light which no man can approach unto," in all the infinite glory and unspeakable holiness of his own perfections. "Light," therefore, as a sacred emblem and spiritual figure, is an expression of all that God is in his essential being and glorious perfections, as also of the grace which he communicates, and the glory which he bestows. As, then, light contains in it the seeds of grace and glory, of happiness and holiness, for "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," the opposite idea, darkness, seems to concentrate in itself all that state and sense of sin, gloom, misery, and despair that a soul can feel, in the borders of time, or in the depths of eternity.

The very expression, "sitting in darkness," implies **life**. They are not said to **lie** in darkness, as a corpse, but to sit, which is a posture not of the dead, but of the living; and further, it implies **feeling**, for if a man sit in darkness, the very life that is in him, and maintains him in that waiting posture, will make him feel the darkness that surrounds him. To see, then, and feel the darkness that fills us within, and envelopes us without, is a sign of spiritual life, for when the Spirit of God, by his quickening breath, makes the soul alive unto God, it becomes, for the first time, sensible of this darkness, and feels, as it never did before, the misery and wretchedness of a state of condemnation before God. It feels,

too, how it has all its life been immersed in the thickest, grossest darkness, and, it may be, rebelling against light, if ever a ray of conviction flashed across the conscience. Darkness is a feeling. When "a horror of great darkness" fell upon Abraham (Gen. 15:12), he certainly felt the dark cloud over his soul. When Jeremiah said, "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness," (Lam. 3:2), and Heman cried, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in **darkness**, in the deeps," (Ps. 88:6), surely these saints of God felt the darkness gathered around them as sensibly in their soul as we see and feel the dark gloom of a wintry night, when we look out of doors from our warm, well-lighted room. The blind naturally see no darkness, for they see no light. Day and night are all one to them; for to see darkness as much needs eyesight as to see light. So, in grace, to see darkness implies that we possess light and sight. As in an ocean cave a degree of light is needed in the very entrance to see the dark recesses stretching themselves far away out of sight, so, in grace, the quickened sinner needs divine light to view the dark recesses of his fallen nature, with all their hideous gloom.

He sees, also, that there is **something in true religion which he has never known** something in the things of God, as made known to the soul by a divine power, of which he is not yet in possession. This is the case and state of many a dear child of God. He has light to see his darkness, life to feel his death, faith to believe his condemnation, and sincerity to acknowledge the justice of his sentence, but no power to see himself in the light, or to come forth into liberty. He is "sitting in darkness," unable to stand or walk, go forward or backward. This he knows and feels for and in himself, and as such he has more real truth and honesty in his heart, more grace and true religion, more light and life, more faith and feeling than hundreds of high professors, who walk in the light of their own fire, and by the sparks that they have themselves kindled.

But besides this feeling of darkness from a sight of one's own heart, and of an aching void which love and mercy have not yet filled up, there are other causes at work which contribute to

increase its density. **Heavy afflictions, providential trials, or sore temptations,** will often combine to sink the awakened sinner deeper still into misery and gloom. The work of grace upon the heart generally begins under some afflicting stroke of God, to bring us, as it were, to our senses. In body or in family, in circumstances or in mind, a stunning blow is given. Some heavy stroke seems, indeed, absolutely needed to awaken the conscience and pierce the callous, insensible heart into some feeling. Why this affliction is sent he at present sees not. He sits in darkness, and therefore the dealings of God with him in providence and grace are both hidden from his eyes. He is, if I may use the figure, like one in a railway tunnel, with the engine at a stand through some accident. He is afraid to get out of the carriage, and afraid to stay in. Neither line is safe; the up train or the down train may either next moment dash in upon him. So he sits in darkness, unable to move; but longs for deliverance, and cries to God for help, for all other is vain.

Some of you may at this moment be thus sitting in darkness: you may have had a very dark and gloomy week; you may have felt. this very day, much of the hiding of God's face and the miserable darkness of your own soul, so that you have gone about of all men most wretched. Even you, who have been highly favoured in times past, who have had most blessed manifestations of the Lord's goodness and mercy. and clearly seen and rejoiced in your interest in the blood of the Lamb, may have had this day, or during this past week, a gloomy season, and been sitting in much darkness of soul. You may have had trying circumstances in providence. Your poor body may at this very moment be bowed down with pain and disease. You may have just left at home an afflicted husband or child, or escaped here from the persecutions of a scolding wife; or some tidings may have come this morning to distress your mind, or fill it with rebellion and self-pity. Satan this day may have been haunting you with his horrible suggestions, and hurling dart after dart into your troubled soul, so as to make you tremble at yourself, fearing there is not a spark of grace, or a grain of vital godliness in your heart.



Sin, too, may have been working at a fearful rate; or the old trial, which has half killed you again and again, has once more broken out to fill you with fresh sorrow, and almost sink you into despair. What is worse, the Lord does not appear to hear any of your cries for help; and thus, wherever you turn your eyes, within or without, "through the wrath of the Lord is the land (**your soul**) darkened;" (Isa. 9:19); " he hath fenced up your way, that you cannot pass, and set darkness in your paths" (Job 19:8). Thus you sit in darkness, and can, in a measure, say with David, "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate" (Ps. 143:3, 4).

iii. But the Holy Ghost has added another word to describe the experience of those whom the dayspring from on high, visits. He speaks of "the **shadow of death**" as a spot in which they are also sitting. Let us examine the meaning of this striking expression. Death must ever be a solemn, if not gloomy subject to the children of men. We can scarcely hear a tolling bell, or see a hearse passing along the street, without a solemn feeling coming across our mind towards that pallid corpse which we know is stretched in the coffin. And when death comes nearer home, when we have perhaps to go into the chamber shaded in gloom, to gaze upon, for the last time, those loved features that we have seen a thousand times full of life and animation, but now pale, rigid, motionless, with that indescribable aspect that a corpse always wears, such a sight must needs cast a gloomy shade over our minds.

Even where grace has gilded the dying bed with heavenly light, and we can, in faith, follow the departed soul up to the gates of glory, we shrink instinctively from the soulless body. "That I may bury my dead out of my sight," was the feeling of Abraham. But where this consolation is denied, and this dear relative has passed out of time into eternity, without leaving behind that blessed evidence which gives us a hope beyond the grave, what a

still deeper gloom does that pallid corpse then create! Or when we think of our own approaching end, when we feel that death may soon invade our earthly tabernacle, and consign these lips that speak and those ears that hear, the heart which beats and the lungs which breathe, to the cold ground, no more to see or be seen by relative or friend, it casts a shade of gloom over our minds, unless we are blessed at the moment with the enjoyment of the love of God, and can smile at death,

When I can read my title clear To mansions in the skies.

The Holy Ghost, then, taking up this feeling, which is common to us all, speaks of "the **shadow** of death," intimating thereby the gloom that it produces. You were all, some months ago, witnesses of the great solar eclipse **1858**; you saw how the sun became slowly darkened in the noonday sky, how gradually a shade spread itself over the earth, and a gloom, as of approaching night, settled over this vast metropolis. The moon, interposing her dark body between the sun and the earth, intercepted the bright beams of the king of day; he lost his glory, and went down, as it were, at noonday; and though the period was short, earth, as she sat in the shadow, mourned the eclipse of her sovereign. So death, when the Sun of Righteousness is hidden from view, and his bright beams are eclipsed, spreads a dark gloom over the soul, which gloom is here called the shadow of the king of terrors. Allow me another figure. You leave for a little while this smoky city to resort to the beautiful sea-side, and after you have been walking on the sea-beach, under the blazing sun, gazing with calm delight on the ceaseless waves as they roll in all their majestic grandeur, and feeling the southern breeze blow upon your face, carrying health with every breath, you pass suddenly into some cool cave or ocean grotto that runs deep into the bosom of the lofty chalk cliff that overhangs the shingly beach. As you pass in, what a difference you feel between the bright beams of day that filled the sky and warmed the earth into life and fruitfulness, and that dark and gloomy shade into which you enter.

I use these figures to convey the thought more strikingly to your mind. So Death, the gaunt king of terrors; Death, who with his scythe in his resistless hand, mows down whole millions of the human race; Death, who awaits his victims at every corner; Death, that soon must lay you and me low in the grave—casts a shadow wherever he comes. He visits the sick room, and casts a shadow there; he hangs over the cradle, and his shadow falls on the infant's face; he comes in the Indian letter from abroad, or with the black seal and mourning envelope put into our hand at home; and these tidings or these tokens cast a deep shadow over our hearts. Indeed, where is the place where death does not cast his shadow? where the house where this shade has never fallen? In fact, he never comes without it. He is "the last enemy;" he is the final fulfilment of the original curse. And though death, to a saint of God, is stripped of its terrors, robbed of its sting, and disarmed of its victory; though, to the expiring believer it is but a portal of life into the mansions of eternal bliss, yet, say what we may, the portal casts a shadow. Even David, though full of sweet confidence that "the Lord was his shepherd," at the very time when "his cup ran over" with the Lord's goodness and love, calls it "the valley of the shadow of death" (Ps. 23:4). "The rod and the staff" comforted him, and "he feared no evil," but it was still "a valley," overhung by frowning mountains and dark, over-arching woods, and "the shadow of death" was spread upon it from the entrance to the end.

And yet it is but a "**shadow.**" To the graceless, the Christless, the impenitent, the unbelieving, it is a substance, for the wrath of God, which burns to the lowest hell, awaits them at the end of the valley, to plunge them into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But to those who die in the Lord, in the sweet enjoyment of peace through his blood, it is but a passing shadow. For them the substance died when Jesus died. It was buried in his tomb, but did not rise with him, for he destroyed it when he abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. (2 Tim. 1:10) But those spoken of in the text are not arrived to that blessed spot where "they fear no evil;" they are still sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Death casts day by day its

gloomy shadow over them, and they are in the condition spoken of by the apostle, "through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage." II. Having described, then, as far as I have been enabled, the characters spoken of in our text, in conformity with the word of truth and the experience of the saints, I now come to what the Holy Ghost delivered by the mouth of Zechariah about "**the dayspring from on high;**" and I shall show, with God's blessing, what divine truth is couched in the expression.

"The dayspring" means literally the break of day. Thus we read, "They arose early; and it came to pass about the spring of the day that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house." (1 Sam. 9:26) So the Lord asked Job, "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place?" The idea is, that the day springs with joy and exultation out of darkness, as the sun is compared to "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber"—the sleeping-room of night, and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." (Ps. 19:5) The title of Ps. 22 is **margin** "the hind of the morning," as if the morning sprang out of night as joyously as the hind leaps out of its covert. "The dayspring," therefore, means simply the dawn or break of day. But what is its **spiritual** meaning?

i. It signifies, **first**, the Gospel of the Son of God, the glad tidings of salvation through the promised Redeemer, the Messiah of whom all the prophets had spoken, and to whom all the Old Testament types and figures pointed. John was sent to herald his approach. His birth was as the day dawn before the Sun of Righteousness arose to illuminate the dark world and was born of the virgin at Bethlehem. Thus, in this sense, "the Lord God of Israel had visited and redeemed his people," by sending the forerunner of Jesus in the birth of John. Light was now breaking in the light of the gospel day, which was to chase away the darkness of the legal night. The law was a thing of types and shadows. It was, speaking comparatively, a dark dispensation: for all its rites and sacrifices were but enigmas, dark and incomprehensible, except as receiving their solution in and by the Lord Jesus. The dayspring from on high, therefore, in that sense

of the word, signifies the breaking in of the mercy and love of God about to be revealed in the manifestation of his dear Son in flesh, of whom John was the forerunner and messenger. So that, when John came as the herald of Jesus, "the day began to break, the shadows to flee away," and soon the Beloved of the church was to appear "like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." (Song. 2:17)

ii. But as I handled the expression "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," as bearing an experimental sense, and showed how the saints of God, in the experience of their souls, in their inward sensations, often thus sat, so I shall similarly dwell upon the experimental meaning of the words, "the dayspring from on high," as bearing upon this felt state and realised condition. For whatever the gospel is outwardly, as a revelation of grace and mercy; whatever God has done for the salvation of his people by sending his dear Son; whatever Jesus is in himself as the Christ of God; it is only as we have some manifestation of this to our souls, only as we have this dayspring from on high rising upon and shining into our hearts, that we get any solid relief from guilt and condemnation, darkness and death. It is not the letter of the gospel, however plain and clear; it is not the mere fact that Jesus came, lived, died and rose again; it is not the mere proclamation of mercy through his atoning blood and love that can speak peace to the soul that sits in darkness and in the shadow of death. The mere proclamation of mercy, the mere tidings of salvation through a crucified Jesus, remove no guilt from the conscience, nor can they in the bare letter bring the soul out of such a state of misery and gloom.

But when the dayspring from on high begins to break in upon the soul: when the love and mercy, the grace and truth of God begin to dawn in upon the benighted mind, and faith and hope and love' are raised up by the power of God, to embrace this gospel, to believe in this Jesus, to rejoice in this salvation, this message of love and mercy, through a Saviour's blood, is sweetly adapted and blessedly suited to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. You who now sit in darkness, and in this death

shadow, do you not feel that you want something experimentally manifested to your soul by the power of God? Can hearing remove the darkness? Can praying dispel it? Can talking, can preaching, can the ordinances of God's house chase away the gloom from your mind, and roll away the shadow from your heart?

You may hear the blessed tidings of salvation proclaimed by the mouths of God's servants, in the most experimental manner, and yet go home darker than you came. You may sit in the pew wrapped up in the very shadow of death, when life is proclaimed and felt in the pulpit. One that sits next to you may be bathed in tears of joy from the light and life of heaven shed abroad in his soul, whilst on you darkness hangs its thickest pall, and death spreads such a fearful shadow over your soul that you may be meditating to steal away when the service is over, and plunge yourself into the dark river flowing near. A servant of Christ may proclaim in your ears salvation through a Saviour's blood,—nay more, may describe your very feelings, may enter into the very trials of your soul, and put his hand upon the sorest and most secret spots of your troubled heart; but no dayspring, no, not one solitary gleam of light, breaks in upon your mind. Nay, the very light of the gospel shining outwardly, and not shining inwardly, only increases the feeling of darkness in your heart.

But let the Lord appear in one gracious word; let one ray of the Sun of Righteousness break in upon your soul; let the Blessed Spirit apply something to your heart, to lift you up out of misery and death; then, as this dayspring dawns, you are brought out of this darkness which you feel, and the shadow of death in which you are immersed, and come into the light of day. Therefore, exercised saints of the Most High, you who know what it is experimentally to sit in darkness and the shadow of death, be often lifting up your heart to the Lord, **as, indeed, you will do, for you must sigh and groan under your darkness and misery,** that he will bless you with a manifestation of himself, that you may have the shining in of his gracious countenance,

that you may feel his presence, taste his love, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

But we need spiritual eyes to see divine light, be it much or little. The sun may rise upon London, but a man may be blind, and now see it; he may be cooped up in a wine-cellar, and not know it; he may be shut up in a gloomy cell in Pentonville Prison, and not enjoy it; he may be in the hold of a ship in the river, and not be enlightened or warmed by it. It is not the fact of the sun shining that gives light to the blind, or brings his rays into a prison; it is not the circumstance of Christ having come, and the gospel being preached, that will give you light who know what it is, feelingly and experimentally, to sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. The exercised saints, therefore, of God, deeply feeling this, are crying, from time to time, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance; break in upon my dark, benighted soul; speak a word to my fainting heart! Come, blessed Jesus, and reveal thyself to me in thy love and blood."

But why do they thus sigh and cry, and beg of the Lord to bless them with some manifestation of his love? Because they sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Then that is a good position. "A good position?" say you. "What, my darkness and gloom, my trials and temptations, my affliction and distress, my troubles at home, my trials abroad, my poverty, my family sorrows, my assaults from Satan, my dreadful heart, full of rebellion and self-pity, my mournful days, my restless nights, and all that concurrence of circumstances that sink my soul so low,—are all these good things? Is there, can there be a blessing in them?" Yes; a blessing in disguise. How so? They fit you for manifested mercy; they pluck you out of a dead profession; they shake you to pieces out of a Laodicean state; they uproot your fleshly confidence; they break down your pride and self-righteousness; and they show you what true religion is by cutting up everything but what God's Spirit, by his own grace, plants in the soul.

I am sometimes glad to see people sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Their complaints, when I visit them, make no harsh music in my ear. I am glad to see them exercised. I feel for their trials, I sympathise with them in their afflictions; but I know it is "through much tribulation we must enter into, the kingdom." Therefore to see the saints of God in distress has been a cause of rejoicing to me, instead of a cause of sorrow: for I know that the hand which wounded will heal, that the grace which stripped will clothe, and the power that brought down to the grave will surely raise up. Therefore, you exercised saints, you tried and tempted children of God, you who think yourselves so hardly dealt with you who this day have been murmuring under your griefs and woes, you who feel yourselves the most miserable of wretches that can walk the London streets,—if there be with all this darkness and dejection, a sigh. a cry to the Lord of life and glory to break in upon your souls, the day will come when you will bless God for these trials and afflictions, when you will say how good he was to send these sharp trials, these ploughs and harrows to break up the fallow ground, that you might not sow among thorns, and perish in hypocrisy.

I wish there were more London professors sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. I wish they were more tried, more tempted, more distressed, more knocked about, more cut to pieces, more laid low. There is, I fear, a sad want of life and power in London professors; they are much sunk in the world, and buried in carnality and death. They want a good shaking, a hot furnace, or a deep flood, to bring them into the life and power of vital godliness. Not but that the Lord has his exercised saints in this vast metropolis. He has, I believe, a people "scattered and peeled," at both ends of London. But taking the great bulk of professors at headquarters, even those who, we hope, really fear God, there is every reason to believe there are many who are sunk in worldliness; and that the grace of God is at a low ebb, for the most part, in those who are members of churches, and fill up seats in congregations. Therefore, poor dear child of God, I speak to you in the corner there, burying your face in your hands or your handkerchief, through trouble and sorrow, do not murmur



and fret against the Lord for the painful things you are passing through. It is purging your heart from London religion, raising you out of the grave of a London cemetery. It you be sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, it is not to destroy you, but that the dayspring from on high may break in upon your soul.

III. And what will it do for you when it comes? **It will give you light.** It is the dayspring or dawn, and therefore must communicate light wherever it comes. "In thy light," says the church, "we see light." The first thing it will probably do will be to show you why the Lord has been bringing all these trials and afflictions upon you, and how they have worked together for your spiritual good. You will then see that not a single trouble or temptation has befallen you that has not been secretly working together for your good, and God's glory. As this light, then, begins to dawn upon your soul, you will see that the Lord was really with you in the trial and affliction: this will make you kiss the rod; and as you feel submission and resignation to bow to the sovereign will of God, meekness and patience will soften your heart, and subdue that wretched self-pity and rebellion that have so awfully worked.

As these fruits of righteousness spring up in your heart, you will begin to bless the Lord for his afflicting hand, and feel how profitable it has been made to your soul. I have had, myself, a good deal of affliction, and I will tell you what has always tried me most,—when the affliction has passed over my head without being sanctified to my good. When I have found profit from affliction, when in it my heart has been drawn up to the Lord, and it has been attended with a blessing to my soul,—then I can praise and bless the Lord for his afflicting hand. But until the wisdom and goodness of God are seen and felt, we lack that sweet resignation, that holy calm, that lying at the Lord's feet, and that casting ourselves into his gracious hands, which when felt, lighten the heaviest loads.

But as the light increases and shines more fully and brightly, it begins to show us Jesus, and who Jesus is, and we get perhaps a

discovery of his glorious Person and work. We may see a little of the sufferings of Jesus in the garden and upon the cross; of his meekness, gentleness, patience, and submission to his Father's will; this reconciles us to bearing the cross, and to sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, for both fell upon him. By and by, as the Lord is pleased to strengthen faith in the soul, it begins to take more powerful hold of this blessed Saviour; as it hangs upon him who says, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me," light breaks in more and more; doubts and fears begin to disperse, the gloom is dispelled, and the soul comes forth into the light of God's countenance, for the Sun of Righteousness now arises upon it with healing in his wings.

What a blessed thing is light, the light of life, the light of God's countenance, of the glorious gospel, of Jesus' face! "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But to whom? To those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. How such hail the first rays of light! If you were shipwrecked, cast by night upon a desert rock, how you would hail the first beams of the morning light to show you where you were, and what hopes there were of final escape. So, similarly, how a sense of danger, magnified by the darkness, makes the shipwrecked soul hail the first beam of light, that it may see the way of escape from hell to heaven. There may be here some poor saints of God who are cast upon the desert rock, and saying, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning." (Ps. 130:6) How such hail the first beams of heavenly light; how glad they are to see any tokens for good; how blessed to them is any manifestation of mercy, any melting of heart, any dissolving of spirit, any breaking down of soul, any discovery of atoning blood and pardoning love. How sweet to them it is to have any divine light dawn upon their mind, to have any breaking in of the goodness and mercy, grace and glory, of the blessed Jesus. The more we sit in darkness, the more we prize light.

Many high professors despise all this, and run out against it as a building upon frames and feelings, and making a Christ of our experience. Poor things! Their light is not worth having; and their religion, it is to be feared, is but a fire of their own kindling, the light of which will never light them to heaven. But why do they despise it? Because they never sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Therefore, really and truly, what is their light? An **ignis fatuus**, a will-o'-the-wisp, a gas-lamp, a meteor, a falling star, anything, everything but the dayspring from on high, or the Sun of Righteousness. But the Lord's people cannot be put off with a gaslamp, an **ignis fatuus**, a will-o'-the-wisp. They must have Jesus. They must have his blood upon their consciences, his grace in their hearts, his presence in their souls; sweet discoveries of his Person and work, the whispers of his love, the touch of his finger, the smiles of his face. They must have Jesus for themselves.

"Give me Christ, or else I die," is their feeling. But what makes them break forth with these earnest sighs and cries? They are in darkness and in the shadow of death. Were they otherwise, they would be content to remain as they naturally are,—dark and dead. But feeling their state, it makes them long for the beams of light; and when it breaks in upon their soul, they can bless it because it comes from and leads to God.

The next blessing it communicates is "to **guide their feet into the way of peace.**" What a place London would be without light! I dare say many here remember old London as I do, when there was not a single gas-light in the streets. How this remarkable invention has turned a London night almost into a London day, and changed dangerous streets and impassable alleys into safe and brilliant thoroughfares! London in utter darkness! What confusion, what destruction of life and property! So it is in grace; the dayspring that breaks in upon the soul is to guide our feet as well as dispel our darkness. There is a way of peace, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. For he is "our peace," (Eph. 2:14; Mic. 5:5), and "the way," (John 14:6), and therefore the way of peace. He has made peace through the blood of his cross, (Col.

1:20), having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to them which were afar off, "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and "to them that were nigh." (Eph. 2:16, 17)

The dayspring, then, breaking in upon the soul, shines upon the way of peace, and guides the feet into it. The light shines upon the way lined with blood, the way of salvation through the finished work, atoning blood, and meritorious sufferings of the Son of God. As then the light shines upon the way, and it is seen as a way of peace, a way of pardon and reconciliation, a way of access and acceptance, a way of grace and glory, a way of life and happiness, the feet of faith move towards it, enter upon it, and walk in it. This is a peace that passeth all understanding, a peace which the world cannot give or take away, a holy calm, a gracious subduing of all rebellion; and that power which once said to the boiling waves and howling winds that chafed their whitened crests into a succession of billows, "Peace, be still!" does it all.

How great the change! Instead of war with God, to be at peace; to see by the eye of faith that the whole way from earth to heaven, as revealed in the Person and work of the Son of God. is peace from first to last, and that as long as the feet are moving in that path they are walking in a way of peace here and hereafter. O to know, feel, and enjoy more of this peace, the peace of which Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you!" Oh, how sweet it is to have a little true peace, to be at peace with God. against whom we have so dreadfully and damnably sinned, to have a manifested interest in the blood which speaketh peace, and as such cries, from the ground for mercy, and speaks it when applied to the conscience. It thus speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, which cried for vengeance.

The way of peace, then, is not in rebellion, in murmuring, in fretfulness, in carnality: no, nor in worldly pleasure, in handsome houses, fine clothes, beautiful furniture, a respectable appearance, and abundance of gold and silver. "What hast thou to do with peace?" may be said to all such "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," when they say, "Is it peace?" The only

peace is peace in believing, peace through atoning blood, peace by walking in sweet communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Nor are we left ignorant how it is to be attained and maintained. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Php. 4:6, 7)

IV. But whence arises this dayspring, with all these effects? What is the source and fountain of it all? **"The tender mercy of our God."** All comes through his tender mercies. Mercy first, mercy middle, mercy last, mercy in eternity, rejoicing, as it were, against judgment (Jas. 2:13), triumphing over, though not at the expense or sacrifice of, justice, nor to the detriment of God's righteousness, but still prevailing, through the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. O the tender mercy, the sweet compassion the pitiful bowels of love displayed in the Person and work of Christ! Here is the dawn of mercy, the first intimation of a full and free salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Here the Lord begins to speak peace to the troubled conscience, and to give the first sensible and inward evidence of an interest in his everlasting love. Clouds may arise and darken the clear face of the dawning day: but still each ray that glanced into the heart was a herald and a harbinger of the Sun of Righteousness, which, when it rises upon the soul, chases away all the mists and fogs, and breaking through the dark clouds of unbelief, is as "the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without a cloud." when the Sun of Righteousness chases away all the mists and fogs of night.

I have given you from the text a short and imperfect sketch of the way in which the Lord the Spirit often carries on his work in the heart, and what are the feelings and experience of the soul led in this path. There may be present here those acquainted with a part or the whole of it. Some may be now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, sighing and longing for this dayspring from on high. To you, dear friends, who mourn and sigh, grieve

and groan under felt darkness, on whom death without and within often casts a gloomy shade,—to you whom nothing can satisfy but the smiles of God, the visitations of his presence, and the looks of his love,—to you the Lord will appear in his own time and way, that he may comfort your cast-down souls, and speak peace to your troubled spirits. It is his grace that makes you see and feel where and what you are. It is light from him that shows you the darkness. It is life from him that makes you feel the shadow of death. It is his Spirit, and not your carnal heart, your fallen nature, that cries within. It is he that kindles the spiritual desires, that imparts the living faith, communicates the gracious hope, and from time to time drops in the words of consolation that you feel within.

And he will carry on the work. You may doubt and fear; and as long as we have a body of sin and death, an ensnaring world, a restless and implacable enemy, and a conscience tender and fearful, we shall have our doubts and fears. If the Lord be our light, his withdrawing must produce darkness; if the Lord be our life, all but himself is death. Darkness and death produce doubt and fear, not, it may be, of eternally perishing, but doubt of our present goodness of state, and fear lest we should stumble, slip, or go astray. But in spite of all these doubts and fears, the Lord will appear in behalf of all who fear his great name. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Therefore, my beloved friends, to whom I have spoken in his gracious name; the Lord will appear to you who sit in darkness; he will carry on the work in your soul; he will revive you. The darkness has been or is now so thick that you have thought the day of gospel light and liberty would never come. But it will come; and when it does, you will see why it has not come before. You will see the Lord had first other lessons to teach you, had to sink you deeper and deeper into a knowledge of self, of your need of Jesus, that he might shine upon your soul with greater blessedness, and make you love and value him beyond all price and all comparison.

## **Death and Resurrection, or Spiritual Convictions and Heavenly Affections**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, June 27, 1858\*

\* In consequence of Mr. Philpot's temporary indisposition preventing him from preaching during a part of the Spring of 1864, the Publisher (Mr. J. Ford) has been obliged for the last and the present No. to have recourse to those Sermons which he took down from his lips at an earlier period. It may be so with other Nos.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:1, 2, 3

Until the eyes of our understanding are spiritually enlightened, and our heart touched by regenerating grace, we see, we know, we feel nothing savingly or experimentally of the power of God in the salvation of the soul. We may be religious, very religious; serious, extremely serious; pious, decidedly pious; we may attend church or go to chapel, receive the sacrament or sit down to the ordinance, say our prayers or pray extempore, read the Scriptures and good books; and comparing our religious life with the profane conduct of many by whom we are surrounded, may please ourselves with the deceptive illusion that we are recommending ourselves to the favour of God, and when death shall close the scene, shall be rewarded with eternal life. And yet all this time we may be as destitute of the power of God in saving the soul, as ignorant of law and gospel, of condemnation or salvation, of what we are as sinners or what the Lord Jesus is to those who believe in his name, as the very beasts that perish. True religion must be wrought in the soul by the power of God. We are not saved because we are religious; but we are religious because we are saved.

"Who hath saved us, and called us" (2 Tim. 1:9)—saved before called, and called because saved. The grace that wrote our names in the Lamb's book of life, that gave our persons to the Son of God, that he might redeem us through the cross by his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death; the grace that is now in the heart of Jesus as sitting at the right hand of the Father in glory and majesty,—this same grace quickens our soul into spiritual life, convinces us of sin, gives us repentance, brings us to the foot of the cross, reveals in us a precious Saviour, and raises up a faith and hope and love in his name which both save and sanctify us unto life eternal. Thus we are not saved by anything of a religious nature which we can communicate to ourselves, or others communicate to us; but we are saved by the grace of God, and by the grace of God alone. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2: 8.) If, then, that grace never visit our heart with its regenerating power and its sanctifying influences, we may have all the religion that the flesh can be possessed of, in all its high doctrine or all its low doctrine; in all its strictness or all its laxness; in all its Churchism or all its Dissent; in all its Pharisaism or all its Antinomianism; and yet die under the wrath of God and have our portion with the damned.

Compare this fleshly religion in which thousands are nursed and wrapped up, and in which thousands contentedly live and die—compare, I say, this external service, this mere bodily exercise, without life or power; without faith or repentance, without love or hope, without divine teaching or heavenly testimony, with such language as I have just read from the inspired word, and which is now all but sounding in your ears. Ask people, aye, very strict and religious people, what they know about being dead and their life being hidden with Christ in God; about being risen with Christ, and seeking those things which are above; about setting their affection on things above and not on things on the earth; and what answer can they give? What do they know for themselves of a heartfelt, experimental, and divine religion like this? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Which, then, are we to accept as true religion—that which bears the stamp of man, or that which bears



the stamp of God? that which unenlightened, unregenerated men, and even ministers, would impress on our minds and impose on our consciences, or that which the Holy Ghost has written down in the inspired word as a guide to the saints of God? I need not tell you which we should believe—whether we are to follow the true light which shines in the inspired page and guides the soul to heaven and God, or that *ignis fatuus*, that meteor-like will-o'-the-wisp which, issuing out of the corrupt heart of man, only plays around us with deceiving light to lead us into, and drown us in the bog of superstition, error, and self-righteousness.

I seem to see four things in the words before us, which I shall endeavour to bring before you as they are commended to my understanding, my heart, and my conscience.

I.—*First, Death*: "Ye are dead."

II.—*Secondly, Resurrection*: "If ye are risen with Christ."

III.—*Thirdly, Ascension and Session*: "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

IV.—*Fourthly, Affection*: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

I.—The spring and fountain of all true religion, of all vital godliness is *union with Christ*. He is the head of the body, the Church; therefore, from him, and from him alone, all spiritual life comes into his mystical members. "I am come that they might have life." (John 10:10.) "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25.) If, therefore, we have union with Christ—and without union with Christ we have no saving, sanctifying, or experimental religion—we shall have union with him, not only in what he is now at the right hand of the Father, but in all that he was whilst he was here below. As, then, the path of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father in glory was a path of suffering, sorrow, and death, and as in his case the cross went before the crown, so it must be with us. If we have any hope in

our soul of being with Christ in the realms of eternal day; if we have any expectation of reigning with him in the life to come, and enjoying those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; if we have any sweet persuasion that we shall be glorified with him and see him as he is face to face, which we never shall enjoy without vital union with him,—we must first be conformed to his image as manifested here below. I need hardly tell you that all those whom God foreknew are predestinated to the image, that is, the likeness of Christ, as the apostle so clearly testifies: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29.) This conformity begins below, but is completed above: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) This image or likeness of Christ is twofold: 1, His *suffering* image, as seen here below when he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and, 2, His *glorified* image, in which he now appears at the right hand of the Father. "Ought not Christ," he himself said, "to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) As, then, with Christ the Head, suffering and glory were firmly bound together by the will and decree of the Father, so it is with the members. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Tim. 2:12.) "If so be we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17.)

i. But as this is an important subject let me endeavour to open it a little more fully and clearly. Look, then, at these two points: 1, First the *ground* on which our conformity to the image of Christ rests; 2, Secondly the *nature* of that conformity.

1. The *predestinating purposes* of God are the ground, as I have shown from the passage just quoted from Rom. 8. It was the eternal purpose of God to glorify his dear Son by making him the Head of a people whose nature he should assume into union with his divine Person. This is the *foundation* of their conformity to him, as it is also of that union with him whereby we become "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph.

5:30.)

2. But this shows us also the *nature* of that conformity—that he was made to resemble us by partaking of our nature, and we made to resemble him by partaking of his Spirit. As this conformity, then, to his image is a *spiritual* conformity—a likeness in soul, though there will be hereafter a *bodily* conformity, for "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," both in soul and body (1 Cor. 15:49), it begins at regeneration, in the implantation of the life of God in the heart. Till then, we are conformed to this world, we bear the image of Adam the first, Adam the fallen, the Adam who "begat a son in his own likeness after his image" (Gen. 5:3), the carnal image which God despises when he awakes to execute judgment upon those who bear it. (Psa. 73:20.)

I have shown you that the image of Christ to which we are to be conformed is twofold: 1, First, the *suffering* image in which he appeared upon earth, and 2, the *glorified* image which he now wears in heaven. As, then, we are to be conformed hereafter to his glorified image above, for "when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2), so we must be now conformed to his suffering image below.

I may seem to you perhaps wandering from my text. But not so; for this conformity to the suffering image of Christ is intimated by the words of the apostle in it: "Ye are *dead*;" for every step of the Lord Jesus Christ from the manger to the cross was, if I may use the expression, a step of death, a step in death, and a step to death. He came to die: that was his errand. There was no mortality naturally in his flesh; but he took a nature which could die, and a life that he could lay down. Had his pure humanity been naturally mortal, it would have been a fallen, corrupt, and sinful nature, subject to corruption; but God's Holy One saw no corruption. (Psa. 16:10.) And did not he himself say? "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it

again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17, 18.) But he came to die. "I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:15.) As, then, he took that life that he might lay it down, his path, from the first assumption of that life in the womb of the virgin to the laying of it down upon the cross, with every breath, word, and act of his pure humanity, was, so to speak, an act of death, because an act of suffering; for his sufferings ended in death. Therefore every act of his blessed Majesty when here below, being an act of suffering, was so far an act of death, as leading to it, terminating in it, and to us an example of it. He died to the world, for he was not of it, and by his death judged and condemned it; he died under the law, for he bore its curse and endured its penalty; he died under the wrath of God due to us that it might be appeased and put away. He died daily under poverty, shame, persecution, and temptation, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. And his daily death ended in his actual death, closing a scene of meritorious suffering with the oblation of his body and soul on the cross, in the sacrifice which he offered up as the only propitiation for sin.

ii. The beginning of this conformity to the suffering image of Christ is as I have already intimated at regeneration, when the first line of the image of Christ is traced on the soul; and this line is the line of *death*. For we never live till we die, and we never die till we live. So Paul found it: "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." (Rom. 7:9.) "Ye are dead." But when did you begin to die? When your soul was made alive unto God by his regenerating grace.

1. Our first death is, I believe, generally to the *world*. Conviction of sin, trouble of mind, distress of soul, guilt of conscience bring us out of it. The wounded deer cannot run with the herd. It lies down in the shade among the fern to bleed and die, when the antlered group bound merrily on. So a wounded conscience drops and falls, or slinks away into the shade out of the company and out of the sight of the cheerful youths and mirthful maidens, among whom once perhaps the now stricken man ran first and

foremost. The new life of God in the soul, the rising fear of his great name, the budding tenderness of conscience, opening like a green leaf in spring, all shrink from the chill breath, the defiling contact of the world, wherever our lot be cast, whatever be our station in life, even where neither immorality nor profanity makes itself openly manifest.

These first strokes of conviction, this strange sense of uneasiness and unhappiness, may not only come on unexpectedly, but their cause be at the time unknown to the sufferer; and yet, like the beginning of consumption, be the beginning of death. The commencement of a work of grace is often very gradual; but it always goes on till the patient dies.

2. This is being brought *under the law*, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20.) To Christ's suffering image we are to be conformed; this death then we must die; for we must have vital union with the Lord Jesus in his dying life, if we have union with him in his risen life at the right hand of the Father. As Jesus died under the law, and by dying under the law died to the law, so we must die the same death that we may be dead with him. The law must kill us as it killed him; must curse us as it cursed him; bring condemnation and guilt into our conscience as it brought condemnation visibly and manifestly upon him as he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Not that we can suffer to the same extent, or for the same purpose as he suffered. He could say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." (Lamen. 1:12.) He could say, in the language of the Psalmist, "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore." The law did not spare him; it exacted the uttermost farthing; nor did he give up his parting breath until he could say, "It is finished." So if we are to know anything vitally of dying with Christ, we must know something of dying as he died. And observe it was by crucifixion, a painful and lingering death, though in the Lord's case preternaturally shortened; for when the work was done, why need he suffer more? Thus under the law

you die a lingering death; gradually your strength and spirit decline and fade; weaker and weaker does the flesh become till at last you die away as to all hope and help. This is dying under the law.

3. But again, Christ died under the manifested, visible *anger of God*. Not but what his blessed Majesty had a gleam of light in seeing his Father's countenance beaming in upon him with ineffable complacency when the cloud of wrath had passed away, for how else could he have said with such sweet filial confidence, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit?" (Luke 23:46.) But in appearance, in the eyes of man, of his enemies and murderers, he died under the wrath of God, for he died an accursed death according to the very language of the Law, for he was literally and truly "hanged upon a tree." His cruel foes knew nothing of those divine purposes of which they were the unconscious executors; nor did they see that when "they derided him, saying, he saved others, let him save himself," he was then offering his body and soul to his Father as a sin-atonement sacrifice. So we in a sense must die in our experience under the wrath of God. We must feel what a holy and terrible God we have to deal with, and that we are justly doomed to die; that by our sins we have deserved eternal condemnation; and that unless he extend mercy to us, except he save us by his grace, we never can be delivered from the wrath to come. As we thus feel or fear the terrors of the Almighty, we die to all legal hope; we are killed to our righteousness, and expire before God, sometimes in an agony of distress. When your soul was brought down within you by a sense of God's anger due to your sins; when guilt lay hard and heavy upon your conscience, you have fallen down, sometimes bodily, flat before God, feeling there was nothing in you to save you from the lowest hell, and that if God were to hurl a mighty thunderbolt from the innermost recess of heaven and launch you into the bottomless pit, you only had your desert, and must say justice had its due. This was to die under the wrath of God; this was to expire under a sense of guilt and condemnation in your conscience. Have you never felt this?

iii. But death, naturally and literally, is not in all cases a rapid or instantaneous process. There is the lingering consumption and slowly advancing dropsy, as well as the rapid fever and quick-destroying inflammation. How varied in name and nature, in beginning and progress, are the diseases which thin the ranks of the living and fill the cemetery with the dead. But the end in all is the same. Long or short may be the road, but they all terminate in the same place—our last home. As in death natural, so is it in death spiritual. The apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ;" and again, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.) Crucifixion, we know, was a lingering death; it did not take life away instantaneously, for, with a refinement of cruelty, it avoided injuring the vital organs, that the criminal might, as a Roman emperor said of one of his enemies, "feel himself die." Instances are therefore recorded of men living as long as three days upon the cross; but they slowly got weaker and weaker, and their bodily powers suffered gradual diminution, until pain and hunger and thirst closed the scene. So it is in grace. It is not all the people of God who, like Heman, suffer his terrors until they are distracted; nor do all tremble over the open mouth of hell with unspeakable fear lest they be plunged headlong into it. But they die a slow and lingering death, becoming weaker and weaker until all their strength is wasted away and gone, and they die in their feelings, helpless and hopeless to save themselves. Thus they die as completely, if not so rapidly or violently, as those who fall down slain under the terrors of the law, and feel the outstretched sword of justice more pointedly and more powerfully in their very vitals.

iv. Now it is by this death that we die unto the things of time and sense; to all that charms the natural mind of man; to the pleasures and pursuits of life; to that busy, restless world which once held us so fast and firm in its embrace, and whirled us round and round within its giddy dance. Let us look back. We were not always a set of poor mopes, as the world calls us. We were once as merry and as gay as the merriest and gayest of them. But what were we really and truly with all our mirth? Dead

to God, alive to sin; dead to everything holy and divine, alive to everything vain and foolish, light and trifling, carnal and sensual, if not exactly vile and abominable. Our natural life was with all of us a life of sense; with some of us, perhaps, chiefly of pleasure and worldly happiness; with others a life of covetousness, or ambition, or self-righteousness. Men's pursuits and pleasures differ as widely as their station or disposition; but a life of sense and self reigns and rules in all. Now by dying with Christ, we die unto those things in which our natural life consists, for they live in us as long as we live in them; and that they may die in us we must die to them. Thus the apostle speaks of his own double crucifixion: "Whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The world, then, can only be crucified unto us as we are crucified unto it. Paul therefore says: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. 5:24.) Many have tried to crucify the flesh, but never could do it because they were not first crucified themselves. Now thus to crucify us is to bring a death as to earthly things into the soul. Thus under the conviction of sin we die to the world; for when suffering under the pangs of a guilty conscience, what is the world to us? What relief can it afford to a bleeding wound? What balm to a troubled mind? What salvation from death and hell? Therefore we die to the world from its inability to do us any good, as the world, the things of time and sense, the charms of nature and art, the spectators of his misery would all swim before the eyes of a man dying on a cross,—he dead to them, they dead to him. So it is or should be in the crucifixion of the soul. "O, world," it says, as it hangs on the cross, "thou hast deceived me long enough. Where now are thy promised pleasures, thy mirth, thy amusements, thy schemes of profit and preferment? What can they all do for me a poor dying sinner? I have spent days and years greedily looking for the offered enjoyment, and what have I found but guilt and condemnation? Let me die to thee and live unto God."

Similarly we die unto sin. Sin once put forth its desperate power and overcame all our resolutions; sin drew, and we followed like the fool to the correction of the stocks. Sin charmed, and we



listened to its seductive wiles. Sin held out its bait, and we too greedily, too heedlessly swallowed the hook. But now we see and feel what guilt and condemnation it has brought into our conscience to have been so drawn aside, entangled, and overcome. We find and feel that the pleasures of sin are but for a season, and that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord. When, too, we are favoured to view by faith what suffering and sorrow sin cost the Lord to put it away that we might not sink for ever under its load, there is a dying *to* it—at least to its reigning power and dominion.

So with our own *righteousness*, wisdom, strength, and all the goodness of the creature. There was a time when we highly prized them all, and, like Job, "would not let them go." But by degrees, as the law, the justice, and holiness of God, the nature and evil of sin, and our own helplessness to do the things that we would, were opened up in our consciences, we died as to the power which we once thought we had in ourselves to believe, repent, and obey. Our boasted knowledge we saw to be ignorance and the worst of ignorance, as puffing us up with pride when really destitute of all true knowledge of God and his dear Son. Our once vaunted strength we found to be weakness, for it never enabled us to truly repent of sin nor savingly believe in the Lord Jesus, or kept us from the power of evil. And thus we died to them and they to us. We might call upon them to help us in the hour of need; but it was like calling to the dead to help the living. But when a better righteousness, wisdom and strength were revealed to us in a crucified Christ, then we gladly, as well as feelingly and experimentally, died to all our own, that we might find them all in him. Thus there is a blessedness in dying with Christ, for by this death we only lose what we may well part with, and get in its stead what makes us rich for ever and ever. To part with the world is to part with its condemnation; and to die to self is the very germ and beginning of not only the death of our worst enemy, but of living to Christ. Thus death becomes the basis of all vital godliness, the grand preliminary to everything holy and happy, blessed and peaceable for time and for eternity.

"Ye are dead." Do you not find it so by vital experience? When does religion most flourish in your heart? When have the things of time and sense least influence on your soul? When pressed down with sin and sorrow, do you not seem to be more dead to the world than when levity and frivolity possess your mind? And if ever you are favoured with a glimpse of a suffering Jesus in the gloomy garden, or expiring on the ignominious cross, does it not seem, at least while the impression lasts, to put a death on everything which at other times occupies or charms your mind, whilst it raises up a good hope through grace in your soul? As, then, we look to Jesus by faith, dying that we might live, the virtue of his death flowing into the soul kills us to the things of time and sense. We thus find that the more we close our arms round the Person of Jesus as crucified for us, and the more we embrace the mystery of his atoning blood and dying love, the more the power of sin, worldliness, self-righteousness, creature strength, and wisdom die in the soul. But O the difficulty of parting with these idols! It is killing work. And yet when we are in some measure killed to them, what a deliverance it is from the miserable bondage of sin, and the hardly less miserable bondage of the world and self.

II.—We have seen what *death* is. We have fairly looked at him in the face, and we have seen that though he is so terrible to the flesh, he is after all the Christian's friend, not his enemy. Now, then, we pass on to view his companion and successor, *Resurrection*, which was to be our second point of consideration this morning.

*"If ye then be risen with Christ."* We thus see that there is a rising with Christ as there is a dying with him.

The Resurrection of our blessed Lord has various aspects, all which bear upon the experience of the saints of God.

1. Christ rose from the dead *for himself* triumphant over death and hell. But he rose not only for himself that he might sit on his throne of glory according to the promise of the Father, but as *the*

*head of the Church*, of that countless multitude, which when gathered together will not only exceed the stars in number, but outshine them in glory. Now as all these died with Christ when he died upon the accursed tree, and were mystically buried with him when he lay in the sepulchre; so when the mighty Jesus rose from the dead and issued from that gloomy tomb in which he had lain for three days and three nights, they at the same moment rose with him. We read therefore that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:5, 6.) We here see the connection that there is between Christ's resurrection and our regeneration. "Hath quickened us," that is, made us alive, "together with Christ." When, then, life entered into the dead body of Christ in the tomb, it was the mystical quickening of all the members of his body, the sure and earnest pledge of their regeneration. Peter, therefore, says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Pet. 1:3.) As but for the death of Christ there could have been no atonement for sin, so but for his resurrection there could have been neither justification nor regeneration; for as "he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.) Regeneration, then, is the resurrection of the soul as the prelude to the resurrection of the body and soul together in the great day; and it is to be known in vital experience in the same way as death is made known. For as we die spiritually and experimentally with Christ under and by the law, so we rise spiritually and experimentally with him under and by the gospel. When Christ rose from the dead, the law had no more power over him. The law did all it could do in killing him. When he was upon the cross, the law discharged all its thunders and curses upon his devoted head. It condemned and slew him, and then the law could do no more; for it is with the law of God as with the law of man: when once it has inflicted its penalty and the criminal has died under that penalty, the law has done its office. It dies in killing. A criminal cannot be twice executed. Thus it was with Christ, and thus it was with the people of Christ: when the law

had killed Christ, it was dead as regarded him, and never could touch him again. So when he rose from the dead, he rose free from all law charges, demands, and exactions; he rose as completely discharged from the penalties of the law as a criminal who goes out of prison when the Queen has signed his free pardon.

2. But how is this to be *made experimentally known*? By some manifestation or discovery of a risen Christ to the soul. We read, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20.) Why? Because they saw in him their Lord and their God, as Thomas saw and confessed. Their doubts and fears, their unbelief and infidelity were all gone, and they rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. So when the soul is blessed with any manifestation of Jesus as risen from the dead, and with a sweet testimony of its interest in his death and resurrection, and the conscience is purged in any measure by the application of atoning blood so as to deliver it from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law, and bring it into the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, it rises experimentally with him; that is to say, it rises out of and from under the condemnation of the law and conscience, and enters into the blessedness of salvation by free grace and by free grace alone.

3. But not only does it rise from under all law charges and condemnation, but it rises *out of the world* by rising *above the world*. How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the world, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power; who are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business, or entangled by worldly persons or worldly engagements. Their partners in business or their partners in life; their carnal relatives or their worldly children; their numerous connections or their social habits; their strong passions or their deep-rooted prejudices, all bind and fetter them down to earth. There they grovel and lie amid, what Milton terms,

"The smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call earth;"

and so bound are they with the cords of their sins that they scarcely seek deliverance from them, or even desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air, so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions. But if, as members of his mystical body, they are already risen with Christ, as it was not possible for the Head to be holden of death when God loosed the pains thereof (Acts 2: 24), so neither shall they ever be buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness. They must rise spiritually if they rose mystically. If interested in the *reality* of Christ's resurrection, they must know the *power* of Christ's resurrection.

But how blessed it is to know a little of this power; to rise, in our feelings and affections, from the grave of carnality in which we are so often fast held; from that death and bondage, legality and self-righteousness, which so press us down. And not only so, but to rise above the smiles and frowns of the creature, above the distracting cares of daily occupation and business, far away from the company of ungodly men and dead professors. Thus to mount up is a fulfilling of the promise: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers, with yellow gold." (Psa. 68:13.) O to get away from the dust and dirt of the pots; from the clay and rubbish of the potter's yard; where all foul vermin breed among the broken potsherds; and to be a dove soaring on its silver wings and golden feathers up to heaven's gate! Do we not know sometimes what it is thus to mount up in affectionate desires after living union and communion with the Lord Jesus? This is being risen with Christ. But how many who, with all their faults and failings, we still hope fear God, seem more like Lazarus in the tomb, "bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin," than like Lazarus after the word had been spoken, "Loose him, and let him go." Alas! too many members even of Christian churches, who have made an open profession of faith in a risen and ascended Jesus, seem much more concerned about the prosperity of their shop or farm, and more anxious about their wives and families, and the poor perishing things of

time and sense generally than about the prosperity of their soul. But whilst thus held down in and by their grave clothes, they find it as impossible to disentangle themselves from them as Lazarus was to loosen his own bands of death. Nothing short of the same voice of love and power which called forth the sleeping Lazarus can bring them out of the tomb to see the face of a risen Christ.

You that are dead and yet alive, buried and yet risen, can you trace in your souls anything of these two points which this morning I have endeavoured to open up? Can you find anything like death, and anything like resurrection? Have you ever sunk under the terrors of a broken law, under guilt of conscience, under a sense of condemnation, under fears of eternally perishing, under a solemn conviction that by no exertion of your own you could save your soul from the wrath of God; and thus have died to all your own strength, wisdom, and goodness? Can you look back to any special season when such an experience of death was wrought in your soul? Or if you cannot lay your hand upon any particular time or special season, yet can you trace that, for a longer or shorter period, you have had convictions of sin, and that they have been of such a nature, reality, and depth as to bring your heart down with labour, and make you feel that unless Christ be revealed to your soul you must sink into eternal misery? Though painful at the time, and though perhaps we were then quite ignorant what the Lord was doing with and in us, yet how good it is, how strengthening and encouraging to faith to be able to look back to a season when the Lord laid judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, so as to disannul our covenant with death and to tread down our agreement with hell. Convictions are not consolations; the law is not the gospel; bondage and imprisonment are not deliverance and liberty; but they precede them, prepare for them, and are indispensable unto them.

But has the Lord gone a step further in your soul's experience? Has the Spirit of God wrought upon your heart in any way of mercy and goodness by revealing salvation through sovereign, superabounding grace? Has he ever given you to see the beauty

and blessedness, grace and glory of the Person of a risen Christ, and thus brought into your heart a sweet acquaintance with his love and blood and salvation, as so suited to your case, as so adapted to all your wants and woes, as so meeting in every point the extremity of your desperate state by nature and practice? Has the Lord the Spirit thus raised up in your soul any measure of faith in the Son of God, any faith of adherence, if not faith of assurance, so that, as the Scripture speaks, you cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart (Acts 11:23); that is a firm resolve and fixed resolution, in his grace and strength, to hold on and out unto the end, and sooner die than part with a good hope in him?

Now this is *resurrection*, for this is a rising up out of the ruins of self to embrace a risen Christ. And wherever there has been death there will be this resurrection. The wicked die in their sins, but not so the righteous. Many die in the convictions of their natural conscience, as Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas. But the saint of God never dies under the weight and burden of spiritual convictions; for in them there is a heavenly life which can never die. Being risen with Christ, as a member of his mystical body, he will never die in despair nor under the wrath of God. He may fear again and again lest he should so die; and through fear of death and what comes after death may all his life-time be subject to bondage; but liberty and deliverance, however long delayed, will come at last. The resurrection of Christ is the sure pledge of this; for as Jesus must rise from the tomb and could not lie there longer than the appointed time, so the saint of God will not ever lie under a sense of wrath; will not ever groan and sigh under terror and apprehension; will not ever be in the tomb of darkness and gloom. The Lord will bring him forth and manifest his risen power in his own time and way to his soul; and then he will have in his conscience a blessed testimony of Christ's resurrection by knowing the power of it in his own heart.

III.—But we come now to our third point—*Ascension*, and its consequence, *Session*, or sitting at the right hand of God.

i. Jesus did not tarry upon earth long after he had risen from the

dead. Forty days he spent here below to be seen of his disciples, to whom "he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3), to leave indisputable testimony that he was the same Jesus who was crucified at Calvary. But he did not tarry longer than was necessary for this purpose, and to establish their wavering faith. At the end of the forty days, he ascended from Mount Olivet in the open sight of his eleven disciples, in whose presence "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." (Acts. 1:9.) Thus there was a visible departure of our gracious Lord; and this was performed in the presence and sight of all the eleven apostles to confirm them in the reality and certainty of his going up on high; for, though they did not see him when he rose, they saw him when he ascended. Eye-witnesses, as has been observed by learned divines, were not necessary unto the act of Christ's resurrection, but were necessary unto the act of his ascension; for to see him when risen was a sufficient proof of his resurrection, but he must be seen ascending for proof of his ascension. I have insisted upon this point, because I wish to lay a firm basis on which our faith may stand. But we will now consider the ascension of our gracious Lord *experimentally*.

As then we have union with Christ in death and in resurrection, so we have union with him in ascension. We therefore read in a passage which I have before quoted, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6.) There were certain steps from the cross to the crown taken by our blessed Lord, in which we have union and fellowship with him; 1st, death; 2nd, burial; 3rd, quickening; 4th, resurrection; 5th, ascension; and 6th, session, that is sitting down at God's right hand. In all these points and steps the Church has union and communion with Christ. We have seen death, burial, quickening, resurrection, and now we come to *ascension*. We have not literally ascended any more than we have literally risen; but we ascend spiritually as we arise from the dead spiritually. Our bodies are here below, but our souls, we trust, are risen and ascended with Christ. What this ascension is experimentally we shall see more particularly when we come to



our last point, for it is contained in the precept, "Set your affection on things above." Have you not every now and then heavenly affections, spiritual desires, earnest breathings, actings of faith and hope and love—those living tenants of the soul, which pant and flutter like so many imprisoned birds in their cage? It is these affections that ascend with Christ to where he is at God's right hand, when the Spirit opens the cage and the young eagles mount on high.

Bear this, then, in mind, that when Christ ascended, he ascended not only for himself, but as the great Head of the Church. "I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He ascended as the Head of his mystical body, and thus took the whole of the body into heaven with him. As upon the cross all the elect of God died with him; as in the tomb they were all buried with him; as when he rose they all rose with him; so when Christ ascended into heaven they all ascended with him. He therefore said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He prepared a place by taking possession in his own Person, that where he is there his people may be also. Thus when the Lord Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of the Father, when all the angels sounded their golden harps and the courts of heaven were filled with glorious harmony, as the principalities and powers in heavenly places and the spirits of just men made perfect beheld the Son of God sitting down upon his throne of glory, the Church of God virtually ascended with him, and sat down with him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This mystical sitting down in heavenly places with Christ is the foundation of our spiritual ascension; for as those divine realities are handed down into our soul by the power of God, and their sweetness and blessedness made experimentally manifest in our hearts, our affections rise and ascend until they all centre in Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Do you not thus know the ascension of Christ not only in doctrine but in experience? Have you never had a view of Christ at the right hand of God? When you thus saw him by the eye of faith your heart went up toward him, and your affections flowed out where your heart was gone, for you saw him at the right hand of the Father, as having

ascended and led captivity captive. I hope I know something of this in soul experience or I could not describe it to you. O that you and I knew more of it, and that our affections were more set upon things above, and less upon things of the earth.

ii. Consequent upon the ascension of Christ is his *Session*, that is, in the language of our text, sitting "on the right hand of God."

Now this *Session* of Christ at God's right hand implies several things; first, *Acceptance*, that is, the approbation of his heavenly Father, and his acceptance of him as the God-man Mediator, which was manifested by his placing him at his own right hand; 2, secondly, *Exaltation* to regal dignity and power; 3, thirdly, *Intercession*, for he was "to sit as a priest upon his throne" (Zech, 6:13); and 4, fourthly, *Mediation*, as the Church's living Head, for our life in the text is declared to "be hid with Christ in God."

But we shall find that this session with Christ is full of heavenly fruit, and like the tree which John saw in vision, its fruit and leaves are for the healing of the nations. These fruits must be experimentally known that they may be handled, tasted, and enjoyed. Thus every precious promise which was ever applied to your soul, every mark of grace, every sweet whisper, every look of love, every glimpse of the King in his beauty, are all so many testimonies that Jesus is at God's right hand. Why? Because they are so many fruits of his intercession. Do you not find your need of a Mediator when you approach the throne of grace? Whither do you direct your prayers? Do they not all ascend to where Jesus sits? And must they not be perfumed with the incense of his intercession in order that they may enter the ears of the Lord of sabaoth? Do you know anything of spiritual communion with the Lord Jesus Christ? To whom do you unbosom your sorrows? Before whose face do you lay your woes? To whom do you resort in times of temptation and distress. Who can support you under them, or deliver you out of them? Are you not looking for a manifestation of the love and blood and grace of Jesus? Does not this show that your hope is anchored within the veil whither the forerunner is for us already entered? (Heb. 6:20.)

iii. But I just intimated that one of the fruits of the Session of Christ at the right hand of God, and to which I must now confine myself, is that he might be a living Head over all things to the Church. For this end, as Paul tells us, God "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1:20-23.) The apostle, therefore, in our text, says, "your life is hid with Christ in God." Thus Jesus as risen, as ascended, as sitting at the right hand of the Father, is "our life." We have no other; for he is "the way, the truth, and the life." But this life is "hid with Christ in God." By the word "hid" we may understand mainly two things; 1st, that this life is *concealed* from the world. The spiritual life of a child of God is altogether hidden from the carnal eye. 2ndly, it signifies that this life is *stored up* in him, deposited in his hands, and laid up safely and securely in his bosom. Out of him then, as our life, come all our daily supplies of faith and love and every grace. From him comes all my power to preach, all your power to hear. From him comes every sensation of contrition and brokenness, every feeling of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity; from him, as "of God made unto us sanctification," is derived that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

What a bearing then has the resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ upon the experience of a Christian! Take these divine realities away or hide them out of sight, and what is there but carnality and death? It is from want of an experimental knowledge of these divine truths that so little is known of spiritual religion. But nothing else is of any real value. An earthly religion may content a Pharisee; a carnal, formal worship may satisfy a dead professor; but it is living union with a living Lord at the right hand of God, and receiving communications out of his fulness which alone can satisfy a living soul. Can you live without Christ? If you are a real believer in the Son of God, you can no more live without Christ than without bread; without prayer than without food; without faith and hope than without daily meat. I fully grant that we have our cold and dead seasons, and these many and long; but I am speaking now of a believer's feelings when the life of God is warm in his heart.

Now all these supplies of life and power, of grace and strength, are communicated out of the fulness of Jesus at the right hand of God, for in him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and they are sent down by him to keep alive our dying souls, for our life is "hid with Christ in God." It is the breathings, movements, and actings of this hidden life in the soul which distinguish a real Christian from a dead professor. A dead professor is satisfied with an earthly religion, with a round of forms, with external ordinances, with the flattering applause of dying creatures like himself. But the saint of God, in whose heart the Spirit dwells and whom he teaches by his own heavenly grace, is from time to time looking up unto Jesus to receive out of his fulness. His life is hid with Christ in God. In the bosom of Christ he pours out his sorrows; from that bosom he receives his joys. This is the ascension of a believing soul to where Jesus sits enthroned on high, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Be not deceived; think not that a mere external religion or a profession of the truth, without an experience of its life and power, will ever save you. It is the hidden life, and that hidden with Christ in the very bosom of God, that makes and manifests a living soul. If we have not this, we have nothing. I tell you plainly and faithfully that if you have not this inward and hidden life of God in your bosom you know nothing aright, you have nothing to save or sanctify your soul. Search, therefore, and see, you who desire to fear God, what you can find in your bosom of this union with Christ to death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting together with him in heavenly places. True religion is a heavenly religion. It comes down from God and ascends up to God; and be assured if you are partakers of this heavenly religion that your glorified bodies will hereafter ascend with your immortal souls; for "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.)

IV.—From our union with Christ in these points follows the apostle's exhortation, which I proposed to consider in the 4th and last place under the head, *Affection*. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

The apostle assumes that the Colossian believers to whom he was writing were partakers of these vital realities—that they were dead, risen, ascended, and sitting with Christ in heavenly places. He, therefore, earnestly exhorts them to the performance of those living acts which manifest the reality of grace in the heart.

We may divide his exhortation into two main points: 1st, negative; 2ndly, positive; that is, 1st what they should *not* do, 2ndly what they *should* do.

1. He bids them, then, not to "*set their affection on things on the earth.*" Now naturally we have no affection for anything else. There is no such thing as a spiritual desire or a heavenly affection in our soul when we are in a state of unregeneracy. So fallen are we that we love, and cannot but love the world and the things of the world. We have no heart for anything but the things of time and sense; nay, rather, as our carnal mind is enmity against God, we hate everything which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy. One main part, therefore, of the work of God upon the soul is to take off our affections from these earthly things, and to fix them upon Jesus where he sits enthroned above, that we may love and hate those things which he loves and hates.

But how broad, how expressive is the exhortation, "not to set our affection on things on the earth." There is not a thing on the earth, then, according to this direction, on which we should set our affections. We love our wives, our children, our relatives; and we should do so for husbands are bidden to love their wives even as themselves (Eph. 5:25, 33.) But we must not love them in preference to God, or inconsistently with our love and obedience to him; nor must we love them as we love him who died to save us from the wrath to come. Our affection is not to be set upon things on the earth. Business, worldly cares, the interests of our family, the things of time and sense, in whatever form they come, whatever shape they may assume, must not so entwine themselves round our affections as to bind them down to the ground. We may use them as God's creatures for the support and

sustentation of our life, but we must not abuse them. We cannot in our present time-state be utterly divorced from the things of time and sense; for most of us have to gain our living by the sweat of our brow, or the harder sweat of our brain; but we are not to set our affections on them. Houses, gardens, land, property, friends, family,—all these earthly things we are not to love, even if we possess them or some of them, nor set our affections on them so that they should become idols. A main purpose of God in his rod and by a daily cross, is to wean, loosen, and divorce our heart from these natural idols, for we cannot embrace them without defilement. James speaks of one main element of pure and undefiled religion as consisting in keeping ourselves "unspotted from the world." (James 1:27.) Thus we may compare a child of God to a person dressed in clean habiliments, say a very neatly apparalled female who has to tread her way through some dirty alley—through one of the miserable courts of London. How carefully must she tread, how closely must she keep her garments to preserve herself from defilement. So it is in grace: we have to walk in this world as a cleanly female would walk through a narrow passage, where on every side there was nothing but filth and ordure. You cannot think perhaps that this fair and beautiful world, as it appears to our eye, can be as loathsome or as filthy as a London alley. But it is so, for everything here is defiled with the filth of sin. Thus a fair-looking object may be foul, because turned to an idol. It may be but a flower, and yet be an idol; it may be a darling child whom everybody admires for its beauty and attractiveness; yet it may be a defiling idol. A cherished scheme, a favourite speculation, may be an idol. A crop of wheat, a flock of sheep, a good farm, a thriving business, universal respect, may all be defiling idols; for all these things, when eagerly pursued and loved, draw the soul away from God, and by drawing it insensibly from him, bring pollution and guilt into the conscience.

2. Now we are, or by grace in due time shall be, through trials and afflictions and the dealings of God upon our soul, weaned and divorced from earth with all its charms and pleasures and all its polluting idols. And if we are favoured with a faith's view of an

ascended Jesus, and he is pleased to endear himself to our soul by some discovery of his love and grace, it will draw up our heart and affections to himself. We shall thus be enabled to perform the *positive* part of the precept, which is to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and set our affection there. If we thus learn to love him, we shall love other things less; and if he be pleased to keep us near to himself, we shall endeavour, as John bids us, to keep ourselves from idols, which can only bring distracting guilt into our conscience.

I am indeed well aware that all this must be wrought in our soul by the power of God. I am not laying down or enforcing these precepts as legal duties to perform, but blessed privileges which are wrought by God in the heart. I know what a wicked heart I carry in my bosom, how soon I am drawn aside and entangled by the snares of sin and Satan; but my desire is to be ever looking up to the Lord of life and glory, that he would send down the communications of his grace, that I may experience the power of his resurrection in my heart, and thus be weaned from these things of time and sense, and have my affections more singly fixed on his blessed Majesty. And I know that true religion must ever have this effect. It must purify the heart and draw out the affections. Whether you know it or not, you may depend upon it that there is a vital reality in true religion, a living power in the grace of God; and that where God works by his Spirit, something must be done, aye, and something will be done, to make a separation between us and those who are living to themselves, and setting all their affections on the earth.

The Lord, of his infinite mercy, lay these things with greater weight and power upon our conscience; make us to feel more and more their solemn importance, and lead us more vitally and experimentally into those heavenly truths which bear upon earth such precious fruit, and which shall be "crowned with praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be ascribed equal and eternal glory.

## The Death of the Flesh the Life of the Spirit

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 25, 1844

"O Lord, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit." Isaiah 38:16

The words I have just read, some of you may remember, are a part of "the writing" that King Hezekiah penned after "he was recovered of that sickness" which Isaiah the prophet was sent to declare was unto death. But when the Lord, in answer to Hezekiah's prayers and tears, reversed the sentence, and raised him up once more to health; and not only so, but enabled him to say, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back"—then, that there might be a lasting record of the Lord's dealings with him, and a standing word of consolation to Gods afflicted people, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he penned this writing. Thus was his triumphal chant; the song of his deliverance which he sang upon the "stringed instruments in the house," and to the honour and praise "of the Lord." (Isa. 38:20.)

Before, then, I enter into the spiritual and experimental meaning of the words of the text, it will be necessary to trace out a little of Hezekiah's experience, that we may know what he intended, when he used this expression, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." The term, "*these things*," is clearly the key of the text, and has a reference to certain dealings of God upon his soul; in order, therefore, to know what he meant to convey by it, we must take a glimpse at these dealings of God with him.

Hezekiah, let it be remembered, was a gracious character before God brought on him the heavy trial recorded in this chapter. (Isaiah 38.) But he was where many of God's people are, though he knew it not: he had not been plunged deep enough into a knowledge of his own ruin, helplessness, and hopelessness as a



fallen sinner. He wanted what Mr. Hart speaks of in his experience; (he uses a strange word, but a very expressive one;) he says, "After this my, shall I call it *reconversion*?" Many of God's people need this reconversion. They want a second plunge; and until they have had this second plunge, they do not, for the most part, know gospel mysteries deeply.

I shall endeavour by tracing out the experience of Hezekiah to explain my meaning more fully; and thus show how consistent it is with the teachings and dealings of God the Spirit on the heart. Hezekiah, as I have hinted, was a partaker of grace before the heavy trial came on him recorded in this chapter. And you will perceive most marked traits of his being a spiritual character, if you will read what is said of him in the corresponding passages in the books of Kings and of Chronicles; for there we have many proofs of his being one that feared God. For instance, we find in him a great zeal for the Lord, in breaking down the images, and cutting down the groves. It is also expressly said of him, that "he trusted in the Lord;" that "he clave to him, and departed not from following him;" and that "the Lord was with him." (2 Kings 18:4-7.) How earnest he shewed himself that the house of God might be opened, (which had been shut up by his father Ahaz,) every part of the temple purified, its worship and sacrifice restored, and the Passover duly celebrated. (2 Chron. 29.) And we see how his love extended beyond Judah; he sent post, we read, even from Dan to Beersheba to gather together to the solemn feast those that feared the Lord of the tribes of Israel. He was a man of a tender conscience also; one who knew something of real brokenness and contrition before the Lord; for when the blasphemous letter came from the King of Assyria, we find him rending his garments, clothing himself in sackcloth, and going into the temple to spread out the letter before the Lord; and not merely spreading out the letter, but also pouring out his soul in cries and groans, in prayers and supplications, that God would vindicate his own cause, and deliver him and his people from the hands of Sennacherib. (Isa. 37.) Besides this, on the very eve of the trial came the deliverance. God heard his cries, smote the army of the King of Assyria, and gave Hezekiah this striking

testimony that he had heard his prayer, by cutting off a hundred and fourscore and five thousand of that mighty army which had threatened him and Jerusalem with total destruction.

Putting all these marks together, we cannot entertain a doubt that Hezekiah was at this time a partaker of grace. We see his zeal, his faith, his love, his humility, and the tenderness of his conscience; that he knew what spiritual prayer was, and answers to prayer; the application of promises, and the fulfilment of them. But still, though he had the grace of the Spirit in his soul, though he had a new heart and a new nature, and had received tokens of mercy from God, yet there was something deficient, something grievously lacking in him. And this is the case with many of God's people. They have the fear of God in their conscience; they have a zeal for the Lord of hosts; they have a love to his Name, to his people, and to his truth; they have a measure of tenderness of heart and godly sincerity; and at times, when brought into straits and circumstances, the Spirit of grace and of supplications is poured out upon them, by which they cry to the Lord, and which he hears and answers. Yet there is something grievously lacking in them; they are still floating on the surface of truth only; they have still a superficial religion; "the fountains of the great deep," as Hart says of himself, "have not been broken up;" the depth of human depravity, the treachery of the heart, the pride, presumption, and hypocrisy of their fallen nature, and all that fathomless abyss of the Adam-fall which is so covered over by the veil of ignorance and unbelief—this gulph of ruin into which they were precipitated by their forefather's transgression has not been opened up by the Spirit of God in their conscience. Therefore, they only float upon the surface of truth, without diving deep into that unfathomable sea of man's misery and God's mercy, to pluck up the precious jewels which are only to be found there. So that, for want of a deeper work upon their conscience; for want of being more stripped, searched, and exercised; for want of being more powerfully led into a knowledge of their ruin and misery, their views of Jesus are superficial, and shallow, mere floating in the head than felt in the heart, and consisting rather in the reception of sound doctrine in the

judgment, than in a spiritual acquaintance with Jesus as he is, and with all that he has done for his people, in a broken and contrite spirit. Is not this true of the greater part of God's people in town and country? And is not this slight, flimsy religion fostered by the superficial, doctrinal preaching of the day? Persons have confessed to me, with tears flowing from their eyes, that whilst they sat under doctrinal ministers, they never knew their own misery, nor ever tasted God's mercy.

Now what is to cure this deficiency? What is to lead them into a more powerful experience of the truth? What is to bring them off this sincere yet shallow religion? What is to deepen the work of grace in their conscience? Why, the things that God brought upon Hezekiah: "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." (v. 1.) That was the way the Lord took to deepen his work in Hezekiah's heart—to bring death before him. And no doubt, as the sentence of death entered into his body, so the sentence of death also entered into his conscience. And thus, the Lord, by sending home the sentence of death into his very vitals, and bringing it by divine authority into his heart and conscience, broke to pieces that which was hollow, false, and insincere, and showed him his true standing before him. In a word, he felt that he was not fit for eternity, to enter into the presence of God. His faith had not yet fully embraced the Person, love, work, and blood of Jesus; his hope had not yet taken a firm anchorage within the veil; and in fact, his religion stood more "in the wisdom of men" than in "the power of God."

Now, my friends, I know from soul experience, that until the Lord tries his work upon our heart, we shall rest in a superficial religion; we shall be content with shallow evidences, dim hopes, and shadowy expectations; we shall be content with a slight wounding and a slight healing, with being sincere in the main, and in being truly desirous to serve, please, and fear God. For want of clearer and deeper teaching, we shall be ready to think we have attained to far greater things in the divine life than we

have attained unto, and so be apt to deceive ourselves *partially*; mind, I do not say *entirely*, for I have along been tracing out a true, though shallow experience. But all this superficial religion is for the want of God's sending home the sentence of death into the conscience; as the Apostle says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves." (2 Cor. 1:9.) I speak of what I know; for I was here, I believe, myself for some time after the Lord first quickened my soul.

But what I want to draw your attention more particularly to is this—What effect was produced on Hezekiah when the sentence of death entered his conscience? We read, "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord." What a reality, what a power, what a truthfulness shine through that expression! It is as though he turned away from the creature, from the world, and from all the strength, wisdom, and righteousness of the flesh, to seek God alone as his refuge. No doubt, there were in Hezekiah's time, as in ours, those who would give him false consolation; there were, doubtless, around his death-bed, plasterers, with polished trowels and heaps of untempered mortar. The priests, we may be sure, flocked around him, and sought to administer false comfort to his soul. "Remember," they would say, "O king, thy zeal for the Lord; call to mind how thou didst purify the temple; how thou didst keep the passover; didst break to pieces the brazen serpent; the many things thou hast done for God; and how the Lord delivered thee from the hand of the king of Assyria." But all these consolations (or that which they meant to be such) administered to him no comfort; for they all fell upon a heart that could not receive them. The sentence of death was in his conscience; guilt, wrath, and condemnation were all burning up his soul; the arrows of the Almighty were drinking up his spirit. It was God's purpose that he should not be thus comforted; for if he could have taken peace from the things that they were trying to plaster him over with, he would have lost the comfort which God had designed through this trial to bring into his soul.

Now, that is the reason why God will not let his people take

comfort from the opinions of men—because he means to bring them off the creature; to wean them from leaning on an arm of flesh, and to bring them to that spot where he, and he alone, becomes all their salvation and all their desire. In order, therefore, to bring them off from the creature, he knocks away the rotten props from under them, by which they so often try to shore and buttress up their sinking souls.

But where did Hezekiah turn to? He turned "toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord." His bed was probably near the wall; and by turning to it, he implied that he felt that now he had to deal with God alone, and that no creature should come between the Lord and him. He turned, then, away from friends and from every earthly thing, to seek the Lord only. Now this is the spot to which God will bring all his children. He makes all his people, and that through painful, sharp, cutting convictions in the conscience, turn away from creatures, and from all false comfort; and to come to the Lord as feelingly lost, naked, guilty, and undone, that he may bind up the wounds which his own hands have made. This is close work. Presumption, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness cannot live here. Godly fear and spiritual sincerity alone breathe in this air.

But, we read, that he not only turned his face to the wall, but "*prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.*" There is no real prayer till we turn our faces to the wall. There is no true pouring out of the heart before the Lord till we are brought into circumstances from which his out-stretched arm alone can deliver us. How many of God's own people go on praying in a formal way, bending their knees night and morning with all due regularity; (I speak not against it); yet how little do they know of heart-felt prayer, or of crying unto the Lord out of distress of mind, and of pouring out their souls into his bosom, because they have no other refuge wherein to hide their guilty heads! But depend upon it, there is no real prayer till there is this pouring out of the heart before the Lord, nor any real supplication, fervent wrestling, and importunate pleading till the soul, from deep necessity, turns its face to the wall to seek Jesus as its only hope and refuge.

"*And he wept sore.*" He could take no comfort from the things he

had done for the Lord. He could not look at his evidences, they were all obscured; he could not review his well-spent life, it was blemished and stained throughout; he could not look at the future, or to what he meant to do for God, for the future was a dreary blank; yea, an eternity into which he was hastening without knowing how he stood before the Lord, whether he was pardoned, accepted, and saved, or whether the wrath of God was to abide on him for ever.

Now when he was reduced to this extremity, the Lord appeared for him. The Lord always meant to appear; he never intended to cut him off, as he threatened; he always purposed to lengthen his life fifteen years. But he led him through this trial, not only to teach him his deep guilt and misery, but also to show the superaboundings of his own grace in pardoning his sins through the blood of the Lamb. Thus Hezekiah had to bless God all the days of his life, as he himself declares, for being led into these deep waters, for having passed through this furnace, and being brought into this trial; because in it he learnt what he could not learn anywhere else, and in it pardon and peace were blessedly communicated with divine power and sacred unction to his soul.

In delivering him, then, out of this trial, the Lord lengthened his natural life, smiled upon his soul, and preserved him from going down to the pit, casting all his sins behind his back. Taught, then, and guided by the Spirit, Hezekiah penned this writing as a sweet memorial of the Lord's dealings with him, and that it might be an encouragement to God's people in similar circumstances in time to come.

But the main point to which I wish to call your attention is contained in the words of the text. Let us, then, with God's blessing, see what the meaning and mind of the Holy Spirit is in them. "O Lord, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit." What were "these things" he alludes to? The words "these things" have reference to what Hezekiah had been speaking of—the trial into which he had been thrown, and the deliverance which had been vouchsafed to him out of it; the

laying of sin upon his conscience, and the casting of it behind the Lord's back; the furnace into which he had been put, and the Lord having brought him safely and uninjured out of it; the sentence of death sent into his conscience, and the manifestation of light, life, peace, and salvation whereby God removed it, when by it he had been thoroughly emptied, humbled, and stripped. Thus by "these things," by the trial and the deliverance, by the affliction and the consolation, by the smarting and the healing, by being cast down and being raised up, by being made poor and by being made rich; *by* these alternating series of God's dealings in the conscience "do men live;" "and *in* all these things," being brought into them, being carried through them, and being delivered out of them,—"*in* all these things is the life of our spirit."

I.—Let us, then, see how by "these things" men live. What is the effect when the sentence of condemnation comes into the conscience? By it we live. How so? Live by death? How can that be? Because the life of faith in the soul is of such a nature, that whatever weakens nature strengthens grace, and whatever feeds nature famishes faith. The life of God in the soul is a tender exotic which, like a flower among weeds, lives as nature dies, and pines as nature flourishes. So that "by these things men live," since spiritual life is carried on and invigorated in the soul through the trials and temptations that starve and weaken the flesh.

1. For instance; these trials *deaden us to the world*. Do we not find this to be a solemn truth, that when all things go well with us, when the world is all smiles, when circumstances prosper, when the body is healthy, strong, and vigorous, spiritual religion is almost dying away in our souls? Is it not true, that, like Jeshurun, when we are waxen fat we kick? Do we not feel as the world gets a firmer hold upon our heart, that the things of God lose their reality and power in the conscience? Is it not a matter of experience, that just as nature flourishes within us, so grace seems to wither, pine, and languish? The flourishing together of these two things is incompatible. Is nature weakened? grace is strengthened. Is grace weakened? nature is strengthened. Nature

and grace, the spirit and the flesh, are so entirely opposed, that the death of the one is the life of the other, and the life of the one is the death of the other. In order, then, to weaken nature, and to make the world and its charms as nothing in our sight, the Lord sends, or allows trials and afflictions to come upon us, that by weakening nature, and bringing us down in our soul, he may cause the life of the Spirit to be more active and vigorous in our heart. For instance, when a trial comes upon us, such as befell Hezekiah (a trial I have in a measure passed through, and therefore know something of it)—when the sentence of condemnation comes into our conscience, what is the effect of it? In what state and circumstance does the trial find us? For the most part, it finds us full of the world; we have some sincerity, some godly fear, some desire to be right, and some fear to be wrong. We have had some testimonies, enjoyed some measure of consolation and of the peace of God in our conscience. But still, for want of a deeper work, for want of the stripping and emptying operations of the Spirit, the world has gradually crept in upon us, and taken possession of our heart and affections; and we know not how far we have backslidden from the right way, and into what a state of leanness, barrenness, and deadness we have fallen till the trial comes. But when the trial, temptation, or affliction comes; when the sentence of condemnation enters with power into the conscience, it shows us where we are, how insensibly we have slipped into the love of the world, and how imperceptibly its spirit has struck its deep fibres into our affections. When death stares us in the face, when our evidences sink out of sight, when God hides himself, and his wrath is felt in the conscience, what a vain thing the world is! When under these circumstances, and bleeding under the wounds which the Spirit makes in the soul, what poor consolation the comforts, pleasures, riches, and honours of this world afford! What balm can they give to the wounds of a guilty conscience? Thus, the spirit of the world, the dross and the tin mixed with the pure metal, is purged away by the severity of the trial, and the heat of the furnace into which the soul is cast.

2. But again. The trial finds us very much in this state, *mistaking*



*the teachings of man for the teachings of God; heaping up treasure, without the Lord communicating his precious riches, by the operations of the Spirit, to our conscience. How many persons there are, and it is to be feared that many of God's people are among them, who are mistaking the form of religion for the power of it; mistaking doctrines learned in the head for the teachings of the Spirit in the soul! Now when this trial comes upon us; when the Lord takes and puts us into the furnace, it burns up all this false religion. We have perhaps made ourselves very wise in the letter, possess retentive memories which we have well stored with texts and passages of Scripture, have heard a great many excellent preachers, read numerous books written by great divines, and thus have accumulated many treasures. But when the sentence of condemnation comes, these treasures, heaped up for the day of evil, are all driven away like smoke out of the chimney, or chaff from the threshing-floor. They cannot stand the day of trial, not being wrought in the soul by divine power, nor sealed upon the heart by a testimony from God, but only floating in the judgment. When unpardoned sin lies heavy on the conscience, the soundest sentiments and the clearest views, which have not been wrought into the heart by the Spirit of God, cannot give peace to the mind; and we can no more hang upon them to save our souls from the wrath to come, than a drowning man can hang upon a straw to save him from sinking in the deep waters. Thus, this trial purges away a great deal of false religion.*

3. Again. While in this state, before we have had the second plunge—for, mark you, I am speaking to the children of God—*there is a great deal of presumption in the carnal mind, which passes with them for faith.* Many of God's people use the language of assurance, which they never received from the teachings of God the Spirit. They have heard the minister say, "My God, and my Jesus;" at the prayer-meeting they have heard, "My God and my Father;" and they have sung it in the hymn, without the blessed Spirit having shed abroad the love of God in their heart, or given them the spirit of adoption to cry, "Abba Father." They have thus borrowed these terms of appropriation from the lips of others; and ignorantly mistake this presumption,

so rife in the present day, for the real assurance of faith. But when God brings a man down to the waterflood, and gives him a second plunge, he drowns this presumption, and brings him to this spot—that he has nothing but what God gives, feels nothing but what God inspires, knows nothing but what God teaches, and is nothing but what God makes him. A man then looks at the numerous words that have dropped from his lips, how high he has soared, misled by the example of others; and he now finds what he once thought to be faith, to be nothing but daring presumption and vain-confidence. Thus this sharp trial cuts up his false faith, and brings him down with grief and sorrow into deep humility and contrition before the Lord.

4. Another effect which the trial produces is this. When the sentence of condemnation from God's lips comes into the conscience, *it opens a man's eyes to see the reality of vital godliness*. My friends, there is a great deal of talk about religion; but how few persons know anything of what true religion is, of the secret of vital godliness, of the inward teachings and operations of God the Spirit upon the heart! Many men speak fluently enough of doctrines, and of the blessed truths of the gospel; but what good can mere doctrines do for me, unless they are sealed on my heart, and applied with divine power to my conscience? Without this, the greatest truths can do me no good. But when the Lord lays us low, puts us into the furnace, and drags us through the waters, he shows us that true religion, vital godliness, is something deeper, something more spiritual, something more supernatural, something that stands more in the teachings of God the Spirit and his operation on the heart, than ever we dreamt of before we entered upon the trial. We might have had the clearest views of doctrinal truth, and professed to believe too that true religion is the work of the Holy Ghost; and yet these were but dim notions floating in the head, before we came into the furnace. But these things now are seen in a different light, and felt in a totally different manner. What before was but a doctrine, becomes now a most certain truth; and what before was but a sound sentiment, is now sealed as a living reality in experience.

As the Lord, then, brings us into the dust, he strips away our mere notional, doctrinal religion. He begins to open up to our heart the real nature of vital godliness—that it is something deeper, something more spiritual, something more powerful, something more experimental than anything we have ever yet known; that it consists in the teachings and leadings of God the Spirit in the conscience. As soon as this is felt, it strips a man of everything he has learnt in the flesh, and brings him down to the dust of death; and when brought there, the blessed Spirit opens up the truths of the gospel in a way he had never known before.

Many people know the truth in the letter, but how few by the teachings and operations of God the Spirit in the heart! They have sound views of the way of salvation, but it has never been wrought out with a mighty power into their soul; they have clear heads, but their hearts are not broken into contrition and godly sorrow; their minds are well-instructed in the truths of the gospel, but these truths have not been communicated by "an unction from the Holy One;" nor have they been felt with a solemn, overwhelming conviction, whereby they know the truth and the power of it, and have their souls baptized into a spiritual conformity to, and sweet enjoyment of it. Till a man is made to see the emptiness of a mere profession, to have his free-will stripped and purged away, and to be brought out of that empty religion so generally current, and is broken down into humility at the footstool of divine mercy, he will not feel the power, the reality, the sweetness, and the blessedness of the overwhelming love of God displayed in the gospel. Until the soul is thus stripped, till the vessel is thus emptied, these things cannot be known, nor is it in a condition to receive the glorious riches of free grace. Until the dross and tin is removed from the heart, the pure metal cannot shine, till this chaff is blown away, the wheat lies heaped up in a confused mass on the threshing floor. The Lord, therefore, will try his work on the heart; for he is a jealous God, and he will not give his glory to another, but maintain to himself his prerogative of sovereign mercy, and of saving to the uttermost.

When Hezekiah, then, said, "By these things, men live," he meant that by these trials and deliverances, by these sinkings and raisings, strippings and clothings, emptyings and fillings, "by these things men," that is, spiritual men "live." It is a mystery, but a great truth, that just in proportion as we die to the world, to self, to sense, to nature, and to false religion, the more the life of God is strengthened in our conscience. The Lord, perhaps, has taught some of you this truth through great afflictions. But when these trials came upon you at the first, it seemed as though they would entirely overwhelm you; they took away your standing, and it appeared as though they had destroyed your faith and hope. But though these floods of temptation passed over the soul, they swept away nothing but the rubbish, which till then was mistaken for the inward teachings of God the Spirit. So far then from these afflictions overwhelming your faith, you found that faith was secretly strengthened by the very flood that threatened at first to drown it. True faith is no more destroyed by sharp trials, than the oak is destroyed by cutting away the ivy, or by a storm blowing down some of its rotten branches. When temptations first assailed us, we thought they would destroy us utterly; they were so powerful we could not stand up against them; they threatened to leave us not a single sail to set before the wind. But did we not find after the first gust of the storm had burst over, that we became more deeply rooted in the truth, and were enabled to enter more into the power and sweetness of it? I have compared professors of religion sometimes to trees of two different kinds of growth. There are those who resemble fir trees in a plantation, and others, oaks in a park. The fir trees, nursed in a plantation, (like professors in a church,) and sheltered from the wind, are easily torn up by the storm; while by the same gust the oaks only get more deeply rooted. The more the wintry winds blow and the tempests howl, and the more they beat upon the oak, the more firmly fixed does it become, the more deeply the roots strike into the earth, the higher the branches tower up to heaven, the more broadly do they spread themselves over the soil. So spiritually, the storms and tempests that pass over a child of God, instead of weakening, only strengthen him; for they bring

him nearer to the Lord. And thus, as the oak, the more the wind blows upon it, takes a firmer root in the soil; so the storms and tempests that blow upon the soul, only cause it to take a firmer hold of the truth, and to strike its fibres more deeply into the Person, love, work, and blood of Jesus. So that, "by these things men live;" for through them, the life of God is maintained and kept up in the soul, the Holy Ghost secretly strengthening it by the very things that seemed to threaten it with destruction.

II.—But he adds, "And in all these things is the life of my spirit." By "spirit," he means the "new nature," so called from its being born of the Spirit. This "new nature" has its ebbings and flowings, sinkings and risings; it has its fluctuations; and sometimes, to our feelings, appears almost ebbled out from our heart. But Hezekiah says, In all these afflictions and consolations, these ebbings and flowings, these risings and sinkings,—"in all these things is the life of my spirit." By all this contrariety of feeling, grace in the soul, the life of God in the heart is nourished, strengthened, and revived. So far, then, are these trials, exercises, temptations, difficulties, and perplexities, from destroying or overwhelming the grace of God in the soul, that the very exercises and passing through them, is the life of the spirit. Grace flourishes amidst these afflictions; faith is in more lively operation by the weights and burdens that are put upon it; because God has so ordered it, that when we are weak, then we are strong. This is the grand secret of godliness, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.) In order, therefore, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in us, we must come into trials and temptations, in order that our weakness may convince us of our deep need of him, and bring us into that spot where Christ's strength is made perfect. We are thus brought to feel that all these trials and deliverances are mercifully given to cause our spirit to revive and flourish; to show that the Lord had laid help upon one that is mighty; that in him dwelleth all divine fulness; and that out of that fulness we receive grace for grace. And thus the Lord secretly keeps up that life he has given; and by these very trials, and what comes out of them; by these very exercises and deliverances, he causes the new

nature to revive and flourish, not only in spite of, but through and on account of these very trials and exercises that once seemed ready to overwhelm and almost destroy it.

What a mercy it is, to know that these trials and afflictions are sent by the hand of God! What a mercy, though painful in the extreme, to be stripped and emptied of all our lying refuges; to feel the truth of those words, "the hailstones shall sweep away the refuge of lies." (Isa. 28:17.) Those of us who know the plague of our own hearts, O what refuges of lies do we find there! and what a mercy it is to be brought to feel the sentence of condemnation applied with power to our conscience! What blessed results hang upon these trials! So that the very things we thought to be against us, we find are the very things that are most for us; and the things we thought to be most for us, we prove to be most against us. The very things we thought we had most cause to fear, are the very things we have most cause to be thankful for; and if we had those things which our carnal hearts most desire, they would leave the soul barren and empty. Thus, then, the soul finds, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." So that in the hour of solemn meditation, we can bless God for the trials and exercises, thank him for the furnaces, and praise him for emptying and stripping us; because we have found what occasion he has taken therefrom to teach and comfort the soul, and bring it into some measure of conformity to Christ's suffering image. And thus we find, as Hezekiah said, "In all these things," painful as they are, "is the life of our spirit."

## **Deliverance from Death into the Light of the Living**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 13, 1860

"For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" Psalm 56:13

The Psalms are a blessed manual of Christian experience, and well may I call them so; for I think I may confidently say that there is not a single spiritual feeling in the bosom of a child of God which is not expressed, with greater or less distinctness, in that inspired record of the hidden life of the saints of old. By way of proof, take a few examples. If, for instance, guilt lie hard and heavy upon your conscience, if sin press you down as an intolerable load, where can you find your feelings so clearly and so beautifully expressed as in Psalms 38., 40., 51., 69.? In these and other Psalms of a similar kind—"penitential," as they are sometimes called, you almost seem to hear the sighs, cries, groans, and prayers of a soul bleeding, as it were, under a sense of the wrath of God, and imploring forgiveness. You could never have framed such petitions, or made such confessions, as the Holy Ghost has there put into the heart and mouth of David; yet you find that the feelings expressed in those petitions and confessions are the very experience of your breast. But take another view of this heavenly manual of all true vital experience. Say that the Lord, in the depth of his infinite mercy, in the exceeding riches of his abounding grace, is pleased to break your iron chains, to turn your captivity, and to bless you with a sense of his pardoning love, where can you find the joyous feelings of a liberated soul more blessedly expressed than in Psalms 32., 103., and 116.? where the sweet psalmist of Israel, like Naphtali, "a hind let loose," praises and blesses God for loosing his bonds, for redeeming his life from destruction, and crowning him with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Or if, after a sense of mercy received, you are called upon to walk in temptation's fiery path, where can you find your temptations to despond or rebel, to

murmur and fret at your own trials, and to envy the ease and prosperity of others, more clearly expressed than in Psalms 37. and 73.? If you are walking in darkness and have no bright shining light, where can you find the feelings of your soul more vividly and pathetically described than in Psalm 88.—the experience of Heman? If you carry about with you a deep and daily sense of God's heart-searching presence, feeling that every thought of your bosom lies naked and open before the eyes of him with whom you have to do, where can you find such a description of God's omnipresence and omniscience as in Psalm 139.? If you desire to make the word of God your daily study, that your heart and life should be conformed thereunto; or if you are from time to time breathing forth your desires that it may be opened up to your understanding, and applied with power to your soul, where can you find your spiritual feelings so beautifully expressed as in Psalm 119.? So I might run through the whole experience of a Christian—what I may call the spiritual gamut of his soul, from the lowest bass to the highest treble, and point out that there is not a single note or half-tone of divine teaching and gracious feeling, which may not be found set down and sounded on this harp of many strings. Yes; I may say from the babe in grace to the father in Christ; from the first cry for mercy in the soul of the convinced sinner to the last hallelujah of the expiring saint, God has written the whole experience of his children as with a ray of light in this blessed manual of spiritual pains and pleasures, sighs and songs, prayers and praises, groans from the gates of hell and shoutings at the portals of heaven.

Now, with his gracious help, see and admire God's wisdom in this. You might have various feelings in your soul either of sorrow or joy, and yet be much tried in your mind whether they were spiritual feelings—whether, for instance, your convictions were the workings of mere natural conscience, and your joys the sparks from a fire of your own kindling, or whether they were each the inwrought work of God. But when you see God's own stamp that he has fixed upon certain feelings or certain experiences, and that by putting them into his book he has himself given his attestation that they are such as he approves



of, you have an evidence that what you feel of sorrow or joy has been wrought in you by the power of God. You might otherwise rise into fanaticism and enthusiasm through false joys, or sink into despair through false fears, mistaking in each case the workings of nature for the workings of grace. But this being the manual, the guide, the test, the proof, it keeps on the one hand the child of God from setting up the enthusiastic feelings of nature as marks of grace, and, on the other, from sinking into despondency, as fearing that his experience is not wrought in his soul by a divine operation. O, how good it would be for us to make the Psalms more our bosom companion: not merely as persons sometimes carry their Bibles in their bosom, as was the habit of a gentleman whom I knew in Ireland, whose life was preserved thereby, the slugs from the assassin's gun aimed at his breast being thus intercepted, but to carry in the inmost heart this manual of Christian experience, and find it daily unfolding more and more its beauty and blessedness to our admiring souls.

But there is one feature in the Psalms to which I wish now more particularly to call your attention, as it is connected much with our text. In other parts of Scripture, God speaks to man; in the Psalms, man speaks to God; and as he speaks to him as one brought near by the power of his grace there is a holy familiarity, a blessed drawing near, a sweet pouring forth of heart and spirit into the bosom of God which we find rarely paralleled in any other part of Scripture. As Enoch walked with God of old in sacred fellowship and divine intimacy, so there is in the Psalms a blessed familiarity unfolded to our view whereby David and other holy men of God walked before him in the light of his countenance.

But to come at once to our text, in which I think you will see, with God's blessing, these three prominent features:—

I.—First, *gratitude for the past*: "*Thou hast delivered my soul from death.*"

II.—Secondly, *a desire for the future*: "*Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?*"

III.—Thirdly, *the anticipation of a promised blessing as the happy result of the granted desire: "That I may walk before God in the light of the living."*

These three points I hope, with God's blessing, to bring before you this morning, and in so doing to unfold the spiritual experience described in them. And may God give me the unction of his grace that I may so open up his truth, and so preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, as may commend the word to your conscience, and be attended with the power of God to your soul.

I.—Let us look first at the *expression of David's gratitude for the past: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death."* In examining these words a little more closely, we may see in them, I think, three leading features:—First, how death reigns and rules in every man who is not delivered from it by the power of God. Secondly, that there are those whom God by his Spirit and grace is pleased to deliver from both the region and the reign of death. And thirdly, that there is in those thus delivered the grateful expression and adoring acknowledgment of it.

i. Death is to most men, even in the very name, a sound of gloom. It well may be so. The Scripture itself speaks of death as "the King of terrors;" and names his habitation "the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Gloom must dwell in "the vale of the shadow of death." When we consider what death really is, not merely as putting a final close, and that, perhaps, with a pang of mortal agony, to all that nature loves, but an opening gate into endless woe, our wonder is rather that men meet it with such stoical insensibility, instead of being more alarmed and terrified at its approach. But what is death? Is it only the separation of body and soul? Is it merely what we see with our bodily eyes when we view the corpse stretched upon the bed, or as we represent it to our imagination when we follow the coffin

to the cemetery? Does death merely mean that pale corpse, that funeral hearse, those weeping mourners, those gasping sobs of wife or husband, with all the sights and sounds of woe as the heavy clods, amidst the still silence, fall on the coffin? To most this is all they see or know of death. But death, in a scriptural sense, has a far wider and more extensive meaning than these mere outward trappings of sorrow. It has three meanings, and each a fearful one to those who live and die without a manifested interest in the blood and obedience of the Son of God. There is, first, death *spiritual*; secondly, death *natural*; thirdly, death *eternal*.

1. When God made man "in his own image, after his own likeness," and placed him in the garden of Eden, he gave him a certain charge. Adam might eat freely of all the trees in the garden, but there was one which he might not touch or taste. To keep him back from such a transgression God affixed this terrible penalty of disobedience: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Adam violated that precept. Seduced by his wife, who had been tempted by the devil, he broke through that injunction: he did take and eat of the tree of good and evil. What was the consequence? Did God's word fall to the ground? Had not God said, "*In the day* that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die?" Was that sentence unaccomplished? Did God speak it in vain? Did Adam not die in that very day? But you will say, "Why, he lived more than nine hundred years afterwards. How, then, was that word made true?" He died in his soul. That was the death in which he died that day. The body lived, but the soul died—that is, to God. This is *spiritual* death. "God created man in his own image." He lost that image by disobedience; and, as the body becomes dead at the departure of the soul, so by the departure of the image of God man became not partly, but wholly "alienated from the life of God." (Eph. 4:18.) For mark this: there can be no half death. We read of one who fell among thieves and was "left half dead;" but his half death was still a breathing life, for his wounds were bound up, and he lived to bless his kind benefactor. Death is not death until life is utterly gone. While the pulse beats, whilst the lungs breathe, whilst the body moves, it is

not death; there still is life. To be death, there must be the end of life and beginning of corruption. So it is as regards spiritual death: man is not half dead—he is wholly so. And if he be wholly dead, he can no more communicate spiritual life to his own soul, than a body in the graveyard can raise itself up by any innate power to come forth once more among the walks of men. Were this more plainly seen, it would be more generally acknowledged that man by nature has neither will nor power to turn to God; and that he is, as the scriptures so emphatically declare, "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. But again, there is death *natural*, which must sooner or later overtake us all, when body and soul must part, when our dying eyes will close upon this earthly scene, when the world and we must for ever separate. Though the sentence may be delayed, that sentence is sure: the day, the hour, the moment will come when you must yield up your vital breath—when your age will depart and be removed like a shepherd's tent, and you will behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. (Isaiah 38:11, 12.)

3. Then there is, in the case of all those who die out of Christ—*eternal* death; what the Scripture calls the "second death," which is to be cast into the lake of fire; to be for ever under the terrible wrath of God; to be eternally wallowing in the billows of sulphurous flame, and to be shut up in that awful pit into which hope never penetrates. It is not then so much death as the consequences of death, unless by a sense of pardoning mercy the sting be taken away, that make it to be so truly awful; to be the king of terrors; and invest it with that terrible aspect which strikes gloom, or should do so, into every human heart where Christ is not made experimentally known. But what says the Psalmist in the text, as the expression of his gratitude? And well might he tune a cheerful note! Well might he bless and praise God for his manifested mercy! "*Thou hast delivered my soul from death.*" Feeling the sweetness of it, he could look up with the confidence of faith and say—"O God, what a blessing thou hast conferred upon me! Thou hast delivered my soul from death and

all its dreadful consequences."

ii. But let us look at this matter a little more clearly. Adam at his creation had only a natural life communicated to him. God "breathed into him the breath of life," giving him thereby an immortal soul; but Adam had not spiritual life in the same way as the saint of God now possesses it. He stood in his own strength, in his own righteousness, upon his own basis. When therefore he lost the image of God, which was this righteousness, he lost his all. But God, in his infinite mercy, instead of leaving the elect to have life in themselves as he left Adam to have life in himself, deposited their life in a covenant Head. He would not trust man with what man had before lost. He therefore laid up their life in the fulness of his dear Son. But see how this bears upon the three kinds of death that I have been describing.

1. Here is a soul beloved of God, chosen of God from all eternity, but now dead in trespasses and sins—unable, unwilling to deliver itself from death. But it has life in Christ. Though not yet developed, like the bud in the vine; though not yet brought forth, like the babe in the womb, it has an existence in Christ, as Levi had in the loins of Abraham. (Heb. 7:10.) By virtue of this eternal covenant life, at the appointed season, the blessed Spirit quickens it into spiritual life. Ezekiel, when he was commanded to preach to the dry bones, prophesied unto the wind, and when the wind began to blow (which signifies the Spirit's influence), breath entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; so it is when the Holy Ghost is pleased to quicken the soul into life divine. Then, and then only, is it delivered from spiritual death. And the life thus given can never die. Adam's life not being a spiritual but a natural life died. But the life in the breast of a child of God can never die. As the Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This is then the mercy, that those whom God has quickened by his Spirit and delivered from spiritual death, shall live for ever and ever. Nor can the life which God has given ever be quenched. It may sink low; it may seem to vanish out of sight. Like a river, it may

ebb and leave little visible but mud and mire. But the tide will flow again; the river will once more rise, and life again be felt. God will revive his work, and with it a renewed evidence that spiritual life once given is never lost.

2. But see how he delivers also from *natural* death. The death of the saints in the New Testament is not spoken of as death: it is called a sleep. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. 4:14.) In the case of those who die in Christ, it is not death to die. Therefore the very name is changed. The Holy Ghost does not call it death. Of Stephen we read, "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." The Holy Ghost won't allow that Stephen died; though his body was crushed with stones and every bone mangled, yet it was not death. It was like a child put to bed, and the stones that mangled every bone of his frame were the pillows between which the sleeping martyr was laid. Thus the dying saint can say what none else can, as if the nurse were now laying the child between the pillows, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death"—not merely my soul from death spiritual by the communication of grace divine, but my body from death natural, by turning death into sleep. How many saints have hailed the approach of death, and said, "Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" How they have longed for the body to drop into the grave, there to sleep till the resurrection morn, that the enfranchised soul might soar aloft into the bosom of God! In their case was it death? We saw the pallid corpse, but by faith we followed the spirit up to the mansions of the blest; and if we dropped the tear of affection over their remains, it was sweetened by the thought that their soul was in the bosom of God.

3. And then there is "the *second* death," which is the most fearful of all; because to that there is no end. Why should death be an object of fear? Because "after death cometh the judgment." And why should judgment be an object of terror? Because judgment implies condemnation, and condemnation implies an eternity of woe. From this eternal death where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, but called death as being an everlasting

separation and perpetual banishment from him who is the fountain of life, the saint of God is delivered by the blood-shedding and death of Christ, and by the communication of spiritual life to his soul.

III. But there is the *enjoyment* of it—the sweet certainty of it in the breast. You may have been delivered from death, as much as David was, but not so fully in the assurance of the deliverance. God may have quickened your soul into life divine; he may have communicated his grace to your heart. Yet you have many doubts and fears whether it be a real work of grace upon your soul. And when you hear the grace of God described as an internal possession, and its evidences, workings, and fruits traced out, though you may find some marks in your favour, yet either from wanting fuller and clearer testimonies, or the Lord not shining upon your soul, or through the opposition of an unbelieving heart, and the inward whispers of a guilty conscience, you may greatly fear whether you are a partaker of salvation. Now to clear up this point, I will show to you that there are, as regards this inward deliverance from death, degrees of faith, of hope, and of assurance.

1. It is not every child of God who has been delivered from death by regenerating grace who can use the words with the confidence expressed here: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death." But I will show you when he can. When God is pleased to bless him with a sense of his pardoning love; when Jesus is revealed to his heart, and manifested with power to his soul; when the blood of sprinkling is applied to purge his conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works, to serve the living God; when the Spirit of adoption is given, and he is enabled to cry "Abba Father;" when he can "read his title clear to mansions in the skies" by the witness of the Holy Ghost in his breast that he is a child of God; when he feels the presence of God, and a sweet flowing forth of love and affection to his heavenly Father,—at such favoured seasons as these, he can say in the sweet confidence of faith, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death." But all the living family of God cannot say this; and even those who have been enabled to say it

at one time cannot say it at all times. There are times and seasons when you have a degree of faith, a degree of assurance, or even a degree of hope, which does not rise up to the full amount of overflowing certainty, and yet does not fall far short of it. You come, for instance, into this place full of doubt and fear. Guilt and bondage lie hard upon your conscience. You hear me or some other servant of God describe the work of grace upon the heart—certain evidences, marks, and tokens of what God does by his Spirit in the soul. You feel a responsive echo in your breast. You cannot deny that such and such things you have experienced in your inmost heart. You gather up therefrom a sweet confidence, or a comfortable hope, which may amount to a good degree of divine assurance, that you are one of those upon whom God has had mercy. You come in full of heaviness—you go out full of gladness; you come in doubting, fearing whether you were a Christian at all; you go out able to believe that God has begun and will carry on the work of grace upon your heart. Don't you see that there are degrees of faith, and degrees of hope, and degrees of assurance; so that though you may not be able to say with the full confidence in which David speaks here, "Thou *hast* delivered my soul from death, and I am confident of it," you still feel a blessed incoming of God's goodness and mercy to your soul, that may enable you in a lower key, though not able to rise up to the height of the spiritual gamut—but in a lower key, with stiller voice and more bated breath to express the same thing, though not with the same certainty and assurance. You may have a testimony, for instance, that God has delivered your soul from *spiritual* death. Whence your spirit of prayer? Whence your desires after God? Whence your sighs and cries under a burden of sin? Whence your longings for the manifestation of Christ to your soul? Whence your confessions before a heart-searching God? And whence the earnest breathing of your heart to live to the glory of God? Is this life or is this death? Are these the feelings of a soul upon whom the Holy Ghost is working, or are they the feelings of a soul still dead in sin? You have the echo within to the sound of the truth without; the answer of a good conscience towards God, as his servant speaks in his name, and asks, "Is thy heart as my heart?" and having this, though not blessed with a



full manifestation, or able to say "Abba Father" with unfaltering tongue, you have so far a comfortable hope, what the Scripture calls "a good hope through grace," a sweet testimony which you would not part with for a thousand worlds, that God by his grace has delivered your soul from death. Hold it fast. As the Lord said to the Philadelphian Church, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." So in his name may I say the same to you. As the sailor on a lee shore, with breakers in sight, lowers the anchor from the bow of his ship, and the more the wind blows the more he looks to the anchor, for as long as the anchor holds he knows that the ship is safe; so must you with the anchor of the soul, a good hope through grace. Look well to the anchor and the chain cable. Is the iron good? Have they been tested, and did they stand the test? Then anchor good, hold the ground fast. Thus will the good ship—the ship of the soul—be safe. And it will hold fast, for its flukes are fastened within the veil, in heaven itself, in the very bosom of Jesus, in the very heart of Immanuel, God with us.

II.—But I pass on to my second point, which is David's *desire for the future*: "*Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?*" There is nothing so dreadful to a child of God as to fall; and the more the grace of God is in his soul in lively exercise, the more is he afraid lest he should do so. Grace in exercise does not make the heart hard or the conscience callous. The Spirit of God does not lead a man into sin, but from sin. The faith he gives is a holy faith; the Spirit that reveals justifying righteousness is a holy Spirit, and as such produces an inward sanctification of heart. See it here. David had no doubt that God had delivered his soul from death. He could believe with a sweet certainty that he never should perish, but be with God for ever in the mansions of the blest, for he could say in the sweet confidence of faith, "The Lord will give grace and glory." Did that lead him to licentiousness? Did that induce him to say, "Now that my pardon is safe, and my salvation secure, and I cannot perish, let me indulge every base lust: now I can safely commit every crime, because do what I will I can never perish?" Was any such thought in his breast? Such thoughts may be in a man's breast, as what thoughts are there

which cannot and do not find entrance there? But they are the thoughts of the devil: they are diabolical insinuations, not gracious teachings; come from beneath, not from above; are "blasts from hell," not "airs from heaven." Grace makes a man's conscience tender: grace plants and keeps alive the fear of God in his soul; grace makes sin exceedingly sinful, as grace makes Christ exceedingly precious; grace in blessed exercise makes us desire perfect holiness; grace inwardly and experimentally felt will make us beg of God with all the powers of our soul to keep our feet from falling. We are surrounded with snares; temptations lie spread every moment in our path. These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we shall infallibly fall into them, and be overcome by them but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this; the Christian feels this. The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares: he is entangled in them, he falls by them, and then putting away "a good," that is, a tender "conscience," and thus not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, concerning faith he makes utter shipwreck. The child of God sees the snare, feels the temptation, knows the evil of his heart, and is conscious that if God do not hold him up he shall stumble and fall. He has had, it may be, a bitter experience of the past. He has seen how, from want of walking in godly fear, for want of circumspection and standing upon his watch-tower, he has been entangled in times past in the snares of death. He has rued the consequences, felt the misery of having slipped and fallen; the iron has entered into his soul; he has been in the prison house, in bondage, in darkness, and death; in consequence of his transgressions he has been "the fool" described in Psalm 107., as "afflicted because of his iniquity," and can re-echo Hart's mournful description of his own miserable folly:

"That mariner's mad part I played,  
Who sees, yet strikes the shelf."

As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself; and the

higher his assurance rises and the clearer his views become of the grace of God which bringeth salvation, and of his own interest in it, the more is he afraid that he shall fall. If his eyes are more widely opened to see the purity of God, the blessedness of Christ, the efficacy of atoning blood, and the beauties of holiness, the more also does he see of the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein, and not only so, but his own helplessness and weakness and inability to stand against temptation in his own strength. And all these feelings combine to raise up a more earnest cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." I believe that a child of God in his right mind would rather die than fall into any open sin to bring a reproach upon the cause of God. I feel, under the sweet influence of his grace, that I would sooner have five months' illness such as I have lately had, and that is no small trial, than to be left for five minutes to commit a sin which should wound my own conscience, grieve the children of God, and open the mouth of the enemies of truth. It is better to take gallons of bitter medicine to heal the body than to drink a single vial of the sweet draught of sin to poison the soul. God may afflict your body, strip you of property; yea, like Job, you might sit upon a dunghill and scrape your ulcers with a potsherd; be without house or home, friend or companion, and yet be a happier, better, and safer man than if you rolled in worldly wealth and were living in things that God abhors. But David felt, as every child of God feels, that he could not keep his own feet; he therefore begged of God to hold him up. He knew he had no strength, but he knew that the strength of God could be and would be made perfect in his weakness. Therefore he poured his very heart into the bosom of God; laid body and soul into the lap of God; entrusted himself, with all he had and was, into the arms of God; and in the effectual expostulation of one who had sweet intercourse and blessed familiarity, he said, "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?" As though he would say, "Hast thou not done me the greatest of all favours? When I was dead in sin, didst thou not quicken my soul? When I trembled at the thought of temporal death, hast thou not assured me I should not die, but sleep? And hast thou not given me the blessed earnest in my bosom that on me the second death shall have no power, but that

I shall live and reign with thee above? Hast thou given me these favours, so great, so overwhelming, and wilt thou not give me another favour during my short abode here below? Wilt thou not do this other thing for me—keep my feet from falling? Thou who hast done so much for me by thy Spirit and grace, O do me this one favour and grant me this one kindness, whilst I live here below, to keep me in thy fear that I may never do that which is displeasing in thy sight."

2. But there are other ways in which the child of God may fall, besides falling into *evil*. He may fall into *error*. The professing church is full of it. He loves the truth; the truth has made him free; and he has experienced its sanctifying as well as liberating influence. But he sees error abound, and that it comes forth in a very specious manner. He begs, therefore, of God to keep him from error, to give him a deeper, clearer, more powerful and experimental knowledge and enjoyment of the truth in his own heart, and ever to preserve him from swerving from it to the right hand or to the left. But a sense of his weakness and liability to be drawn aside from "the truth as it is in Jesus," leads him to ask of the Lord to keep him. "Wilt thou not keep my feet from falling?" Here is one error in this direction; here is another in that. Some are denying the eternal Sonship of our adorable Redeemer; others asserting that God does not chastise his people for sin; and so subtle are their arguments, and so mixed up with texts and specious conclusions from acknowledged truths, that the poor child of God is at times fairly puzzled what to think or what to say. But he has an inward, a holy dread of being entangled in any God-dishonouring error. He has felt the power of God's truths in his soul, and is jealous over it and over himself with a godly jealousy, lest the robbers and the spoilers should plunder him of his jewels; as the Apostle so wisely cautions the church at Colosse, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8.) He knows that many false prophets and lying spirits "are gone out into the world," and that "they lie in wait to deceive," that "by good words and fair speeches they may deceive the hearts of the simple." He sees

that errors abound on every side; that few know and love the truth; that few ministers preach it, few churches profess it, and few, very few, live under the power and in the practice of it. All these things, working together with the deep and daily sense that he has of his own ignorance and liability to err, combine to make him cry, "Lead me into thy truth; teach me, for on thee do I wait all the day. Make thy truth precious to my soul. Keep me from denying it in heart or lip; or disgracing it in life. Preserve me firmly in it to the end of my days, that I may live and die in the sweet enjoyment of it." Such are the feelings of my soul. Let me, in all honesty, yet in all affection, ask, Are they yours?

3. But one who has been delivered from death may, in another sense of the prayer, "Wilt thou not keep my feet from falling," use it to be preserved from falling into *darkness of mind*, into deadness of soul, into carnality of spirit, wanderings of heart, inward departings of affection from the Lord. Though preserved from outward evil, though kept from embracing error, he may still be inwardly guilty of the two evils charged by the Lord against his people of old, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jerem. 2:13.) Falling under such a charge as verily guilty in this matter, he begs that God would keep his feet from slipping into this snare of Satan; that he would not suffer him to backslide inwardly; would not allow him to indulge any one cherished lust, or set up a bosom idol in the chambers of imagery; would not permit him to fall into a cold, careless, dark, stupid, benighted state of mind, wherein he retains little else but a profession, having lost for a time all its vital power. O, how many, especially of the old professors, are held here! How little spirituality of mind in their conversation; how little godly fear in their deportment; how little savour of Christ in their homes; how little separation of spirit from the world; how little of the power, presence, mind, image, or example of Christ is visible in them. The locusts, the locusts have eaten up every green thing; a nation of armed lusts, thick embattled ranks of sins, have "laid their vine waste, and barked their fig tree; have made it clean bare and cast it away; the

branches thereof are made white;" so that "they walk naked and men see their shame." (Joel 1:7; Rev. 16:15.) Fearing lest, after enjoying deliverance from death by the sweet presence of the Lord, he should get into this backsliding state of soul, and, like Ephraim, be joined to idols, the exercised child of God begs to be kept from thus falling into a secret alienation of heart from the Lord. And knowing that the indulgence of any sin, secret or open, will bring him into this miserable spot, wherever he sees sin, he begs of God to keep him from it: sins without, sins within; sins in the church, sins in the world; sins abroad, sins at home; sins in eating, sins in drinking; sins in buying, sins in selling; sins in his daily occupation; O how he begs the Lord to keep his feet from falling or being entangled in any sin that may grieve the Spirit, wound conscience, and provoke the Lord to withdraw his sensible presence.

III.—And this leads me on to our third and last point, which we shall find to be closely connected with the two preceding; the *blessed result and effect* of the feet being kept from falling, "*That I may walk before God in the light of the living.*"

1. It is good to walk consistently before men; it is good so to walk that men may have no just cause of offence against us, and it should be our earnest desire and prayer, and daily struggle so to live and act. But a man may do all this, and yet not walk before God. We read that "when Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to him and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect," or "upright," or "sincere," as it is in the margin. (Gen. 17:1.) God first "appeared" unto Abraham, that is, revealed or manifested himself to him, and then called upon him to walk before him in the light of this manifestation. And similarly he calls upon all to whom he has manifested himself to walk before him. But what is it to walk *before* God? It is to carry about with us in our daily life and conversation an abiding sense of God's presence; to live as under his continual eye; to be ever conscious that "he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins;" sees every internal movement of the mind; hears every word of the lips; marks every action of the

hands. This forms one main part of walking before God—that is, as if God were ever before us and we ever before him. But it also implies, as connected with the preceding words of the text, a daily walking before him in that uprightness, sincerity, godly fear, and tenderness of conscience which become those who have received such a blessing as to have been delivered from death. It is, therefore, not a legal task or self-imposed duty, but a gospel blessing. We read of Enoch that he "walked with God." There is a distinction between walking *before* God and walking *with* God. To walk *before* God is to walk with an abiding sense of God's eye being upon us; to walk with a desire to do those things which are pleasing in his sight; to walk in his ordinances blameless; to walk before his people with our garments unspotted by the world; in a word to walk before him in private as in public, alone and in company, before the church and the world, by day and by night, as we should walk if we had a personal view of his glorious majesty in heaven before our eyes. There are persons either of high rank or commanding presence before whom you would not speak as you would before others, because there is something in and about them which puts a certain restraint upon you, and you walk before them with a degree of awe and respect. Now if you carried about with you a deep and daily sense that God saw every thought, marked every movement, heard every word, and observed every action, this sense of his presence would put a restraint upon your light, trifling, and foolish spirit. You would watch your thoughts, your words, your actions, as living under a sense of God's heart-searching eye. This is to walk before God. O, how little there is of this in the professors of the day! But, on the contrary, what levity, idle jesting, vain conversation, and such a continual stream from their mouth of every trifling incident, as if there were not a grain of grace or one spark of godly fear in their heart! It has grieved my soul again and again to witness it, and I have been obliged to flee from it, and get alone out of the way of it. How can they walk *with* God who have not yet learnt to walk *before* God? This is a more advanced stage of the divine life. To walk with God is then to walk with him in sweet familiarity, in holy confidence, in a blessed sense of interest in his love and grace, and thus to walk with him and talk with him as a man

walketh and talketh with his friend. There are some who walk before God, but how few walk with God! Many live under a more or less deep and daily sense of God's heart-searching presence, who are not admitted into this sweet familiarity nor enjoy the blessedness of this heavenly intercourse.

ii. But there is something exceedingly expressive in the words which immediately follow, for they show *how*, by the power of his grace, we walk before him. "That I may walk before God *in the light of the living.*"

Two things demand our attention here: 1, *The light* in which he desired to walk; 2, That this light should be that "*of the living.*" Let us look at them separately.

i. There is a great desire in the quickened and renewed soul for *light*. I mean a divine and heavenly light. I think I can truly say that I scarcely ever go upon my knees before the Lord without asking for light. "Light, Lord, light," is my cry; for I so see and feel my darkness, and that nothing but light from the Lord can remove it. When a boy, I used to be wonderfully puzzled with the words in the Prayer-book, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord," which I thought meant a dark evening at church-time; but how God was to enlighten it I could not tell. That prayer, however, though not exactly in the same form, is now my daily one; so I have not thrown away the prayer, though I have thrown away the Prayer-book. The prayer is scriptural, for it is founded on the promise, "The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28); and if we feel the darkness, and that the Lord alone can enlighten it, we have a divine warrant to plead with him that he would do so. But in nature, light performs a thousand benefits, besides merely dispelling the dark shades of night.

1. It gives *health* to every leaf and flower. Every tree, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, every blade of grass in the meadow, of springing corn in the field, all feel the genial, health-giving influence of light. How we see them all



instinctively turn towards it to inhale health from it, and how great the contrast between the pale, blanched leaf of the plant in the cellar and the bright verdant foliage of that which drinks in the rays of the noon day sun—as great as between the pallid face of the poor weaver and the ruddy countenance of the ploughboy, and due to the same cause—the power of light. For light is the parent of health as darkness is of disease. So in grace, light is *health*; and to walk in the light of God's countenance is to have him for the "health of our countenance." (Psalm 42:11.)

2. Light, again, is "*gladness*," as we read, "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour." (Esther 8:16.) And, again, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." So also "Thou has made him exceedingly glad with thy countenance; that is, the light of thy countenance." (Psalm 21:6.) Darkness and sorrow are as much allied together as light and gladness. Thus Job complains, "I went mourning without the sun" (Job 30:28); and Heman cries, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps" (Psalm 88:6); but "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." (Eccl. 11:7.)

3. Again, light *makes everything manifest*; "for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.) Light, then, springing up in the soul gives us to see everything that is for our peace here and hereafter. All the blessings of the gospel; all the mercies of the new covenant; the Person and work of the Lord Jesus; his beauty and blessedness; his love and blood; his grace and glory; his suitability and preciousness; the firmness of his promises; the holiness of his precepts; the force of his example; the tenderness of his compassion; the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; all that can make life happy and holy, and death desirable, light reveals and manifests them all.

ii. But, observe the words, "The light of the living." There is a light which is not the light of the living. In nature, there is a meteor light, the *ignis fatuus*, that plays over the fen and the swamp, which would lead the traveller, were he to follow its

guidance, into the bog; or drown him in the ditch. This is a dead light, for it springs from corrupt substances, which give forth at night this phosphoric light. So in religion there is a dead light—a light which springs not from him "who is light, and with whom there is no darkness at all," but from our own corrupt nature—a light that shines but to betray. This the Scripture calls "a light of our own kindling," and pronounces a fearful woe against those that walk in it. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourself about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Isa. 50:11.) But "the light of the living" is the light which comes down from a living God into a living soul—what the blessed Lord calls "the light of life," which comes from him as a living head, for he is the "life" as well as "the truth and the way." David's desire then was to "walk before God in the light of the living;" that the light of God's countenance might ever shine upon his soul, the light of his favour ever illuminate his mind, and the light of his love warm, cheer, and gladden his heart. He did not want the light of an unsanctified intellect, nor the light of dry letter knowledge, nor the light of mere biblical study, nor the light of an empty profession. He wanted to see and feel for himself the light of God in his own soul, illuminating every recess of his bosom; and that light to be the light of life and love, to lead him to walk more and more tenderly before God in holy fear, carrying about with him a deep and daily sense of his heart-searching eye, seeking to know and to do his will, from a desire to please him and to perform those things which are acceptable in his sight.

This is "the light of the living;" that is, of living souls, of those that have been made alive from the dead by regenerating grace, and who, as such, live a life of faith in the Son of God.

Here, then, taking the text as a whole, and recapitulating its leading points, we have the breathings and desires of a soul made alive unto God. Well may I call the Psalms a manual of Christian experience; and I may call the verse from which I have spoken this morning the sum and substance, the pith and

marrow, the concentrated essence of that blessed manual. Can you, with my words sounding in your ears, and the pressure of these truths on your conscience, lay your hand upon your bosom, look up to a heart-searching God, and entertain some sweet hope, if not a sure confidence, that you know those things for yourselves, by the work and power of the Holy Ghost within? Look at them separately. What evidence have you that God has delivered your soul from death? What marks, testimonies, or evidences have you that life has been communicated to your soul to quicken it when dead in sin? What good hope, through grace, what sweet expectations have you to cheer your heart and comfort your soul when death draws near? What blessed foretastes of the kingdom of glory beyond the grave? If not enjoying the full confidence of faith manifested by the Psalmist when he exclaimed, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death," can you strike a lower note and say, "I have a good hope through grace from what I have enjoyed in times past, and from what I feel from time to time of sweet revivals of faith and love, that my soul is truly and spiritually alive to God?" Now can you go on to the next point? Seeing and feeling the evil of sin, dreading your own deceitful heart, the strength of temptation, the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and the snares of Satan, is it the earnest desire of your soul that God will keep your feet from falling? Is it your daily cry, if not in words, yet in substance, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe?" Then can you say, "O, that I may walk before God in the light of the living, having the light of his countenance lifted upon me, enjoying his presence, feeling his love, walking in his fear, hating everything that savours of sin and death, and longing for the incoming of that blessed light, life, liberty, and love which shall guide my feet into the ways of peace?"

This is religion. People talk about "religion:" it is the language of the day. But where are we to find it? In two places: in the word of truth, the blessed Bible, where God has revealed it by the Holy Ghost, and set his own stamp upon it. That is one. In the heart of a saint. That is another. There is no religion but what is in the Book of God; there is no religion but what is in the heart of the

saint. And the two correspond together. As the wax to the seal, as the clay to the mould, so God's religion, described in the Bible, corresponds with God's religion, wrought by a divine power in the heart. Can you bring your heart to God's book as the wax to the seal, and say, "This is my religion: I see it in God's book; I feel it in my soul. God tells me in his book he delivers the soul from death. I can bring my soul to that book and say "Thou hast delivered *my* soul from death!" There is sweet agreement there. "I find," you add, "the saint of God praying of the Lord to keep his feet from falling: this is my daily desire. I can bring the wax of my heart to the seal of God there. I find still further the child of God begging that he might walk before God in the light of the living: again, for the third time, I can bring the wax to the seal there; for it is the earnest desire of my soul to feel these things as David felt them, and to experience them with the same power." Then you have the double witness: the witness of God in the word and the witness of God in the soul. And in the mouth of two such witnesses shall this and every other truth be established.

## The Deliverance of the Fool from His Destruction

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, November 28, 1858

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

"Fools because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Ps. 107:17, 18, 19, 20

The 107th Psalm is one of the most remarkable portions of God's inspired Scripture, inasmuch as it sets forth in a variety of ways and under different figures the experience of God's saints. There are four characters whom it expressly traces out which I may, not improperly, designate the *wanderer*, the *prisoner*, the *fool* or *backslider*, and the *mariner*. These four characters are set forth and described as types and figures of the saints of God who are led through that peculiar kind of experience. You will find four things are said of them: they have *trouble*, *prayer* or *crying*, *deliverance*, and *praise*. They are all represented as being cast into affliction and trouble; and exercising in their affliction and trouble prayer and supplication. They are all represented as receiving deliverance in answer to prayer, and praise is spoken of as given by all to God. With God's blessing I shall endeavour to open up a little the words before us; and in so doing shall show

I.—First, *Who this fool is*, tracing out as far as the Lord may enable a little of his character.

II.—Secondly, *His affliction*, which is *his transgression and iniquity*.

III.—Thirdly, How in his affliction he cries unto the Lord.

IV.—And fourthly, How the Lord *speaks, heals, and delivers.*

I dare say some of you may be able to find something in your own experience that may correspond with what the Holy Ghost has here laid before us. We are not allowed to call each other *fools*; for there is an express declaration from the lips of incarnate truth that he who calls his brother a *fool* shall be in danger of hell-fire; but I know of no Scripture that forbids any man calling himself a fool; if there be one I am not aware of it. Nor is there any Scripture that I know of that calls us fools. In the words before us God speaks of some of his people and calls them fools, but only as elsewhere, "Oh, foolish people and unwise." To be a fool in a spiritual sense is to be the opposite of what a wise man is. To act foolishly is to act in a contrary manner to that in which the wise man acts. The wise man is a man who has heavenly instruction in his soul, and acts upon it. He, therefore, sets a watch over the door of his mouth, and walks without stumbling on the right hand or the left. He has no very pressing load of guilt upon his conscience, he is not entangled in the snares of Satan, and thus he acts as a wise man, because despising sin. But the *fool* being sensible of what he is looks to Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." The *fool* is not the ungodly man, he is not a reprobate; but he is a poor, weak, foolish child of God; he is a vessel of mercy; but he is not blessed with that wisdom and fear of God in lively exercise, he is without that strong nature of God which keeps him from weak and foolish things, but yet he is a gracious and saved man, though from various reasons in many sad instances he betrays his filth and folly. He has a fool's eye, a foolish heart, which is ever craving after filth and folly; a foolish tongue which is not held by bit and bridle, and a foolish habit of trusting to himself, whereby he often gets into evil, and Satan lays his snares, and he gets entangled; he has a weak imagination, strong passions, and by the powerful thrustings of his unweary foes he is betrayed into something that brings a reproach, I will not say upon the church, but upon his

conscience; he may be saved from bringing a reproach upon the people of God; but he is sensible that he is acting very indiscreetly and unbecomingly, and by these things he brings darkness upon himself. There may be some here who are congratulating themselves that they are not this fool; you may be like the son in the parable who had never done anything wrong at any time; but the Lord did not seem to countenance his good account of himself very much, not but that I believe he was a good man, still he said his father had never given him even a kid to make merry with his friends, nor had he given him the promise of a feast, so what he had to feast upon was his own good opinion of himself, and his own consistency. And a very delicious feast it often was to him. He had not been so bad as his brother, who had spent all his substance; but at best it was a poor feast; the Lord never smiled upon him; but he had that in himself he could look at with gratification; therefore, when his hungry brother came home he was filled with malice and envy against him, with secret pride and self-righteousness. But the fool is one who has no such good conduct, good intentions, good words or works to boast of. He is sensible that in various instances he has gone sadly astray, which has brought trouble into his conscience, and he may be at times exercised in his soul as to whether he is not out of the secret altogether, whether he could ever have had the fear of God in his soul, and he begins to stagger. He can say that he has "played the fool," as one said of old, "and acted foolishly." But we will take you a little further into the recesses of the words of our text.

II.—"Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, *are afflicted*. Now, these fools have to mourn over their transgressions and iniquities. Poor David was a fool of this kind; he slipped and fell, stumbled and brought guilt upon his conscience. His son Solomon was a fool of this kind, for he sinned and brought great darkness upon his soul. Hezekiah was one of these fools when he showed his goods to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. Peter was one of these fools when he denied his Lord and Master, and that with an oath. When these holy men

brought guilt upon themselves because of their transgressions, they became afflicted.

There is a most pestilent and poisonous doctrine now abroad in the world that God does not chastise his people on account of their sins. How awful for any man to spread such an error. What an antinomian doctrine! How contrary to the Holy Spirit! For the Lord says in the 89th Psalm, and one would think that would be enough to prove it, *"If they break my statutes and keep not my commandments; then shall I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes."* And does not Paul say most definitely in the Hebrews, *"If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons."* So here the Lord expressly says of these fools that they are afflicted because of their transgressions. Are not their transgressions given as the cause of their afflictions? God it may be afflicts them in body, as we read in 1 Cor. 11:30 of many who were "weak and sickly," and of many who had fallen asleep because they ate and drank as though the Lord's supper was a feast. For this cause some were sick and some taken away by death. Here they were afflicted with bodily illness, and if you could trace the cause of your bodily indisposition, you might see that the Lord was afflicting you because of some transgression, so that by visiting your body with painful affliction was reminding you of your sins and transgressions, and thus he lays them before your eyes and brings them to bear upon your conscience. It is good in sickness to accept it as a chastisement, and though your conscience is free from any pride or sin, accept the rod for your sins collectively. But if the rod does point out any peculiar slip or fall, take the rod as being directed against it, and beg of the Lord to give you a manifestation of his pardoning love. He may afflict you in providence; you may have a very covetous heart, and he may see how it is continually drawing you aside; at chapel some contrivance may come into your head whereby you may make your business flourish a little more; you may not come with the express purpose of doing so; but instead of hearing the word, you may be devising some schemes which shall secure a larger profit



in your business, or you may be seeking after something to gratify your covetous desires. Can you wonder then that the Lord should take away all that which you had gathered together and that he should run counter against these covetous practices? Take it as a chastisement. Or he may be visiting your conscience. You are sensible that there are many things in you that the Lord is displeased with, the hardness of your heart, your iniquity or the coldness of your affections, and many things that the Lord takes keen cognizance of; and then he afflicts your conscience: He draws your mind after himself, and at times exercises you upon this point, whether your soul is right with God; you have no answer to prayer; you hear the saints of God speak of blessed manifestations, and of what comforting words come to them, but you have not one, you are shut up in darkness and fear. Or you may have family trials, a sickly child, or an invalid wife or husband, and even be bereaved of them by death. Take all these things as God's rod that speaks to you, by which he reminds you of many things in which you have been drawn aside. As the parent or parents afflict the child for what he has done, so the Lord may be afflicting you. It is a very bad spot to be in to have no affliction in mind, conscience or body; it is pleasing to the flesh, but it is a bad place for the soul. If all is comfortable in the family, easy in circumstances, if there is no uneasiness in conscience, no trials within, I am very sure it sets you far from God, and makes you contented to live the life of a beast, eating and drinking and sleeping, to be as you are and what you are without sighing after a manifestation and discovery of Christ to your soul. Most men and women live the life of a beast, and are just occupied for the day in their business; they have no more anxiety about their souls than the beasts that perish, and so it is with the saints of God except the Lord keep the work alive by chastisement, except he brings them back and teaches them what sinners they are and raises their mind to eternal things. You may think yourself very nicely dealt with because you are in easy circumstances and all things seem to go on as you could wish; but if you were the greatest enemy of God he could not take a more favourable way of avenging himself. See the men of business who have no fear of God before their eyes, look what

they are when a tide of business comes in, are they not as far from God as man can possibly be. If the shop is filled with customers, how full of glee the tradesman is! Where is the man now that is calling upon the Lord? But if times are bad and things get wrong, he begins to call upon God. Now that he begins to feel more losses from the things of time and sense, he begins to set more store upon the things of eternity. So if God wants to set our affections on things above, he must take them off things upon the earth. This is the way the Lord dealt with those in the 73rd Psalm in whose death there were no bands and whom God set in slippery places and cast down into destruction. Therefore kiss the rod, hug it, cleave to it, bless God for it, bless him for his afflicting mercies, his chastising strokes; for they are all meant to bring you out of the world. Dread having no furnace, no rod, being left without chastisement: but bless the Lord for every affliction, for every sickness, for every sorrow, for every trial and for every bereavement; bless the Lord for them all. By these strokes he is bringing you nearer to his sacred and sovereign majesty. O these fools, to go on, till it is said, that their soul abhorreth all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death. We know in illness meat has no relish. Here is a man come out of the field with a good appetite, how sweet the smell of cooked food is to him? But take it to a man who is stretched upon a bed of sickness, and it is loathsome to him. Here is the roasted Lamb of which I spoke lately; to a hungry soul, how sweet it is, to the full soul, how loathsome! Well in a sense these fools' souls abhor all manner of meat. They cannot take the pleasure in the world they formerly did, because they have a troubled conscience. They cannot delight in earthly things as other men do, and thus their souls abhor all manner of meat. How disgusting is the light and joyful tone they hear; it is to them light as the drunkard's song. Oh! how loathsome to a soul really concerned about eternal things is the conversation of the ungodly. He feels that he has a soul lying under the wrath of the Almighty, and what an awful thing it will be if he has to be cast into the devouring flame, and there to lie for ever. What are all the sports of folly? He cannot feed upon the meat, this nonsense that fools can. *"He draws near unto the gates of death."* He

knows not whether the root of the matter is in him. He fears lest the work has never been begun, lest his joys have been all delusions and were only natural conviction, lest all his past experience should have been nothing but a mass of delusion, deception and hypocrisy. He fears that in a short time he may be in eternity, and that all his sins will sink him as with a mill-stone into the depths of hell. Now you would hardly think this man was a saint of God. Where is his religion? Where are his joys, peace, faith and love? You cannot see any of these things in him, nor can he see them in himself. But he is Christ's and it is that that makes him feel what he does. Now we come to

III.—The crying of the soul in this extremity. There is a crying unto the Lord in their trouble. But it is trouble that forces the cry. Men never really cry to the Lord in earnest except they get into trouble. It is not the prayers of a man at ease that enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, the half-hearted prayers; but the prayer of the soul that is in trouble, in the waves of affliction and sorrow. When the billows of God go over a man's head, and he sinks into deep waters, then he prays. So these fools spoken of in our text, they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. What a mercy to have a Lord to cry unto! A throne of grace, a foot-stool of mercy, a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God! What a mercy that the Lord does not leave his people in despair, to sin and Satan, and that he does not thrust them into perdition, there to make hell's arches ring with their cries of misery and horror. But whilst there is life there is hope, and though this poor fool must always take a low place, yet there is a cry in his soul, and a Lord of pity and compassion to hear that cry which it pours out. You never can sink so low as not to have a cry to cry unto the Lord in your soul, if you fear his great name. It is your mercy, privilege, and blessing to know that there is a God, and to know that if you cry to God in trouble he will hear you, therefore, cry on, poor soul, give not up, give not way to despair, cry unto the Lord, and the more you are troubled the more do you cry. Now comes

IV.—*Deliverance.* "He saveth them out of all their distresses." Oh,

how kind! Oh, how compassionate the Lord is! to hear the cry of his poor children here below! "He saveth them out of all their *distresses*." Those distresses of mind, those pangs of a guilty conscience, those doubts and fears, harassing temptations, and those painful anticipations of the world to come. He appears for them, helps them, stretches out his arm. "*He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*" He sends a word of promise, of sweet invitation, or a word that brings with it pardon, peace and deliverance. God sends the word with power into their heart, and when the word comes, deliverance comes with the word, because directly the comforting word reaches the heart, Satan flies, darkness disappears, doubts and fears give way, the hard heart softens, and Jesus comes with the word and reveals himself with a divine power to the heart, and nothing but the word coming with a divine power into the heart can ever heal backslidings, quiet the distressed mind and disperse the doubts and fears that harass a living soul. And he delivers them from their destructions. We would have destroyed both body and soul. Have not some of you had snares so subtle and a nature so strong you could not deliver yourself from them? Again and again your feet were entangled; again and again you were caught in the snare and you felt that that snare would be your destruction. Beware of giving way to the first snare, to the first temptation. Many a man has fallen in a course of sin by giving way in the first instance to temptation which he might have resisted. But temptations, sin and a wicked heart ever working together overcame him so that his feet are entangled. But for God's special grace many a snare would have been our destruction; if the Lord had not taken them out of the way we should have been entangled by them. These snares are spread in every thing we do, in our meat, drink, and clothing, in our body and family, in our business and occupations and in our walks, our goings out and comings in. There is not a single step we can take where secret snares are not spread for our feet, and these snares would certainly prove our destruction but for God's grace. You may think not; but if you saw them you would perceive that there was a snare laid even in your toil and business, but—

"Seldom do we see the snares,  
Before we feel the smart."

These poor fools have been caught in the snares and they would have destroyed body and soul, but for the grace of God. You may read of men guilty of the most atrocious crimes; and if you observe you will see that they went on little by little, from one thing to another, till at last they became manifestly noxious criminals. How many an apprentice has been tempted to take a little in the first instance, and then has gone on till he has destroyed his character, and, it may be, brought himself to circumstance which result in his being a prisoner for the rest of his life. Beware of the first sin. Many a drunkard has begun by merely taking a little. Therefore, beware of forming habits and of being entangled in them. Beg of the Lord to deliver you from them; for the Lord will keep his people; he "will keep the feet of his saints," and he will preserve them to the end.

## The Loss of All Things for Christ's Sake

Preached at Park Street Chapel, Nottingham, on Thursday Evening, Sept. 23, 1858

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."  
Philippians 3:8, 9

Every saved sinner is a miracle of grace; and I believe in my very heart and conscience that the Lord will make every saved sinner know, feel, and acknowledge it; for he will give him from time to time such deep discoveries of what he is in the Adam fall, as will convince him beyond all question and all controversy that nothing but the rich, sovereign, distinguishing, and superabounding grace of God can save his soul from the bottomless pit. But though this is true in the case of every vessel of mercy, yet, as if to establish our faith more clearly and fully in the sovereignty of grace, the Lord has given us two special instances in the Scriptures wherein the miracles of his grace seem to shine forth in the most distinguished lustre and glory; and as if to make the contrast greater, they are of two characters exactly opposite. Yet the grace of God shines so conspicuously in both, that I hardly know to which I can assign the preference. These two characters are— one; the thief upon the cross; the other, Saul of Tarsus. Let us view them separately.

First, I look at the thief upon the cross. I see there a hardened malefactor, for he was no doubt one of the gang of Barabbas, and selected, when he was spared, as one of the worst, to stamp the Redeemer's crucifixion by his side with the deeper ignominy. I trace him, then, through his life of violence and crime, and see him imbruing his hands in the blood of the innocent. I see him year after year sinning to the utmost stretch of all his faculties, until at last brought to suffer condign punishment for his crimes against the laws of his fellow man. I see him amidst all his sufferings at first joining his brother thief in blaspheming the Lamb of God, who was hanging between them upon the cross; for

I read that "the thieves that were crucified with him cast the same into his teeth." (Matt. 27:44.) But the appointed time arrives, the predestinated moment strikes, and I see the grace of God, as a lightning flash, not to destroy, but to save, enter into his heart, as if just at the last gasp, to snatch him from the gates of death and the very jaws of hell. I see it communicate to his soul conviction of sin and repentance of his crimes, for he acknowledged them to God and man. I see how the Holy Ghost raised up in that dying malefactor's soul a faith in the Person, work, kingdom, grace, and power of the Son of God—a faith so strong that I can hardly find a parallel to it, unless in that of Abraham offering up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. When the very disciples forsook him and fled; when his cruel enemies were celebrating their highest triumph; when earth shook to its centre and the sun withdrew its light; at the lowest depth of the Redeemer's shame and sorrow—O, miracle of grace!—here was a poor dying thief acknowledging Jesus as King in Zion, and praying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." O, my soul, hast thou not prayed the same prayer to the same King of kings and Lord of lords?

But now I turn and see another character. I view a man trained up in the strictest form of religion then known, living the most austere, upright, unblemished life. I see him repeating prayer after prayer and making vow after vow, ever setting before his eyes day after day the law of Moses, and directing by that his life and conduct. I next see him, in the height of his zeal, ravaging the church of God, as a wolf devastates a fold, till satiated with blood. I see him holding the garments of the witnesses against the martyred Stephen. I view him rejoicing as with fiendish joy as stone after stone was fiercely hurled, and fell with crushing violence upon the martyr's head. But O what a change! I see him now fallen to the earth at Damascus' gate, under the power of that light from heaven above the brightness of the sun which shone round about him; and I hear him saying, all trembling and astonished—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.) Free will, where wert thou at Damascus' gate? Wert thou not hurrying him on to deeds of blood? Was he not doing thy bidding when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord? Did thy voice arrest his hand? Free grace, was not the conquest wholly, solely thine? Now can you tell me which of these two saved sinners, shall carry the palm the

highest or sing the song the loudest? Can you, ye saints of God, decide in which of these two men the grace of God shines forth the more conspicuously? Was it in touching the heart of the malefactor on the cross, or that of the hardened pharisee? I freely confess I can hardly pronounce an opinion, for my mind hovers between the two; but of the two, I should give Saul the preference, for to bring down the proud, self-satisfied self-righteous pharisee, seems almost a greater miracle of grace than to convert a dying malefactor, especially when we take into account what the grace of God afterwards made him, and how it wrought in him to be such a saint and such an apostle. To show what grace taught and made him we need go no farther than this very chapter. I see here what the grace of God did in this man's heart, and as I read the blessed record of his experience as here, it poured itself forth in a stream of life and feeling from his very soul, I read in every line—I might say in every word—what a mighty revolution must have been wrought in him to make him now so dearly love that Jesus whom he had once abhorred, that for his sake he counted all things but dung that he might know, win, and be found in him, and that the righteousness he had once despised he now felt was his only justification before, and his only acceptance with God.

If, then, the same grace that touched the heart of the dying malefactor and of Saul the pharisee has touched your heart and mine—and it needs the same grace to save and sanctify us as saved and sanctified them—we shall be able, at least in some measure, to speak for ourselves the language of the text, and which, with God's blessing, I shall now proceed to open. In doing which I shall endeavour—

I.—*First*, to trace out the mind of the Holy Ghost in the expression of the Apostle—"For whom I have *suffered the loss of all things and count them as dung.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the *reason* why he had suffered the loss of all things and counted them so mean and low. It was "*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *intense desire* in his soul to "*win Christ and to be found in him.*"



IV.—And *fourthly*, his full conviction that if found in Jesus, his happy soul would be found clothed, *not in his own righteousness, which is of the law, but "that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

I.—The Apostle in the beginning of this chapter gives us a long catalogue, which I will not enter into, of certain religious privileges which were his by inheritance, and of certain, as were in that day considered, great attainments in religion which he had made by his own exertions, for he had advanced by great strictness of conduct to the highest pitch of legal holiness. He could say, what few of us can, that "touching the righteousness which is in the law," which here means its external righteousness, he was "blameless." The Apostle's meaning here is often much mistaken. He does not mean the spirit of the law, but the letter—an external, not an internal obedience—a fulfilment of the law merely as regards the abstaining from idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, murder, theft, and adultery; not an inward loving of God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, but a strict, undeviating uprightness of walk and conversation from his infancy upward; and as such, in, the eyes of man he was blameless.

i. But a time came, according to God's purpose—a time never to be forgotten—when the invincible grace of God touched his heart and brought down his pride into the dust. He tells us (Romans 7.) what his feelings and experience were under the first work of grace upon his heart, and what he learnt and found under the sharp discipline into which he was then introduced. "I was alive," he says, "without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death." (Rom. 7:9, 10.) He was "alive, without the law once." That is, when unacquainted with the spirituality of the law and the wrath of God revealed therein he was "alive," because it had not killed him and laid him dead under its curse. He could read, fast, and pray; he could run on the errands that the law sent him, work at the winch to which it tied him, and perform, at least in the letter, the tasks which it set him. In this sense, he was alive, and lively too, for his zeal was all in a flame to waste the church of Christ as with fire and sword, for he tells us himself that he was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:14), and displayed this zeal in

persecuting the church (Phil. 3:6), or as the Holy Ghost more expressly tells, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and taking men and women, committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3.) But when the law entered his conscience, it killed him as to all hopes of salvation by his own obedience; and when God was pleased to reveal his dear Son in him (Gal. 1:16), he saw and felt such beauty and blessedness in his glorious Person as God-Man, and such pardon and peace, acceptance and justification by and in his blood and righteousness, that all his once fancied gains sank into utter loss. He was thus like a merchant or tradesman who by some convulsion in business is ruined at a stroke. He may have on the debtor side of his ledger a large amount of money due to him for goods supplied, but finds to his dismay that all the sums he was expecting to receive, in order to meet his engagements with, are bad debts, or more confounding still, are to be transferred to the other side of the ledger, so that he must pay where he expected to be paid. So with Saul. He was continually making his calculations, that the law owed him as a debt life and happiness, with the special favour of God, on account of his strict obedience to it; but to his utmost consternation, when the Lord opened his eyes, and the law seized him as it were by the throat, saying—"Pay me what thou owest," he found that the law was not his debtor but his creditor, and that instead of it owing him life, he owed it death. Thus his gains were turned into loss, and his profits into debts.

Now this is a lesson that all must learn spiritually and experimentally who are to know Christ, believe in Christ, and win Christ. But we formerly went the wrong way to work: we once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favour of God, and induce him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey his commandments; and by these religious performances we thought, in the days of our ignorance, we should surely be able to make a ladder whereby we might climb up to heaven. This was our tower of Babel, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which we thought to scale the stars, and, like the proud king of Babylon, "to ascend above the heights of the clouds and be like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:14.) But the same Lord who stopped the further building of

the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth, began to confound our speech so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before, and to scatter all our religion like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. Our mouths were stopped; we became guilty before God; and the bricks and the slime became a pile of confusion. When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith his being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity, and thus gave us a corresponding sense of our filthiness and folly, then all our creature religion and natural piety which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss—that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being for us, were actually against us, and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life. Thus "our tables"—and among them the Lord's table which we attended so constantly—"became a snare, and that which should have been for our welfare"—as we fondly conceived our religious duties were—"became a trap" in which we were caught as in the very act of sinning, and from which there was no escape by any exertion of our own. (Psalm 69:22)

But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, blood, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we began more plainly, and clearly to see with what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves, and what is far worse, mocking God by them. We had been secretly despising Jesus and his sufferings, Jesus and his blood, Jesus and his righteousness, and setting up the poor, miserable, paltry doings of a polluted worm in the place of the finished work of the Son of God. But compared with him, well may we now say, with Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

ii. But the Apostle adds, "*For whom I have suffered the loss of all things;*" meaning thereby not only all his creature religion and fancied righteousness, but everything else which had come into competition with the Lord Jesus.

1. We have to experience the same loss for ourselves. When the Lord, by his Spirit's divine operations, is pleased to make our conscience increasingly tender, planting his fear more deeply in the heart; when he condescends to strengthen that which he has

already wrought in us by his power, and to bring forth the graces of his Spirit into more vivid exercise and more powerful efficiency, we begin to find that there are many things hitherto indulged, which we must sacrifice if we would maintain an honest conscience and walk before the Lord in all well-pleasing. We begin to see that we cannot hold the Lord [world?] with one hand and Christ with the other, and that to follow Jesus requires taking up a daily cross and denying ourselves of much which the flesh admires and loves. It is laid with weight and power upon our conscience that if we would be Christians inwardly as well as outwardly, have the power of godliness and not merely the form, we must part with many things which we have loved as our very life blood. This is the grand test which distinguishes the real from the nominal Christian—the possessor from the professor. I speak from experience. I was myself called upon to make such sacrifices. It may not be your part, nor may the same necessity be laid upon you; but when I was a minister of the Church of England rather more than 23 years ago, I was called upon to sacrifice all my earthly prospects, and with Moses count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. I repeat it—this may not be your case, for I am not laying down myself as an example; but I felt I could not hold my position and office as a minister of that church, because that position called upon me to say and do things which I could not say and do, without standing before the God of heaven with what I believed to be a lie in my mouth and in my right hand. I do not judge other men's consciences, but I felt I must either retain my position with a weight continually resting upon my mind, and thus mock, as I believed, a holy, heart-searching God, or make the sacrifice. I chose the latter; nor have I ever repented the choice, as I can now serve the Lord and preach his truth with a good conscience. But all of you must sacrifice something, if, with Paul, you are "to suffer the loss of *all* things." It may happen that you are placed, for instance, in a situation extremely advantageous to your temporal interests, and one which is fast leading you to a position of worldly ease and respectability. But if you are compelled, in occupying this position, to do things which gall and grieve a tender conscience—things inconsistent with the fear of God and the precepts of the Gospel, grace will compel, as well as enable you to suffer the loss of all these things, rather than live in sin, to the provocation of God, and the bringing of darkness and death into your soul.

2. But if spared this trial; if you have not to suffer in purse or position, you will certainly suffer in *reputation*. You must lose your good name, if you do not lose your worldly advancement, or fall into a lower social position; for no man can be a sincere follower of the Lamb and yet retain the good opinion of the world. If you walk in the fear of God, and follow in the footsteps of a persecuted and despised Jesus, the world will hate and despise you as it hated and despised him, as he himself declares—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18.) God himself has put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); and nothing will secure you from the manifestation of this enmity if you are on Christ's side. Neither rank, nor property, nor learning, nor education, nor amiability, nor the profusest deeds of liberality, nor the greatest uprightness of conduct, will stave off the scorn of men, if you are a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and carry out in practice what you hold in principle. You may manage to carry on a profession of religion, and shun by worldly compliances the shame of the cross; but to retain the respect of the world with a firm holding of the distinguishing doctrines of grace, a living experience of their power, and a godly obedience of life, is utterly impossible. You may contrive by time-serving, by concealing your real views, and by shunning the company of God's people, to escape the cross; but take care, lest in escaping the cross you escape the crown. If you are not conformed to Jesus here in his suffering image, you will most certainly not be conformed to Jesus hereafter in his glorified likeness. But if by living for and unto Jesus and his cross, your name be cast out as evil, wear it as your distinguishing badge, your Crimean medal, as adorning the breast of a Christian warrior. If men misrepresent your motives or actions, and seek to hunt you down with every calumny that the basest malignity can invent, do not heed it as long as you are innocent. They cannot find you a better or more honorable crown, if indeed your godly life provoke the cruel lie. It is a crown that your Master bore before you, when they crowned his head with thorns. If you feel as I have felt, you will at times count yourself even unworthy to suffer persecution for his name's sake.

3. You may be called upon to suffer the *loss of relations or friends*, if not by bereavement, by what is sometimes more

painful—separation and alienation. The Lord himself said, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Matt. 10:35.) Thus you may have to suffer in this sense the loss of father, mother, wife, sister, child—of your nearest and dearest ties; the grace of God producing that separation between you and them, as shall make them lost to you and you to them.

4. But this is not all; these are mainly *outward* matters. There is something more *inward* of which you must also suffer loss. I mean the loss of *all your fancied holiness*, of all your vaunted strength, of all your natural or acquired wisdom, of all your boasted knowledge; in a word, of everything in creature religion of which the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight. All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake; all, all must be sacrificed to his bleeding, dying love: our dearest joys, our fondest hopes, our most cherished idols, must all sink and give way to the grace, blood, and love of an incarnate God. And not only must they be counted as "loss," but lower still must they sink, worse still must they become: they must be counted as dung, as street offal, or according to the literal meaning of the word, as garbage of the slaughterhouse cast to dogs. What a strong expression of the Apostle! How great the grace, how ardent the affection, that made him so abhor himself and love Jesus!

II.—But I pass on to my *second* point, which was to show *the reason* why Paul had "suffered the loss of all things and counted them as dung." It was "*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.*" Can we part freely and cheerfully with what we naturally love, unless we obtain for it something more choice and valuable? Is not money dear? Is not reputation dear also? Is not the good opinion of others, what men think and what they say approvingly of us, very gratifying to our natural mind? To be generally esteemed or admired, to possess property, influence, a good social position for themselves and their families—is not this the main object of most men's ambition and desire? How, then, can we be brought to that state of mind which shall enable us to suffer the loss of all things as with holy joy, and to reckon everything in which heretofore we had delighted but loss; yea, stranger still, to count it but dung, as loathsome garbage such as is cast to the dogs? Oh what grace must be in your hearts to

enable you to renounce what the world so madly pursues and what your own nature so fondly loves! To see all these earthly delights spread, as if in a panorama, before your eyes; the pleasures, the amusements, the show and finery of the world presented to you, as they were by Satan to the Lord himself on the exceeding high mountain (Matt. 3:8); to carry within you a nature which loves and delights in them, and yet, by the power of grace and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to regard them as far beneath your notice, as contemptible, and as polluting as the offal in the street, over which you step in haste lest you defile your shoes or clothes—Oh what a deep and vital sense must the soul have of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus its Lord, and what a view by faith of his beauty and glory to bring it to that state, to count all that earth can give or contribute to individual enjoyment as dung and dross! I am very sure that no man, in living experience, ever had the feeling for five minutes in his soul or carried it out for five minutes in the life, but by some personal discovery of the beauty and blessedness of the Son of God. My friends, take this as a most certain truth, that we can never know Jesus Christ except by a spiritual revelation of him to our soul. You know the words—they are his who cannot lie—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." How am I to know the only true God? Does he not dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see? Must he not, then, shine into my soul that I may see him by faith, as Moses saw him, who "endured as seeing him who is invisible?" Does not the Lord himself say, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him?" (Matt. 11:27.) How, then, can I know either the Father or the Son but by revelation and manifestation? How am I to know Jesus Christ as God, the co-equal and co eternal Son of the Father in truth and love, but by a divine manifestation of his glory? How can I know him as a man, and see his pure, spotless humanity, unless the eyes of my understanding are enlightened by the heavenly anointing? Or how can I know him as God-man unless by faith I view him as such at the right hand of the Father? To show us Jesus, his Person, his grace, and his glory, is the express work of the Holy Ghost, as the Lord himself declares—"He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine

and shall show it unto you." (John 16:14, 15.) I am well convinced for myself that I can only know him by the manifestation of himself. I hope I have had that manifestation of him to my soul; but I am sure that we have no saving or sanctifying knowledge of the Son of God, except by a special revelation of him to our heart. I do not mean by this anything visionary or visible, but a discovery of him by the Holy Spirit to the eye of faith. And when he is revealed to our hearts by the power of God, and we see who and what he is by a living faith, then we "behold his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) We see his glorious Deity as the Son of God; we see his pure and spotless Humanity—how innocent, how holy, how suffering, how bleeding; and we see this eternal Deity and this Holy Humanity in one glorious Person—Immanuel, God with us—seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Thus to see him, thus to know him, thus to believe in him, thus to love him, and thus to cleave to him with purpose of heart—this, this is vitally and experimentally to realise "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Oh what excellent knowledge!—how surpassing all acquired from books! You may have read the Bible from childhood—and it cannot be read too much—and may know it almost by heart from end to end; you may be able to read the Hebrew text, and understand the Greek original; you may study commentator after commentator—all which I have myself done, and therefore know what I am saying; and yet all your reading, and all your searching after the meaning of the Scripture, if continued till your eyes are worn out with fatigue, will never give you that spiritual and saving knowledge of the Person and work, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus which one five minutes of his manifested presence will discover to your soul. The light of his countenance, the shining in of his glory, and the shedding abroad of his love, will teach you more, in a few minutes sweet communion, who and what he is as the King in his beauty, than without this manifestation you could learn in a century. If any say that to talk about manifestations is enthusiasm, I will ask them to explain what the Lord meant when he said to his disciples, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.) Does not the Lord speak here of "manifesting" himself to those that love him? Is this enthusiasm? And when



Paul speaks in almost similar language—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6), was Paul teaching and preaching enthusiasm? The Lord give me a little more of this enthusiasm, if men call by that name the manifestation of Christ to the soul. It is only thus we understand, feel, and enjoy "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." No wonder men suffer no loss of any one thing, much less of all things, for Christ's sake; no wonder they greedily pick up the offal which the so-called enthusiast throws to the dogs. But be it known to them that Christ Jesus is not their Lord, unless he has taken possession of their hearts; for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3 ) When, then, Jesus manifests himself to the soul, he becomes its Lord; for he puts down all other rivals, and seats himself on the throne of the affections.— He then becomes in reality what before he was but in name, Christ Jesus our Lord. We then lie at his sacred feet; we embrace him with the arms of faith; he sways the sceptre over a willing heart, and we crown him Lord of all. Now it is only the excellency of this knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, as vitally felt that makes us willing to suffer the loss of all things. Oh, what is a little money, a little gold and silver, compared with a living faith in the precious blood of Christ! "We are not redeemed," says the word of truth, "with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) Oh, that precious blood! As I have sometimes thought and said, Deity was in every drop! Oh, that precious blood which oozed from his veins in the garden of Gethsemane, when it fell in large drops from his surcharged brow! Oh, that precious blood, in which his body was bathed upon the Cross of Calvary! Oh how it ran from his hands and feet and side! cleansing, as it ran, like an opened fountain, the Church of God from all her sin and uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1.) This is the precious blood which sprinkled upon the conscience cleanseth it from all sin, and purges it from dead works to serve a living God. (Heb. 9:14.) When then we thus see by the eye of faith that atoning blood, and cast ourselves, so to speak, with all our sins into that open fountain, as Naaman dipped himself in Jordan's flood, can we dare we put our words and works into competition with such a sacrifice, with the agonies and sorrows, the suffering obedience and meritorious death of the Lamb of God? In the eyes

of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, can there be a greater insult than to put man's paltry words and works in the place of the finished work of his own dear Son? If man can save himself, why need Jesus have bled and died? Why should we need the sufferings of an incarnate God, if a few acts of natural piety can merit heaven? Men ignorant of God and godliness are too ready to set up their own works and trust to their own righteousness; but all the works of the creature sink into worse than insignificance, when placed side by side with the wonders of redeeming blood and love. Can there be a greater insult in the face of the dread Majesty of heaven, than to parade a few creature doings and duties as only a shade less meritorious, than the blood and obedience of Him who, as God's co-eternal Son, thought it not robbery to be equal with God? (Phil. 2:6.) Perish all such thoughts out of our hearts; and let us rather count all things, whatever they be, as dung and dross compared with Jesus and his blood. It is not religion, but the want of it, which makes men esteem themselves and slight Christ, set up their own works and disregard his. When the Lord is pleased to visit his redeemed ones with his presence, they feel that there is nothing upon earth which they so much love and prize as himself. To feel his presence and love is the foretaste of eternal joy; the prelibation and first sip of that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. (Psal. 46:4.), Then they see what is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Then are they willing to part with all things and count them but dung; and those things which once they counted gain are now seen to be positive loss, for they stand in the way of Christ, and hinder, so to speak, his approach to the soul. If once you have seen and felt the preciousness of Christ, and have had a view by faith of his glorious Person and spotless obedience to the Law of God, you will never again set up your own fancied holiness. To offer such an oblation will be as offering swine's blood; to burn incense to your own righteousness will be as if you blessed an idol. (Isai. 46:3.) In comparison also with him, money, reputation, worldly honour, or any temporal advantage will be viewed as valueless indeed; as demanding affections which we can no longer give, as being already bestowed. Let me illustrate this by a figure. You are a man of business, and your time is occupied nearly all the day with matters of importance. I call upon you to while away some idle moments, having no business to transact with you, but merely to pass away the time. Your time, however, is precious, for you

have urgent matters in hand. I see you through your courtesy for a few moments, but as your time is too valuable to be interrupted by mere idle gossip, you very soon say "Excuse me, I cannot give you any more time. I am engaged—I am engaged; I cannot see you now." Look at the figure spiritually, and see how in a similar way everything which takes up our time, occupies our thoughts, entangles our affections, and turns away our feet from the Lord is positive loss, because it robs our soul of its best treasure. If every look from him brings renewed strength, and every view of him by faith carries with it a blessing, then all that hinders these looks from him and views of him, is as much positive loss to the soul, as the merchant being kept from 'Change by a morning call, is a loss to his purse. What is health or rank or beauty; in a word, what are all earthly delights, with which all must soon part, which must shortly either leave us, or we leave them, compared with the Saviour and with a sweet testimony in our souls that we are his and that he is ours? Only let the blessed Redeemer look upon you with that face which was marred more than the sons of men, with one glance of those languid eyes so full of the deepest sorrow and the tenderest love; only let the Blessed Spirit lead you into the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross of Calvary, there to see by the eye of faith the suffering Son of God, you will then feel how poor and mean are all earthly things, and how glorious and blessed are those divine realities which faith sees here, and which God has in store for those that love him hereafter. You will then see too how the best and brightest objects here below, are as little worthy of your real regard as the toys of childhood or the sports of youth. Would you know, then, why Paul thus wrote? It was because Christ was made precious to his soul that his pen traced the words of our text, for they are the utterance of his own experience, of what he had himself seen, felt, and enjoyed in the gracious discoveries of the Lord the Lamb to his heart.

But you say, perhaps, "I am not there." No, you may not be there, for few ever arrived as far as he in the knowledge of Christ; but are you on the way there? There is a being at a spot, there is a being on the way to a spot, and there is a thorough absence of movement towards a spot. As I came here yesterday by the railway, every minute brought me nearer and nearer to the station where I was to alight: as I go away to-morrow every minute will take me farther and farther from it. Thus it is in

regard to sacred things. Some of you may be coming on within sight of Gethsemane. Follow on—follow on. You are on the way if you are learning that hard but easy, bitter but sweet, humbling but exalting lesson to count for Christ's sake all things but loss. Every fresh trial, every fresh blessing, every new sight of self, every new sight of him, will bring you more into Paul's experience. But there are those who inwardly hate and shun the cross, and who, with all their profession of religion, love the world and are buried in it. Every day, as their conscience gets more and more hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they are farther and farther from the cross, and if a miracle of grace rescue them not, so much nearer and nearer to destruction at the end of their course.

III.—But I pass on to open up, as I proposed, the expression of the Apostle, "*That I may win Christ.*" What, had he not already won him? Yes, he had in a measure, but there was that divine beauty and blessedness in his glorious Person, which his soul longed to realize in a yet greater degree of fulness. As a lover longs to win not only the love, but the person of the object of his attachment to be his own bride, and pants to clasp her to his heart and to call her his, so did the Apostle long to clasp Jesus in the arms of his faith so as to be able to say, "This is my friend, and this is my beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem." (Song Sol. 5:16.) "Yes; this is my Christ, my own Christ, my own Jesus, my dear Jesus, mine in life, mine in death, mine to all eternity!" But he felt that if he were thus to win Christ, it could only be by counting all other things as lost unto him. As the bridegroom counts all other women not worthy of a moment's thought compared with his bride, and regards and loves none but her, so it is of the soul that sincerely loves Christ.

This to some of you may seem rank enthusiasm, and to others hard doctrine. It was so to the young man who "had great possessions" and wished for eternal life, but not at the expense of following Christ. (Matt. 19:21.) It was so to those disciples who turned back and walked no more with Jesus. (John 6:66.) It was so even to Peter himself when he sought to turn his Master away from the cross. (Matt. 16:22.) But this is the way, and there is no other; as the Lord himself told "the great multitudes that went with him"—"If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and

his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear the cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26, 27.) There is no middle path to heaven—there is no intermediate state between hell and heaven; no purgatory for that numerous class who think themselves hardly good enough for heaven, yet hardly bad enough for hell. No; there is no intermediate road nor state. We must win Christ as our own most blessed Jesus, and with him enjoy the happiness and glory of heaven, or sink down to hell with all our sins upon our head beneath his most terrible frown. The soul then that has been charmed with the beauty and blessedness of Jesus longs to win him, and that not for a day, month, or year, but for eternity; for in obtaining him, it obtains all that God can give the soul of man to enjoy, as created immortal and for immortality. Under the influence of his grace, it feels at times even here below all its immortal powers springing forth into active, heavenly life, and looks forward in faith and hope to a glorious eternity, where it will be put into possession of the highest enjoyment which God can give to man, even union with himself by virtue of union with his dear Son, according to those wonderful words of the Redeemer himself—"That they all maybe one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (John 17:21.)

Now has your heart ever panted after the Lord Jesus as the hart panteth after the water brooks? (Psalm 42:1.) Do you ever lie in the dust mourning over your sins against such bleeding, dying love? Do you ever ask God to kindle in your soul an intense desire to have Jesus as your Christ, that he may be your delight here and your portion for ever? Surely there is that in him which is not in anything below the skies, and which if not found here will not be found hereafter. If you have no love or affection for him, why is it but because he has not endeared himself to your soul? But if he has manifested himself to you, you have seen and felt enough of his blessedness to convince you that there is no real peace or happiness out of him. It is true that you may have many trials and temptations to encounter; many perplexities and sorrows may be spread in your path; but be not dismayed, for the love of Christ, if you have ever felt that love shed abroad in your heart, will bear you more than conqueror through them all. The Lord make and keep us faithful to the truth as it has been made known to our consciences; and may the goodness and mercy of God shine into our hearts, and shed abroad its rays of

light and joy in our darkest moments and under our severest trials. And O to be found in him at the great day, as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones—to be found the Lord's "peculiar treasure" in that day when he maketh up his jewels. (Mal. 3:17.) And O then where will be those who are not found in the Lord Jesus! They will call upon the mountains and the rocks to "fall on them and hide from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." The Apostle, then, knowing what the terrible wrath of God was, and what a holy and righteous Jehovah he had to deal with, and knowing, too, that there was no refuge for his guilty soul but the Lord the Lamb, desired with intense desire not only to win Christ, but to be found at the great day in union with him, as washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness. And this brings me to the last point of the text which I proposed to consider, viz.:

IV.—The desire of Paul to *"be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

Here are the two righteousnesses clearly laid down, in one or other of which we must all stand before God—the righteousness which is of the law, and the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ. But bear this in mind, that a righteousness to be available before God must be a perfect righteousness. This righteousness no man ever did or could produce by his own obedience to the law, for no man ever yet loved God "with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his neighbour as himself;" and if a man do not thus love God and thus love his neighbour, he is accused and condemned already by that righteous law which curseth "every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Now the Apostle felt that as this righteousness could not be yielded by himself as a fallen sinner, he must necessarily fall under the condemnation and curse attached to that holy law. Trembling, therefore, in his conscience, as feeling that the wrath of God was revealed against him, and all unjustified sinners in a broken law, and knowing that he must sink for ever under the terrible indignation of the Almighty, if he had no covering for his needy, naked soul but his own righteousness, he fled out of it to find justification and acceptance, mercy and peace in the righteousness of Christ. Thenceforth he "was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and Jesus became

to him his "all in all." When once he had been favoured with a view of the righteousness of the Son of God, he wanted no other for time or eternity. He saw by faith the words and works of the God-Man, and he beheld Deity stamped upon every thought, word, and action of that pure humanity with which it was in union, and thus investing them with a merit beyond all conception or expression of men or angels. He saw him by faith bearing his sins in his own body on the tree, and by his active and passive obedience working out a righteousness acceptable to God, and such as he and all the redeemed could stand in before the great white throne without spot or blemish. As a traveller overtaken by a violent thunderstorm gladly flies to a house by the wayside wherein he may find shelter from the lightning-stroke and the sweeping rain; or as a ship threatened with a hurricane bends every sail to reach in time the harbour of refuge—so does the soul terrified by the thunders and lightnings of God's righteous law, seek for shelter in the wounded side of Jesus and hide itself beneath his justifying obedience. This righteousness is here called "the righteousness of God;" for God the Father contrived it, God the Son performed it, and God the Holy Ghost applies it; and it is said to be "by faith" and "through the faith of Christ," because faith views it, believes in it, receives it, and gives the soul a manifested interest in it.

Now, my friends, you who desire to fear God, you who tremble at the thought of living and dying in your sins, can you find anything in your heart, either as now felt or as formerly experienced, corresponding to the experience of the Apostle, as I have from the words of the text this evening traced it out? If you can—and I hope there are some here who can do so—what a blessed thing it is for you to have an inward testimony, that the Lord himself has wrought and is still working this experience in your souls. Therefore be not dismayed by the trials and temptations which may lie in your path, or be terrified at the vastness of the great deep which seems still to stretch itself between you and him. These trials and temptations will be all blessedly overruled to your spiritual good, and will all lead you to seek more and more to be clothed with the spotless righteousness of Christ, in which alone you can stand with acceptance before God. Again I say, be not disheartened, ye suffering children of God, by your trials and sorrows, exercises and fears; for if the Lord see fit that his dear saints should be thus tried and tempted, it is to teach them that

there is a suitability and a preciousness in Christ which they never can find in themselves.

And now may the Lord, if it be his gracious will, bless to your souls, ye suffering saints, what you have heard from my lips, and lead you still to press on, to endure all things that may come upon you, and patiently and submissively carry the cross, as looking forward to the crown, and thus be willing, and more than willing, to follow in Christ's footsteps and be conformed to his suffering image here, in the sweet hope and blessed confidence of seeing him as he is hereafter, and being conformed to his glorious likeness in the bright realms of one eternal day.



## **DELIVERANCE FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, October 13, 1861

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." Galatians 1:4, 5

What an amount of sorrow and misery beyond all calculation, and indeed beyond all conception, there is in this wretched world, this vale of tears, as it is so often justly called, in which our present earthly lot is cast! Not a house, not a family, not a heart is there which does not sooner or later taste more or less deeply of this most bitter cup. How many, for instance, this morning have risen from their lowly beds, or rather their miserable floors, sunk into such poverty that they scarcely know where to get a morsel of bread to eat, or the poorest, meanest raiment to put on! How many, if not sunk into the same depths of absolute want, yet, like a drowning man in a deep and rapid stream, can scarcely keep their head above water in their daily struggle for the means of existence! How many are now mourning over family bereavements, the delight of their eyes being taken from them at a stroke, or by lingering illness! How many youthful hearts, just in the first opening dawn of life, are bleeding under the deepest wounds inflicted upon their tenderest and warmest affections! How many are lying upon their beds of pain and languishing, and some at this very moment struggling and gasping in the agonies of death, and leaving this world without hope!

Thus, as we cast our eyes around us, or frame in our own minds a faint conception of the sorrows heaped upon the sons of men, we may almost say of this wretched world, that it is like Egypt when the angel passed through the land and smote the first-born. "There was a great cry in the land, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead." (Ex. 12:30.) Or like the inhabitants of Ekron, when God smote them for their sins, and

"the cry of the city went up to heaven" (1 Sam. 15:12.) Or like Ezekiel's roll, which was "written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mournings, and woe." (Ezek. 2:10.)

But there is something still worse behind. Is there not a cause for all this sorrow and misery? Does God afflict willingly the sons of men? Would there be such an amount of human wretchedness, unless there had been some provocation on the part of man, to bring down all these chastisements upon his guilty head? There is something then in this world, and something too in the heart of man worse than sorrow. There is sin. When we look at the stream of misery which runs down this wretched world and examine it a little more closely, we see that it is not a stream of pure unmingled sorrow. It is rather a sewer of corruption than a flowing river of unmixed grief, for ever and anon out of this sewer of corruption, there surge to the top such sad exhibitions of human wickedness and crime, as must appall the mind which is not altogether deadened to every moral and religious feeling.

Look, for instance, at the crimes of the present day. What murders, suicides, deeds of violence, robberies, and hideous acts of uncleanness continually come to light; and how these in some instances, almost accidental discoveries, show what depth of corruption is really working and festering in the heart of man. As the leprosy which broke forth upon the forehead of King Uzziah only revealed the disease itself that had taken possession of his body (2 Chron. 26:19) so these open crimes that come from time to time to light, are merely marks and tokens of the deep-seated leprosy, that works underneath in the fabric of society as well as in the corrupt nature of man.

But in what a desperate, what a deplorable state should we be if there were no remedy for this misery and wretchedness, which has disjointed earth, and, like a mighty earthquake passing over it, made all its foundations out of course. (Ps. 82:5.) What less than a present hell would it be if there were nothing in this world but sin and sorrow; if we had just for a few short weeks, or

months, or years, to drain deep the cup of affliction, to be immersed in the floods of sin, to go down mourning to our grave, and then to open our eyes in endless misery! But O look up, ye mourning saints, who are often bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow, and much more frequently and much more heavily by the deep corruptions of your heart, look up and see that ray of heavenly light which even now seems to shine across this black gloom, this dense darkness, as a beam of sun sometimes in a moment lights up the face of the earth. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78, 79.)

Can you not hear, as it were a voice from God that speaks to the guilty sons of men, even such a voice as the shepherds heard when the heavenly choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men?" Can you not see how mercy appears coming forth, as from the bosom of God, with angel form? How she speaks as with an angel voice to the sons of men, and tells them that there is a balm for all their woes, a cure for all their diseases? Can you not see a hand which, points to the atoning blood and the justifying obedience of the Son of God, and says, "This is the remedy, the only remedy, which God has provided for all the sin and sorrow which are in the world." Were it not so why need I preach? Why need you hear? If there were no mercy for the sinner; if there were no cure for the sick; if there were no salvation for the lost; if there were no door of hope for the despairing, why need I this morning stand before you, and why need you sit to hear what I may speak in the Lord's name? Our text opens up very sweetly and blessedly the remedy which God has provided for all this misery, the healing balm which he has brought to light in the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of his dear Son as the way of pardon and peace to all who deeply and spiritually feel themselves to be poor, sinful, guilty transgressors.

The apostle in the verse immediately preceding our text, breathes forth his desire for the benefit and blessing of the Churches of

Galatia, in his usual prayerful, yet tender and affectionate salutation. "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." And then, as if the very mention of grace and peace touched his heart as with holy fire, and opened his mouth to set forth salvation by atoning blood of the Lamb, he breaks forth in the words of our text, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

Let us, with God's blessing, approach these words; let us come near to this stream that breaks forth in the desert, and see whether we can, with God's help, draw some living water from this well of salvation, which may refresh our spirit, cheer our mind, and comfort our heart. In attempting to do this. I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.— **First**, show you how and why this is **an evil world**.

II.— **Secondly**, how our blessed Lord **gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us** from it.

III.— **Thirdly**, that this was **in accordance with the will of God and our Father**.

IV.— **Fourthly**, that this will produce an eternal **revenue, of praise: "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."**

I.—The present is an **"evil world:"** that is God's testimony of it. You may say, "It is a beautiful world, a glorious world; and I mean as long as I live to enjoy all the happiness which I can possibly get out of it. It is all cant and nonsense to talk about it being such a miserable world. It is true there may be some unhappiness in it; but that is man's own fault. Did not God make it a beautiful world, and can we think that he meant it to be an unhappy one, or that we should be poor unhappy creatures in it?" Such is the language of many a heart, the utterance of many a lip. But whose testimony will stand, God's or man's?

If God has pronounced this to be an "evil world," not all man's vain reasonings, not all man's plausible speeches will alter God's testimony. Man may call evil good, and good evil; man may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; man may call darkness light, and light darkness. But man's testimony does not alter God's reality. If the mouth of God has declared the present world to be "evil," not all the lies of Satan nor all the plausibility of man put together can ever make it to be good.

But what is the **world!** What does the Holy Spirit mean by the expression, which so often occurs in the New Testament? Does he mean the **material** world, that wide and spacious earth which we see with our bodily eyes, and upon which our feet tread? Does he mean the mountains and valleys, rivers and brooks, meadows and fields, wooded hills and smiling landscapes, all which proclaim with loud voice their great and bountiful Creator? No. In a sense, it is true, earth literally, materially partakes of the curse of the Fall; for on the day when man fell God cursed the ground for man's sake, and in sorrow he was to eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles was it to bring forth unto him, and in the sweat of his face was he to eat bread, till he returned unto the ground out of which he was taken. **Ge 3:17,18**

But "the world" here does not mean the material, literal world daily spread before our eyes, but the men and women who dwell in it; for the material world, though it does partake of the curse of the Fall, is not in itself evil, that is, not sinful as the heart of man is who dwells upon it. It is perfectly true that the sin of man has corrupted every spot where it has fallen and carried misery in its train, so that in a sense "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" under the burdens which the sin of man has laid upon it. But the term "world," as used by the Holy Spirit in the word of truth, signifies not so much material creation, though it may in a measure embrace that meaning, as the men and women who are inhabitants of it, and especially as distinguished in the mind of God from his own chosen family.

But was man always evil? Did not God create him in his own image, after his own likeness? And when he had thus created him, did he not look down from heaven upon the work of his hands as with holy approbation and pronounce that it was "very good?" Evil, then, though man may be, he did not come evil from the hands of his Maker. It was not possible that a good God could create an evil man, and that a pure Jehovah could create an impure being. Job asks the pregnant question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But may we not reverse the inquiry, and say, "Who can bring an unclean thing out of a clean?" No; an enemy hath done this. It was with the Fall, as we read in the parable of the tares in the field. The sower sowed wheat; but whence came the tares? Not from him who sowed the wheat; but "while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way." (Matt. 13:25.) Satan was the enemy who sowed tares in the wheat field; and Satan it was that sowed sin in the heart of man; for he was permitted, in God's wise, unerring providence, to deceive the woman; she was permitted to entangle the man and draw him into her transgression; and thus "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that, or in whom [margin] all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) That is the source of all the evil which, is now, or ever has been in the world, for that one sin introduced every other sin with it. It brought in its train every iniquity that ever has been conceived by the imagination, uttered by the lips, or perpetrated by the hands of man.

Thus as the acorn contains in its tiny shell the whole oak with all its branching foliage; so that one sin conceived in the mind of our first parent contained in itself all those branches of sin which have covered the world with their lurid shadow, as the oak spreads its shade over the grass beneath. Every faculty of man fell in the fall from its primitive purity and strength. It was as though in the midst of a bright day the sun had in a moment gone down and darkness fell upon the scene; it was as if an earthquake had rent the solid foundations of the earth; or as if a mighty volcano had suddenly opened its mouth in the soil to pour

forth clouds of sulphurous smoke and streams of boiling lava. In a moment, as if by a sudden shock, man's whole nature underwent a change, stricken down by sin as by palsy or leprosy. His understanding became darkened, his judgment corrupted, his conscience deadened, his affections alienated, and all that warm current of purity and innocence which once flowed in a clear stream towards God, became thickened and fouled with the sin that was poured into it from the mouth of Satan, and was thus diverted from its course of light, love, and life to run into a channel of darkness, enmity, and death. Thus the fountain was corrupted at its very source, and from this spring-head have all the streams of evil flowed which have made the world a very Aceldama, a field of blood.

This is the fountain whence have issued all that misery and wretchedness which in all ages and in all climates have pursued man from the cradle to the grave; which have wrung millions of hot tears from human eyes; which have broken, literally broken, thousands of human hearts; which have desolated home after home, and struck grief and sadness into countless breasts. But. Oh! this fountain of sin in the heart of man has done worse than this; it has peopled hell; it has swept and is still sweeping thousands and tens of thousands into eternal perdition. Let us, then, not be juggled into a vain persuasion by the prince and god of this world that it is either a good or a happy world. This is a part of his witching wiles whereby he deceives the hearts of men by vain shows. He must not speak ill of his own principality or of his own dominion, though, like himself, it is full of darkness and despair. Let us not believe Satan's lies but God's truth; and this we certainly shall do if we have the teaching and testimony of God himself in our consciences.

Let this, then, be firmly settled in your heart and mine by the testimony of God in the word, and by the corresponding witness of the Spirit in our breast, that is an "evil world." The world, however large, is but an aggregate of human hearts,—for as in water face answers to face so the heart of man to man; and as my heart is but a copy of your heart, and your heart but a copy of

every other man's heart, we carry in our own bosom, if our eyes are enlightened to see what really and truly takes place there, a conviction that it is an evil world, because we find the evil of the world alive and rife in our own breast. But we shall see more of this when we come to show how Jesus gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world. I shall therefore pass on to our second point,

II.—Which consists of two branches:

I. **First, the giving** of himself for our sins;

2. **The object and purpose** for which the Lord thus gave himself, **that he might deliver us from this present evil world.**

1. There is something to my mind inexpressibly sweet and precious in the expression, "**gave himself.**" We find the same words used of our blessed Lord elsewhere in Scripture, as, for instance, where it is said that "Christ loved the Church and **gave** himself for it" (Eph. 5:25); and where the apostle speaking of his living a life of faith on the Son of God adds, "who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) So also when the apostle has bidden us to be "followers of God as dear children and walk in love," he adds this prevailing motive, "As Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us." (Eph. 5:2.)

1. But in opening up this heavenly mystery, it will be desirable to cast a glance beyond this time-state, and to direct our contemplation to what Jesus was **before** he voluntarily gave himself for our sins; for if we would spiritually and experimentally enter into this solemn mystery, we must have a view by faith of what he was in the courts of bliss **before** he thus gave himself. A spiritual contemplation of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, will prepare our mind to see a little of the breadth and length and depth and height and to know something of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge; for love was the moving cause of his giving himself, and therefore dwelt in his



bosom before he thus freely surrendered himself to sufferings and death.

We must, therefore, view him as a Person in the glorious Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost; for "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We must, then, with God's help and blessing, raise up believing eyes and believing hearts to view him as one with the Father in nature and essence, as the second Person in that glorious Trinity in which there are three Persons and but one God. We must also by the eyes of faith view him as the Son of the Father in truth and love, his own true, his own proper, his own eternal Son. We must look at him as lying in the Father's bosom from all eternity, as ever his delight and rejoicing always before him. And we must endeavour, as far as the Lord may enable, to look with believing eyes at the love of the Father toward the Son and the love of the Son toward the Father, and so raise up in our souls some contemplation of the intimate and yet ineffable fellowship and union, enjoyed between the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost in the glorious courts above before time existed or creation was known. It is true, most true, that we cannot comprehend these heavenly mysteries, though they are the food of living faith; nor indeed can we raise up our thoughts to their spiritual contemplation; and yet unless we have some gracious knowledge of them and some living faith in them we shall not be able to enter into the heavenly mystery of the love of Christ.

Unless we see by the eye of faith something of the glory which, the Son of God had with the Father before the foundation of the world, how can we enter into the solemn mystery of his giving himself to suffer, bleed, and die? Our Lord, therefore, speaking of his disciples, said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22) that is, the knowledge and enjoyment of it. So John speaks of those "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God: And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:13, 14.) Does not also the apostle give this as a mark of regenerating grace? "For God, who commanded

the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.)

We must, then, see his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, before we can see his humiliation in condescending to be for us a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The height of his glory shows us the depth of his condescension. To view what he was in the courts of bliss prepares us to see what he was when he hung upon the cross. This is all the difference between the eye of faith and the eye of sense. The eye of sense merely saw him hanging in shame and agony between two thieves; but the eye of faith sees him as the beloved Son of God bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.

But it may be asked, "**When** did the Son of God first give himself for our sins? You have told us that it was in eternity before time was. But was sin then known?" No, for creation was then unknown also. But the Church was loved in the mind of God from all eternity, for he himself declares, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." (Jer. 31:3.) As, then, all things lay naked and open before the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah, the sin and misery into which she could sink were foreseen and provided for; and thus we may say that the Son of God gave himself for our sins in eternity, in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.

It seems from the testimony of Holy Writ, that there was a solemn council held in heaven between the Three Persons of the sacred Godhead; for we read of "the counsel of peace being between them both"—that is, the Father and the Son. (Zech. 6:13.) We also read, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" and that this was the result of a covenant seems plain from the words in the same Psalm. "My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (Ps. 89:19-34.) This council, it appears, was how the Church, sunk into sin and therefore justly amenable to divine wrath, could be saved in strict accordance

with the justice and purity of God. This was the mystery to be solved; this was the enigma which, no finite intellect could unravel.

To devise a plan so as to reconcile every attribute of God in full harmony with the salvation of man; to determine a method how justice and mercy could meet together; how peace and righteousness could kiss each other; how justice could obtain its fullest demands, and yet mercy descend to embrace with its loving arms the guilty sons of men, was indeed a task beyond the utmost faculties of the brightest seraph or the highest archangel. The plan of salvation, therefore, is always represented in the Scripture not only as the greatest display of God's love, but also as the deepest manifestation of his wisdom. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." (Rom. 11:33.) "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Cor. 2:7.) This enigma, then, was solved by the coming forward of the Son of God in the eternal covenant to give himself for our sins. In those solemn councils of heaven he freely offered himself to suffer, bleed, and die for guilty man's sake. But this he could only do by himself becoming man, and by taking the flesh and blood of the children and offering up that pure and holy humanity which he should take in the womb of the Virgin, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

He could thus obey the rigorous demands of God's inflexible justice, endure, and by enduring remove the curse of the law, and thus work out and bring in a perfect and complete righteousness in which his people might stand justified before the throne of God. Thus could he save his people in the strictest conformity to the justice of God, and harmonise every jarring attribute of Deity. In this sense he gave himself for our sins before time itself had birth. He is, therefore, said to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and even then to have had "a book of life," in which the names of his chosen people were written. (Rev. 13:8.)

2. But we may now look at the **carrying out** of this eternal plan of redeeming love, and view how in pursuance of his giving himself in the eternal covenant, when the time came—God's appointed time—he gave himself for our sins by assuming flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary. There is an expression in the Book of Common Prayer, I think in the **Te Deum**, which I have often much admired: "When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." There is to my mind great beauty in the idea that he did not abhor the womb of the virgin; for who was it that lay there but the eternal Son of God. What a conspicuous view it gives of his infinite grace and unspeakable mercy that he could assume our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the virgin!

In this voluntary surrender of himself to endure all the miseries and sorrows of his life here below, we see the greatness of the Lord's love; for "he bare our griefs and carried our sorrows" as well as our iniquities. (Isai. 53:4, 11.) Thus, as giving himself for our sins, he bore them from the manger to the cross. When, then, by the eye of faith we see him going about doing good; when we hear the gracious words which ever dropped from his lips: when we see the mighty miracles wrought by his hands, we still view him as our sin and burden bearer.

3. But it is especially in the last scenes of his suffering life that we see him freely **giving himself for our sins**. When, then we follow him into the gloomy garden, where, under the overwhelming pressure of sin and sorrow, he sweat great drops of blood; thence to the Jewish council and Pilate's judgment-hall; and thence to the cross of Calvary where, as the height of indignity, he was crucified between two thieves; in these last scenes of his suffering life and obedient death, we see more especially what the blessed Lord endured when he gave himself up to be made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. For in giving himself for our sins, he took upon himself all their guilt, their penalty, and their punishment. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree as if they had been his own; for having voluntarily put himself into the

sinner's place, he stood as the Surety, from whom justice exacted the utmost mite.

Thus, not only did he endure the contradictions of sinners against himself, but what was far harder to bear, he suffered under the intolerable wrath of God, when his Father hid his face from him, when anguish drank up his spirit, and when as made a curse for us, he hung between heaven and earth as a spectacle for men and angels. God the Father accepted this substitution, for it was according to his own eternal will and good purpose that the Son of his love should thus give himself for our sins, that he might put all their guilt and condemnation away, cast them behind God's back, wash them out in the fountain of his atoning blood, and blot them out for ever as a cloud from the face of the heavens. Where should we be, what should we be, what hope could we have of escaping the wrath to come except for this blessed fact. this solemn, divine reality, that the Son of God gave himself for our sins, and thus for ever put them away?

But could this stupendous miracle of mercy and grace have been accomplished but by the Lord's free and voluntary gift of himself? Who could have brought him from heaven? Who could have asked him to come down? What angel or seraph could have whispered the word on high. "Let the Son of God give himself for guilty man?" What human heart could have conceived such a thought, or what human tongue, if such a thought had been conceived, could have breathed the word up to the courts of bliss, "Let the Son of God come down and bleed for us vile polluted sinners?" What! that God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person; that he in whom the Father eternally delighted; he who was worshipped and adored by myriads of angels,—that he should leave this glory, come down to earth, be treated as the vilest malefactor, have nails driven through his hands and feet, and expire on the cross in ignominy and shame! Could such a thought have entered angelic or human breasts?

And yet this was the eternal thought of God; this was the sovereign purpose of the Triune Jehovah; and to accomplish this glorious plan of eternal wisdom and love, the Son of God freely gave himself for our sins. There is a sweet figure of this voluntary gift of himself in the burnt offering spoken of in the first chapter of Leviticus. This sacrifice was entirely voluntary on the part of the offerer, and as such was wholly burnt upon the altar. So our blessed Lord came of his own accord; it was his free, voluntary act; and thus as the burnt offering was wholly consumed in the flames of the altar, no one part being reserved, so our blessed Lord was wholly consumed in the flames of God's wrath and consumed also in the flames of his own self-sacrificing love. "He gave himself for our sins."

Have you ever seen your sins? Look at the words: how expressive they are! Did you ever have a sight of your sins? Were they ever laid as a load of guilt upon your conscience? Did you ever see their blackness, their enormity, their aggravated nature, their innumerable multitude, and how every one of them deserved an everlasting hell? Did the wrath of God ever fall into your conscience on account of your sins? Did his anger ever drink up your spirit? Was his hand ever heavy upon you night and day, so that your moisture was turned into the drought of summer? Did the curse of the law ever sound in your conscience? Did your iniquities ever appear more in number than the hairs of your head, so that you almost sank into despair under the apprehended wrath of God?

If the Lord has ever wrought anything of this experience with power in your conscience, you will see and feel too something of what it is for Christ to have given himself for your sins, those abominable sins of yours, those black and horrible crimes that have so grieved your conscience, so distressed your soul and made you often fear lest hell should be your everlasting abode. Now until a man has realized something of the guilt of his vile and abominable sins, and they have been laid as a heavy weight upon his heart and a burden upon his conscience, he cannot enter into the solemn mystery of the Son of God giving himself for

them. He does not know what sin is; it has not been opened up to him in its real character and awful magnitude; its guilt and filth and bitterness have not been discovered to him by the teaching of the blessed Spirit. He therefore knows little or nothing of the solemn mystery of dying love and atoning blood. He cannot fully and clearly justify God in the gift of his Son, nor can he properly appreciate the love of Christ in coming into such extreme circumstances of shame and suffering that he might bear his sins, and put them away by his atoning blood.

We must, therefore, know something of the guilt and filth of sin in our own conscience, something of its weight and burden, that we may appreciate the solemn mystery, as well as spiritually and experimentally enter into the sweet and sacred blessedness of that heavenly truth that the Son of God freely gave himself for our sins. And when we look not only at our own, but at the innumerable sins which God's people have committed in all ages and in all places, and see that Jesus must have borne them all in his own body on the tree, under all this intolerable load of guilt must not the holy Lamb of God have sunk utterly crushed, broken and overwhelmed by the wrath of God, the demands of Justice, and the curse of the Law, unless he had been supported by indwelling Deity; unless he had been upheld by the mighty power of God; unless he had been sustained and strengthened by the eternal Spirit, through whom he offered himself without spot unto God?

2. But to pass on to the object for which our gracious Lord gave himself: **"that he might deliver us from this present evil world."** We live in an evil world, and sooner or later every child of God will by deep and painful experience learn the truth of God's testimony concerning it. Its evil character may be glossed over by plausible speeches; the prince and god of this world may by his magic incantations cast a veil over its foul and ugly features, or transform this worn-out and withered beldame into a pure and innocent maiden in all the charming flush of youth and beauty. But though a veil may conceal deformity, it cannot remove it. Paint and rouge cannot make an old cheek young. The

thin sheet spread over a corpse may hide the ghastly face, shrunken features, and stiffened limbs, but it does not turn it into a living man. The plaster over an ulcer may hide the gory matter from view, but it does not make it sound flesh. So Satan by his enchantments may cast a veil over the real character of this evil world, and may hide out of view the deep ulcers which are eating into the very core of man's corrupt nature; but sooner or later they are discovered by a seeing eye and a believing heart under the light, life, and power of the blessed Spirit, and the real state of the case is opened up to a tender conscience.

But the Lord gave himself for our sins that he might **deliver** us from this present evil world. It would little benefit us to see and feel the malady were there provided no efficacious remedy. Many a dying man feels his mortal disease; but he knows to his sorrow, that a sense of illness can no more cure him, than it can turn pain into ease or sickness into health. **Deliverance**, deliverance is that which is wanted. Let us see, then, what the blessed Lord came to deliver us from when he gave himself for our sins.

1. First, he gave himself to deliver us from the **condemnation** of this present evil world. Men are not willing to believe the solemn fact that this world lies under a sentence of condemnation from the wrath of God. But such is the Scripture testimony. "We know that we are of God," says John, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19); and if "in wickedness," in condemnation, unless we think that God justifies wickedness.

Paul, therefore, speaking of divine chastisement says, "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1Co 11:32.) But does not this testimony expressly declare that the world lies under condemnation? If, then, you and I are found at the last great day in the world, we shall be found under the condemnation of the world. When the deluge came, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened, every one who was in the world was drowned by the flood; none



were saved but those who were in the ark. When God burnt up the cities of the plain, all the men, women, and children that were found in them were destroyed by the brimstone and fire, which the Lord rained out of heaven. At the last siege of Jerusalem, when Titus destroyed that city, all found within its walls were put to the sword, burnt in the fire, which destroyed the city and the temple, or dragged into captivity.

Now so it will be with you if you are found at death to be one with and in the world; you will be condemned with it, as being found in it and of it, as were those who were drowned in the flood, burnt up in Sodom, and slaughtered in Jerusalem. If you are found on a dying bed in the world, what can you expect but that the same sentence of condemnation will fall upon you in the day of judgment, as that which will be pronounced upon the world by the Judge of the quick and dead? O, the unspeakable mercy of being delivered from that condemnation by a living faith in his blood, who gave himself for our sins that he might save us from the wrath to come!

2. But there is something more than the condemnation of the world from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins. There are the **people** of the world, the men and the women by whom we are surrounded and with whom we are so closely connected in the daily transactions of life. Mixture with them, to a certain extent, is unavoidable, as the demands of business indispensably require it. But there is a limit beyond which we must not go. We must not make the men and women of this world our friends and companions.

If I am found amongst transgressors, walking with them as my chosen friends and intimates, I shall have to endure the same punishment that falls upon them; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Pr 13:20.) We often see this literally and naturally fulfilled. A companion of drunkards often kills himself with strong drink. A companion of thieves, as approving of their deeds, and connected with them in their employment, if he himself is not actually a pick-pocket, yet is liable to be imprisoned

as a vagabond. Why is he in such company—why is he aiding them in their nefarious pursuits if he is not an accomplice? Just so it will be with us if we are found in life and death friends and associates with the world: we shall be shut up in hell with those who are actually guilty of the crimes perpetrated in the world, even though we ourselves have not sinned as they have. As our company is, so will be our judgment. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly and stand in the way of sinners, we shall be judged with them; if on the other hand, from love to the Lord and to his people, we keep company with **them**, we shall have a share in their blessings.

Let us never forget that the Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver us from all company with his enemies, and to bring us into union with himself and his friends. Indeed I believe that one of the first marks of the grace of God in the soul, is the separation which it produces between us and those who have hitherto been our chief friends and associates. The work of God upon the heart is decisive work. It tolerates no half measures; it allows no compromise. It creates, from the very first, a gulf between the world and us that we never want to bridge over, never wish to be filled up, but are only desirous that the gulf should be daily wider and wider, and the separation greater and greater. I hope I can truly say, for my part, that I neither have nor wish to have one worldly friend or associate. May I ever be separate from all such, and may I live and die in the sweet and sole fellowship of the saints of God.

3. But there is a deliverance also **from the customs and maxims of** the world. And Christ gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the power and prevalence of these maxims and customs, for they are altogether evil. What are they but the advancement of self? "Let me rise, whoever sinks"—is not this the world's motto? As in a crowded place when there is a sudden alarm of fire and men are struggling for life, the strong will trample down the weak to save themselves: so in the grand struggle of life, the spirit of the world is to trample down all and any that may stand in its way in order to advance itself. "Self!

Self! Self!" is the world's battle cry. "Let **me** swim, I care not who sinks. Let **me** rise, I care not who falls. Let **me** get safe to shore, and those who cannot swim, let the tide sweep them away; it will be all the better for **me**." Men may not be so daring as to utter these expressions but they embody the secret thoughts of every worldly heart.

Now to deliver us from such ungodly maxims and such selfish ways, Christ gave himself; for in giving himself for our sins, the purpose of his heart was not merely to save but also to sanctify. He came to deliver us from the world within as well as the world without, that through his dying love and atoning blood, a new heart and a new spirit might be communicated to us, so that we might not be ever seeking the advancement of self, might not be ever bent upon gratifying our pride, ambition, and covetousness; but that the profit of our soul should be to us of far deeper importance than the profit of our bodies, the prosperity of our circumstances or the advancement of our families; that we should hate and abhor that spirit of selfishness which is the very life blood of a worldly heart; that the salvation and sanctification of our soul, should be our first concern; and next to that, as far as we can, to do good to the bodies and souls of our fellow-men.

4. Our Lord, therefore, gave himself for our sins that he might also deliver us from the **spirit** of the world. And where is that spirit? In our own bosom we need not dread the company and maxims of the world without, if we had not so much of the spirit of the world within. It is because we carry so much combustible material in our bosom, that we are justly afraid of fire. If I could live in a fire-proof house, I need not fear my neighbour's house being in flames; but if mine be a thatched cottage I may well tremble when the flame draws near my habitation. So it is in grace. If I were perfectly holy, had no evil heart, knew nothing of sin in the flesh, I need not dread contact with the world. But because I carry in my bosom that world within which is but the counterpart and image of the world without, I need dread the influence, and as it were the very breath of the world upon me:

for the spirit of the world, if it once catch my thoughts and affections, may soon set on fire every evil in my heart.

But our blessed Lord gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the spirit of the world by giving us a new spirit, making us partakers of a divine nature whereby we escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. We should ever bear in mind that our blessed Lord in giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the present evil world, did something more than merely rescue us from death and hell, or merely save us from the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Salvation from the wrath to come is something more than a mere escape from hell. This might have been done, and yet had nothing else been accomplished grace would have fallen very far short of our deep necessities.

But Jesus died and rose again that he might bring us near to his own bosom, conform us to his own image, make us partakers of his own grace, give us to drink of and into his own Spirit, that we might receive those communications out of his own fulness which will make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It was God's eternal purpose that the spouse and bride of his dear Son should not only be rescued from all the sins and miseries of the Adam fall, but should be exalted far beyond what she was in her primeval creation. She is to shine forth one day in the eternal glory of his own dear Son, as he said in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one." (John 17:22.) This glory is twofold—present and future. The present glory is to be conformed to his suffering image, and by beholding him to be changed into it by the power of the Spirit, as the Apostle speaks, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2Co 3:18.) Future glory is to be perfectly conformed to his present glorified image in body and soul.

But as we shall only be glorified with him hereafter if we suffer with him here, so there must be an inward conformity to his suffering image upon earth, that there may be a perfect conformity to his glorified image in heaven. Calvary then is the source whence these healing streams flow; for Jesus is of God made unto us "sanctification" as well as "righteousness and redemption." The king's daughter is "all glorious within" as well as without in "her clothing of wrought gold" (Ps 45:13). The inward glory consists in the transforming efficacy of the blessed Spirit in the heart, through which, being delivered from conformity to this world, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

III.—But now comes our next point, which is to show that the whole of this work of Christ upon the cross, whereby he gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, is **"according to the will of our God and our Father."** It is a blessed contemplation of a believing heart to see and feel how the whole work of Christ, in saving and sanctifying his redeemed people, harmonises with the eternal and sovereign will of God; for this foundation truth is deeply engraven upon every regenerate heart, that nothing can take place in heaven or earth but what is in accordance with the sovereign will of Jehovah. He is the supreme arbiter of all events, and doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

It is sweet, then, to see by faith that the Son of God giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, was in full accordance with the will of God. The will of the Father and the will of the Son must be one; but it is sweet to see that he against whom and before whom we have sinned, should be so well pleased with the sacrifice which Jesus has offered for our sins, and that all this was settled in eternal covenant. It mightily strengthens faith, hope, and love to be graciously persuaded that our Lord did not, so to speak, drag the pardon of our sins out of God's bosom; did not prevail with his heavenly

Father by tears and supplications to let him come down from heaven to save guilty man, but that in this wondrous scheme of redeeming love, as in everything else, the will of the Father and of the Son were one.

To think that Jesus wrung the gift of eternal life out of God's unwilling breast would be to introduce contradiction into the courts of bliss, to make a schism between the Father and the Son, and to overthrow the whole fabric of the covenant of grace. It was the Father's good pleasure, it was the Son's good pleasure, it was the Holy Spirit's good pleasure; for these three, though distinct in Person, are one in essence. What pleased the Father, well pleased the Son, and what pleased the Son well pleased the Spirit; so that the whole of this wondrous scheme of salvation was in harmony with the will and purpose of God and our Father as our Father in Christ. "The gift of God is eternal life," and though this is "through Jesus Christ our Lord," that is, through the suffering, bloodshedding, and death of Jesus, this very channel through which it comes only enhances the greatness of the gift. A view of this by faith opens a door in the valley of Achor for every poor, desponding child of God; and, as viewed by faith, discovers a most suitable and blessed way of access to God himself.

You feel yourself to be a poor, vile, miserable sinner, you see yourself surrounded with evil within and without, as having your lot cast in an evil world; you long for an escape from all wrath and fear, doubt, terror, and torment; but you lift up your eyes and scarcely know where to look; you stretch forth your hands and scarcely know whom to grasp; you move forward, but scarcely know where to direct your steps. Now look up once more and see whether you cannot see a light from heaven that even now shines upon your mind. Listen with outstretched ears if you cannot hear a voice from heaven itself that even now speaks to your heart. And what does that voice say? "The Son of God gave himself for your sins, that he might deliver you from this present evil world; and this is according to the will of God and our Father." Here, then, is a guiding light that shines upon the

pilgrim's path; here is a directing voice that leads his footsteps into the ways of peace and truth. It is true that we must not expect to see an actual light or hear a real voice; but we see light in God's light when we believe, and we hear his voice when faith is mixed with his word.

When, then, as led by the blessed Spirit, we go to the blessed Redeemer that he may deliver us from this present evil world, by the application of his blood and the communication of his love, we go to him thus in accordance with the will of God and our Father. This is our heavenly warrant. If we believe in his name, it is in accordance with the will of God and our Father. If we hope in his mercy, if we love him with a pure heart fervently, if we cast our soul upon him, if, distrusting our own strength and righteousness we hang entirely upon his, we are acting according to the will of God and our Father; we are complying with the dictates of sovereign wisdom, listening to the voice of sovereign mercy, and walking in the ways of eternal truth and peace.

Thus, that the whole work of Christ with all its blessed fruits and effects, should be "according to the will of God and our Father," casts a blessed and glorious light upon the original gift of the Son by the Father. The whole is thus seen to be one grand, glorious, and complete scheme of eternal wisdom and love. As thus enlightened by the blessed Spirit and renewed in the spirit of our mind, we see that God has designed and executed a way whereby we may be delivered from this present evil world.

Is it to you an evil world? Do you "sigh and cry" like those spoken of in Ezekiel (Eze 9:4), "for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" not only in the evil world without, but in the worse evil world within? There is a way of escape for you; there is a door of hope open in the very dome of heaven. Mercy whispers to you from the seat of heavenly bliss, "The Son of God gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God." When this message of mercy and truth is received into a believing heart, and the inmost spirit begins to soften and melt under the sweet sound of

pardoning love, it will bring out of the heart and lip our fourth and last point which is,

IV.— **"To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."** Is he not worthy of all glory? O, what a glorious scheme to save guilty man as contrived in heaven and accomplished on earth! O, what a glorious plan of infinite wisdom to harmonise all the jarring perfections of Deity in the salvation of wretches so forlorn, of sinners so thoroughly lost! O, glorious contrivance, that mercy and truth should meet together in a suffering Immanuel, that peace and righteousness should kiss each other over Calvary's cross; that God should be just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; and all this that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord; that sin might be pardoned and the sinner go free, and yet God's justice not be tarnished, but rather shine forth with re-doubled lustre. Is not then a triune Jehovah worthy of all the glory that myriads of saved sinners can render to his holy name?

Can that heart ever have tasted of his grace—can that soul ever have seen his glory, that withholds this triumphant note and denying him the glory due to his name, says, "Glory to myself; glory to my own wisdom, my own righteousness and my own exertions?" Is that a note to be heard in heaven? Will self-righteousness ever chant its discordant sounds in the heavenly choir? No; as in the temple, when "the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord" (2Ch 5:13), so will it be in the courts of bliss when ransomed souls assemble round the throne and cry, "Glory, glory, glory, for ever and ever, to Father, Son and Holy Ghost;" and heaven's vaults will re-echo with the universal cry "Amen."



## **The Destruction through Death of Him Who Had the Power of Death**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, June 13, 1858

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall. The saints of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin; the fountains of the great deep have been in a measure broken up in their heart; and they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind. But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell. We may indeed in our own experience see something of its commencement; but we can form little idea of its progress, and still less of its termination; for it has this peculiar feature attending it, that it ever spreads and spreads till it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin. We may compare it in this point of view to the venom fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids and solids of the body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and bitten by this serpent's tooth shall in the next be a loathsome mass of rottenness and corruption. Such is sin. The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption.

Was not this God's own solemn warning to him beforehand? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17.) What was this death thus denounced? Not actual death by separation of body and soul, for Adam lived more than 900 years after this, but mortal death, spiritual death, that is the death of the soul, and in the end natural death, that is the death of the body. Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of leprosy, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin" (Lev. 13:2), scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and limb dropped from limb, the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption. Or it may be compared to a cancer, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering. Now if sin be this venom fang, this spreading leprosy, this loathsome cancer; if its destructive power be so great that, unless arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be, must be as great as the malady. This seems very plain. No one thinks of a little cure for a Cobra's bite, a little cure for a leprosy, a little cure for a cancer, a little cure for consumption. If cure there be for these destructive maladies, it must be so great as to be in our eyes little less than miraculous. A partial cure, a half cure, a temporary cure is none; for in these virulent cases the disease will break forth again with redoubled violence. Thus if there be a cure for sin, a remedy for the fall, a deliverance from the wrath to come, it must be at least as full and as complete as the ruin which sin has entailed upon us. Less than this will be of no avail; for if any part, shred, or root of the old malady be left; if all sin be not completely pardoned, and at death its very being removed, what would be left might, so to speak, break forth in heaven, and be more fatal than Adam's fall in Paradise. We must lay this down, therefore, as a foundation point that if the work of redemption effected by the Son of God be not as complete as the sin from which he came to save, it would be as regards us utterly valueless.

Now this same point which is true in doctrine is true also in

experience. As sin and salvation meet together in the one, each illustrating and opening its opposite, so views of sin and salvation meet together in the other in a similar kind of reflection. The two things therefore correspond experimentally as well as doctrinally. The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings of sin will have equally slight and superficial views of the atonement made for sin. The groans of Christ will never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an agonising Lord; the sufferings of Christ will never be opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God with us; the blood of Christ will never be viewed by him, at least not in his present state, as the bloodshedding of the darling Son of God; and the obedience of Christ will have no value in his eyes as the subjection and submission to ignominy and death of him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person. What God may do for him I cannot say. I merely take him as he now is. And I assert that whilst he has such slight, superficial views of the malady, his views of the remedy will be equally slight and superficial. But the man in whose heart and conscience the Holy Ghost opens up deep discoveries of sin, to show him and make him feel how utterly ruined he is by nature and practice in the sight of a holy God, will be taught by the same Spirit in due time the completeness of the remedy; and that divine Teacher in revealing Christ to him will give him very different views of his Person and work from those which he has whose views of sin are slight and superficial. He will have in greater or less measure, according to the depth and power of divine manifestation, views of Christ in the garden and upon the cross, as suffering in shame and agony under a load of sin; he will have sooner or later some application of his precious atoning blood to his conscience to relieve him from the guilt of sin; and he will have strength communicated from the fulness of Christ to liberate him from the power and dominion of sin. Thus one much depends upon, and much corresponds with the other; for though we cannot lay down any fixed standard or insist upon any precise rule of Christian experience, yet we may take it as a general truth that as we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of self, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have before us in the text a sweet and blessed description of the work which Jesus came to accomplish. We are told in it that "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." The reason is also given for this wondrous act of condescension, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

In endeavouring, with God's help and blessing, to unfold the mind and meaning of the Spirit in these words, I shall,

I.—*First*, show who "*the children*" are, and how they are "*partakers of flesh and blood.*"

II.—*Secondly*, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself likewise "*took part of the same.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *reasons* why he took the flesh and blood of the children: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

I.—"The children," in our text, are the children spoken of in the preceding verse, where Paul quotes the language of the Holy Ghost in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." (Isaiah 8:18.) These words the apostle explains as uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ; and thus vividly represents him as standing before the throne of his heavenly Father, and saying unto him, as their head and Representative, as he held them fast in his eternal embrace, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me." We may therefore look upon these words of the Lord Jesus not only as descriptive of the relationship between him and the "many sons" whom he will bring "unto glory" (Heb. 2:10), but we may carry them forward as the utterance of his heart and lips in that great day when he will present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. For then will he be able to say in the fullest sense of the words, as if he would personally appeal to the

omniscient eye of his heavenly Father, "Behold!" Look and see. Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." And now "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:6, 12, 24.)

From this passage then of the prophet Isaiah, in which the Holy Ghost calls the redeemed people of God "children," the apostle draws the conclusion that those whom the Father gave unto the Son to be redeemed by him were by God's own testimony "children" with Christ. As then the Lord Jesus places himself amongst them as being one with them, "Behold, I and the children," he argues in his usually cogent way, that as "the children were partakers of flesh and blood," there was a necessity that the Lord of life and glory, the Mediator between God and man, should himself "likewise take part of the same;" or he could not have said, as if putting himself amongst them, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me."

To understand the arguments of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or indeed Paul's mode of reasoning generally, we must bear in mind that he does not seek to prove his points from any natural, logical, or intellectual considerations, or what he calls elsewhere "the wisdom of men" (1 Cor. 2:5), but from the Old Testament Scriptures, assuming as a fundamental principle that they are the express word of God. As therefore God himself speaks in them, he draws from them all his conclusions. This we are told was his manner. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging," &c. (Acts 17:2, 3.) Thus we see in this epistle how he reasons out of the scriptures, opening their divine and spiritual meaning, and alleging proofs from them. We see, for instance, how he argues from the text: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;" how he takes, as it were, the text to pieces, and draws conclusions from almost every word of it.

And it is observable how he will build up a whole structure of truth upon a few words of the Old Testament scriptures, or even upon one. It is the case with the passage before us. What conclusions he draws from the simple word "children." How it leads him into the union between Christ and the church; and how he shows from it the necessity of the incarnation, sufferings, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus. As then the word "children" contains in it such a depth of heavenly truth, let us examine its meaning a little more closely by the light of the scriptures.

i. And first *why* and *how* are they children? The answer to this is as brief as it is simple. They are children because God is their Father. But how came God to be their Father? The answer to this inquiry leads us back, and leads us up; back into eternity, up into the councils of heaven.

1. First, then, they are the sons of God, because they have an *eternal union* with him who, in his divine nature, is the Son of God. They are therefore declared to have been "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," and in that choice to have been "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto God." (Eph. 1:4, 5.) We thus see that the actual and original ground of their adoption to be children was not founded upon redemption, but upon Christ's being the eternal Son of God, and their union with him as such. If Christ had not been a Son, they could not have been sons; but as he the Head is a Son, they as members are sons, with this difference, that he is a Son by nature, they sons by adoption; he a Son by personal subsistence in the Godhead, they by union with him; he by virtue of his own right, they by virtue of his grace.

2. But they are "children" also by Christ's *espousing their persons* as the gift of the Father, and thus becoming their Head and Husband. By this act of the Son they became more openly and manifestly, as if before the face of heaven, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. It was an open sealing of the compact between the Father and the Son, when he could say, "All

mine are thine and thine are mine." (John 17:10.) The Bride is therefore called "the King's daughter," and is addressed by the Father as such. "Hearken, daughter"—the Father's daughter as being the Son's spouse. (Psa. 45:10, 13.) The Lord Jesus therefore said to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, "Go to my brethren, and say, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

3. They are "children" also by *regeneration*, as John tells us: "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." (John 1:11, 12.) Being "born of God," they become sons of God by a spiritual birth, and they thus are "put among the children" (Jer. 3:19), not only in purpose but by power, not only by decree before time but by its accomplishment in time, not only in the mind of God but openly before men.

4. And lastly, they are children by being "*led by the Spirit of God*," and receiving "*the Spirit of adoption* whereby they cry Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:14, 15.)

Thus they are "children" by their predestination by the Father, "children" by their marriage union with the Son, and "children" by their regeneration by the Holy Ghost—each Person of the Trinity adopting and owning them as sons of God. And the day will come when they will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:43.)

ii. But these children are, according to the words of our text, "partakers of flesh and blood."

What are we to understand by this expression? I believe simply this, that humanity is their present condition. You will observe that the apostle had been speaking before a good deal respecting angels, and, in quoting Psalm 8, had shown from it how Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels." This leads him, as pursuing the same subject, to draw a distinction between the

nature of man and the nature of angels. The children then whom Christ came to redeem are here said to be "partakers of flesh and blood," and are thus distinguished from angels who are not flesh and blood, but possess a peculiar nature of their own. But this angelic nature Jesus passed by. Angels sinned and fell. The Son of God did not take upon him angelic nature to redeem angels. They were abandoned to their fallen condition; left in their sins; left to blaspheme the name of God; to be enemies of God and godliness whilst this world lasts, and then to be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for them. (Matt. 25:41.) Why, we know not. These are deep mysteries which we must not scrutinise; for secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us and our children. Sufficient for us it is to know that God had purposes of love to man; sufficient for us it is that as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, there was a necessity that Jesus should take part of the same. By "flesh and blood" we are to understand the whole of humanity, and especially humanity in its present condition. Now this humanity consists in the possession of an immortal soul and a fleshly body; and these united together in a way which we cannot explain and yet daily feel. No man can tell how his soul is joined to his body, and yet he has every moment an internal consciousness that such a union does exist. When I speak, it is with and by my body. My lips move; my tongue combines with my lips to utter words which as intelligible sounds reach your ear. But it is my soul which thinks before the words come out of my mouth, and it is your soul which understands what your bodily ear receives. It is my bodily eye that sees objects, but there is a soul behind the eye that from those objects thus seen frames perceptions, and converts those perceptions into ideas. My hand can grasp whatever the fingers embrace, but there is something beyond the fingers that tells me what the object is around which my fingers close, and which converts that sensation into perception, knowledge, understanding. Thus though we cannot understand how the soul is united so closely to the body, yet we all have an internal consciousness that there is a union between them, which we can feel better than we can explain. And when this soul of ours is quickened from above; when it begins to live a life of faith and



prayer, a life of joy and sorrow, a life which has its element in the things which are not seen, a life of union and communion with the Father and the Son, through the power of the Holy Ghost, then we have, so to speak, a double consciousness that we have a soul, and that this soul, though distinct from the body, is at present intimately united with it.

II.—When, therefore, the Lord Jesus came to redeem the children from the depths of sin and guilt into which they had fallen; when he came on his blessed errand from heaven to earth to save his beloved Bride by shedding his own precious blood upon the cross for her, there was a necessity that he should *partake of her flesh and blood*. According to the argument of the apostle, redemption could only be accomplished by the assumption of the nature of the redeemed. If then the Son of God had undertaken to redeem the fallen angels, he must have taken angelic nature. This certainly is the meaning of the passage, where it says: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." As then he came to redeem human beings, he must necessarily take upon him flesh and blood, that in the nature which sinned, though not in the sin of that nature, he might suffer, and by offering up his body and soul as a sacrifice might put away the sins of the children, whose nature he assumed, reconcile them to God, and save them in himself with an everlasting salvation.

You will observe that those whom he came to redeem were "the children;" and that these children as a part of the human race are "partakers of flesh and blood," that is, they have a common nature with all other men. Jesus, therefore, "took part of the same"—a holy, sanctified part of it into union with his own divine Person. Thus he took part of our nature, but not of its sin. He had, as we have, a human soul; he had, as we have, a human body; but he had not, as we have, a sinful soul, nor had he, as we have, a mortal body; that is, a body which *must* die; a body in which there were naturally the seeds of death and corruption. He took a body which *could* die, for that was the purpose for which he came, but not a body that *must* die, for he died only by a

voluntary act, as he himself said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17, 18.) He had too a human soul, though perfectly pure; for did he not say, "My *soul* is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death?" (Matt. 26:38.) And this soul was offered a sacrifice as well as his body. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10.) This poor human soul travailed with unutterable sorrow in the garden and on the cross; for the promise was that he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" and this soul "he poured out unto death" of his own will when he was numbered with the transgressors. (Isa. 53:11, 12.) Thus the humanity of our blessed Lord was actual flesh and blood from the moment of its conception, a perfect human body, to which was united a perfect human soul; both without sin, or else he could not be the Lamb without blemish; both without sin, or his pure humanity would not have been that "holy thing" born of the Virgin, which should be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35.) Thus he came forth as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. He came into the world a partaker of flesh and blood, though not as we of sinful flesh and blood; partaker of humanity, but not of fallen humanity; partaker of a body, but not of a mortal body; of a soul, but not of a sinful soul; a real man like ourselves, but not a fallen man, nor a sinful man, nor a man that could, by any possibility, in thought, word, or deed, commit the least fault, or be guilty of the least failing. Well indeed might the apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Here as in a glass we see the wonderful love of Jesus, that he who is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, a sharer of the Father's essence, of the Father's glory, should stoop so low to lift us up so high; that he should condescend to unite to his glorious Person our nature, flesh and blood—to wear a human body like our own; to feel as we do, to speak as we do, to walk as we do, to eat and drink, and hunger and thirst, and weep and sigh, and mourn as we do; yet all the while be the Son of God, and should have a divine nature in as close union with human nature as our soul has

with our bodily frame. We cannot tell how our soul is in union with our body. We know it is so, but how we cannot tell. We only know the fact, but we cannot explain the mode. So we cannot tell how Christ's divine nature is in union with his human nature; we know it is so by the testimony of God, by the express revelation of his word. That revelation to a believer answers all inquiry. But if any man say to me, "Can you explain the mystery of the two natures in Christ?" I ask in my turn, "Can you explain the mystery of your own existence? Can you explain to me how you are able to lift up your own hand, see with your own eye, hear with your own ear, move with your own foot? No man has ever yet been able to explain this apparently simple thing—a feat which every child can perform, but a fact which no philosopher can understand. Can you tell me how mind can act upon matter? how you wish to do a thing with your mind, and can do it instantaneously with your body?" When, then, you can explain your own existence and unravel the mystery of your soul acting in union with your body, then I will allow that you may unravel the mystery of the union of Deity and humanity in the Person of the Son of God, as he lived upon earth, and as he now lives in heaven. Beautiful upon this mystery are the words of Hart:

"How 'twas done we can't discuss;  
But this we know, 'twas done for us."

Happy those who can use the words without a wavering tongue! This is the answer which effectually stops all further inquiry as to the why and the wherefore; this at once solves the enigma by casting upon it the light of infinite wisdom and unspeakable mercy; whilst we reverently adore what we cannot understand. For it is a mystery which can be received only by faith. To the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. When, then, we can believe that the Son of God took part of our flesh and blood out of love and compassion for our souls; that there being no other way which even heaven itself could devise, no other means that the wisdom of God could contrive whereby sinners could be saved, but by the

death of the cross, then the mystery shines forth with unspeakable lustre and glory. The shame, the ignominy, what the Apostle calls the "weakness" and "foolishness" of the cross disappear, swallowed up in a flood of surpassing grace; and faith views it as a glorious scheme of God's own devising, and of the Son of God's approving and accomplishing. Viewed in this light how glorious it appears, that by suffering in our nature all the penalties of our sin, Jesus should redeem us from the lowest hell and raise us up to the highest heaven. How full of unspeakable wisdom was that plan whereby he united God and man by himself becoming God-Man; empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live for ever in the presence of him who is a consuming fire. How glorious is that scheme whereby reconciling aliens and enemies unto his heavenly Father, he summons them when death cuts their mortal thread to mount up into an eternity of bliss, there to view face to face the great and glorious I AM; to be for ever enwrapped in the blaze of Deity and ever folded in the arms of a Triune God. It is this blessed end, this reward of the Redeemer's sufferings bloodshedding and death, which lifts our view beyond the depths of the fall and the misery of sin, as we see and feel it in this miserable world. It is this view by faith of the glory which shall be revealed which enables us to see what wisdom and mercy were in the heart of God when he permitted the Adam fall to take place. It is as if we could see the glory of God breaking forth through it in all the splendour of atoning blood and dying love, securing to guilty man the joys of salvation, and bringing to God an eternal revenue of praise.

III.—But the Holy Ghost, in the words of the text, gives us two reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ took part of the flesh and blood of the children. First, "that *through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*" secondly, that "he might *deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*" We will consider these two reasons separately.

i. As the author of man's sin by tempting him to disobey the express commandment of God, Satan may be said to be the

author of man's misery. That infernal fiend who had fallen from heaven through pride, and whose heart ever gnawed him with agony and pain at the remembrance of past happiness, the experience of present woe, and the contemplation of future torment, could only find some relief from his sufferings by inflicting, as far as he was permitted, similar sufferings on others. Man, therefore, as the last and best creation of God; man, as made in the image and after the likeness of his divine Creator, became the object of his infernal attack. O the cruelty of Satan! O his hatred and enmity against God and against all on whom God had set his approving stamp to mar God's fair creation and thwart his benevolent purposes. When then he viewed the first human pair in the garden and saw them in all their innocence and happiness as God created them; when he beheld how the Lord God came down to converse with them in the cool of the day, wrath and enmity boiled in his heart, and he was determined, infernal fiend as he was, to break in upon that happiness, and to mar that calm, quiet, and holy Paradise. By the permission of God, for without it no such infernal plot could have borne fruit, he succeeded, and by tempting the woman, and through her tempting the man, and thus casting man and woman both down into actual transgression, he

"Brought death into the world and all our woe."

He is therefore said here "to have the power of death;" because it was through him that death came, gaining entrance only by sin, as the Apostle intimates: "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that ["in whom," margin] all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) Satan therefore held, so to speak, the power of death in his hands. When he tempted our first parents to sin in the garden of Eden, he held death in his hands; though, if I may use the expression, he kept one hand behind his back, whilst with the other he pointed to the forbidden fruit. With a lie in his mouth, he said unto the woman: "Ye shall not surely die." He tempted her by the lust of the eyes, as the fruit was "pleasant to look at;" by the lust of the appetite, as "good for food;" by the lust of the understanding as "a tree to

be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6); but held death in his hand when he pointed to it and presented all these attractions. For in the same moment that God's commandment was broken, the forbidden fruit lusted after, handled, and tasted, immediately death entered in, and with this entrance of death, Satan at once took into his hands, by divine permission, the power of death.

ii. But let us now look at the meaning of the expression "*the power of death.*" It seems to have the following meanings.

1. He who had power to introduce sin had *power to bring in death also*. Satan's power over men is through sin; for except for sin he would be utterly powerless. Our Lord therefore could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." In his presence Satan was powerless, because he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." As then Satan has power through sin, and as the penalties as well as the wages of sin is death, so he has power over death.

2. But secondly, he has power over death as being the *prince and god of this world*. (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4.) As then the world is under the guilt and power of sin and death, and by them Satan reigns and rules, and maintains his authority and dominion, he holds in his hands the power of death, and especially of what is often called moral death, or, to use a more scriptural term, death in trespasses and sins.

3. He also has the power of natural death, as *terrifying* and *frightening* men's consciences and agitating them with continual alarm, driving some to desperation and others to suicide.

4. And lastly, he may be said also to have the power of death as being the *Executioner of the second death* upon impenitent sinners to all eternity. Is not this last the main reason, for the others are more hidden from men's eyes, why he is the king of terrors; why he fills the stoutest with alarms; why his very name strikes damp and chill into the merriest assemblies; why almost every one fears to hear the word death, however gently breathed

in his ears. Is it not all because there is that after death which terrifies the conscience—the first gnawing of the worm which dieth not, the first flashes of the storm of wrath which will one day break forth, the first sparkles of the fire which burneth to the lowest hell. It is the apprehension of these things which makes men dread death. Indeed, hard must be that conscience, stony that heart which does not fear it. A man whose sins are not washed away in atoning blood—who has no manifest interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, must fear death, unless he be armed with the very armour of leviathan, unless his "heart be as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone."

Now Jesus came "to destroy him who had the power of death." The word "destroy" here does not mean to annihilate, to cause Satan to cease to be. Satan, so to speak, cannot be annihilated. Devils can no more perish from annihilation than human beings, for angelic nature, like the soul of man, is immortal—in the elect angels, immortal in bliss, in the fallen angels, immortal in woe. Satan, therefore, according to the sure word of prophecy, is to be "tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:10.) Jesus then came not to destroy Satan himself, but to destroy his power. The word in the original literally means "render ineffective." Thus it is elsewhere rendered, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God *without effect*?" (Rom. 3:3), and again, "Do we then *make void* the law through faith?" (Rom. 3:31), and so again, "The promise *made of none effect*." (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 3:17.) In all these passages, it is the same word as is translated in our text, "to destroy." It means therefore to break up Satan's dominion, to render it ineffective, to cast him out of his usurped power, to expel him from the human heart of which he had gained possession, and to destroy his kingdom. We therefore read, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8.) "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out" (John 12:31); and again, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18.) Thus he came to destroy the kingdom and rule of Satan, and to bring the children from out of his usurped authority.

iii. But let us now see how he destroyed him that had the power of death. It was "*through death.*" O, what a mystery! that the eternal Son of God must die; that the prince of life must suffer death; that the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, should sink so low as to die upon a cross, that his body and soul should for a time be separated, and that his pallid form should be stretched in the cold sepulchre, though so soon to be raised in power and glory. The word "death" comprehends all that the Redeemer endured that led to death. He came down into this world for the express purpose to die, and therefore took a nature which could die. No man took it from him. Christ did not die upon the cross by the act of man; though he allowed man to nail him there. It was not the nails driven through his hands and feet; it was not the crown of thorns placed upon his brow; it was not the stripes which mangled his back; it was not the languor and faintness under which he suffered, that caused the Lord to die. No man could take his life from him. He himself said, as I have before quoted, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." And as a proof of this power, just before dying, he "cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost," to show that he was not spent, that he could have lived had he so wished, but that he laid his life down as "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. 5:2.) Those who were crucified usually lingered long, some even two or three days, and died more of exhaustion than of violence. That there might be a standing testimony that the blessed Lord did not die of exhaustion, but voluntarily yielded up his life upon the altar of his Deity, he died in the full and open exercise of all his mental and bodily powers. I lay great stress upon this point, for it was this voluntary offering of his life which made it acceptable to God as a sacrifice—a doing of his will from the heart. What made it meritorious, what gave it infinite value, was indeed his Godhead; for though God as God cannot suffer, bleed, or die, yet as the Son of God took a nature that could suffer, bleed, and die, the dignity and value of Godhead was stamped upon all the acts and sufferings of the manhood. Merit was therefore in every sigh, in every groan, in every tear, in



every drop of blood—a merit of infinite value, because the merit of God. The whole life therefore of Jesus was a meritorious life, his death a meritorious death, his sacrifice a meritorious sacrifice, and thus effectual for redemption, for the pardon of sin, to satisfy justice, fulfil the law, and tender a complete satisfaction to God's injured attributes. As therefore his Deity made his death meritorious, so his voluntary submission to it made it acceptable. This was the mind which was in him—obedience unto death, as the completion of the work. (Phil. 2:5-8.) Thus through death he destroyed him that had the power of death. I mentioned four things whereby Satan has the power of death. 1. Through him it *entered*; 2, by it he *rules*; 3, with it he *terrifies*; 4, of it he is the final *executioner*. Now if Jesus destroyed this power, he must meet it in these four particulars. And so he gloriously did. 1. As Satan brought in sin, and with sin death, so Jesus brought in righteousness by his obedience unto death, and thus brought life and immortality to light. By dying for sin he put away sin, and death the penalty of sin. 2. By destroying the guilt and power of sin, he overthrew the dominion of Satan, who reigns by sin, and set up his own kingdom of grace and peace, into which he translates his redeemed people. 3. By the blood of the cross he speaks peace to the conscience, and thus delivers it from the fears of death by which Satan terrifies the soul. And 4. He has wrested from Satan the keys of death and hell, and delivered the children from the second death of which Satan is the executioner. You need not then dread Satan, you that fear God: he is a conquered foe. He may harass, distress, and try to alarm you; he may sometimes accuse and sometimes fawn, may sometimes seduce and sometimes embarrass, but he cannot destroy you; for Jesus has destroyed him, broken up his power, taken away his armour wherein he trusted, and divided the spoils.

iv. But the Holy Ghost has given us another reason, and a blessed reason too, why Jesus took part of the flesh and blood of the children: "That he might deliver them who through *fear of death* were all their lifetime *subject to bondage*."

Many, perhaps, most of the dear saints of God, have fears of

death; and they must have these fears except so far as a sweet sense of pardoning love is fresh upon their spirit to remove them. The saint of God knows what a holy God he has to deal with; he knows by personal and painful experience the guilt and burden of sin, as often pressing hard and heavy upon his conscience; and he is thoroughly convinced he can do nothing to put away his sins and reconcile his soul unto God. He is deeply conscious also of the unbelief and thorough helplessness of the creature to procure for him a felt deliverance from his doubts and fears; for he is well satisfied that unless the Lord is pleased to manifest himself to his soul, to speak a pardoning word to his heart, to shed abroad his love, to bring near his righteousness, to apply his precious blood, and to sprinkle it with healing, cleansing power upon his conscience, he cannot enjoy present peace, or look death calmly in the face. Many therefore of the dear saints of God for want of these clear manifestations of pardoning love, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. They cannot feel a sweet liberty in the presence of death, or even think of it without apprehension. And even those who are in some measure delivered from the fear of death are not always delivered from the fear of dying; for there is in our very nature a shrinking from death as a dissolution of our present being. He is the last enemy that is to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26), and he is often not destroyed before he makes his last appearance. Thus, even those are subject to bondage from fear of dying, who are not in bondage from fear of death. Besides which, even after they have been favoured and blessed in their souls, grievous backslidings of heart, if not in life, painful slips and falls known only to themselves, temptations of Satan, fears of deception, suspicions of hypocrisy, gloomy sensations arising from dejected spirits or a nervous frame, hold many down in darkness and imprisonment, nor can they rise up into that sweet and happy liberty which they long to enjoy. What they pant after is the sealing witness of the Spirit, the blessed voice of pardoning mercy, and the immediate breaking in of the love of God, to swallow up all their doubts and fears in a full tide of superabounding grace. Whilst this is withheld, or not enjoyed, they are subject to bondage—many all their lifetime. They have very often expectations of a coming

deliverance, and sometimes these rise very high. They cannot wholly deny that the Lord has had something to do with their hearts; nor can they put aside the tokens, evidences, and marks for good which they have experienced. Talk with them, and you will find they can bring forward blessed evidences of the life of God being in their breast. Many a sip and taste have they had of the goodness and mercy of God; many a sweet though passing visit of the presence of Jesus. Many a precious promise, or encouraging word has been dropped into their heart; so that at times, their faith has been strong, their hope bright, their evidences clear. But after this their bright sky has been clouded again by darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, and temptations of Satan. And yet their life and conversation clearly manifest that the fear of God is in their heart. They evidently show a tender conscience, a humble mind, a meek and quiet spirit, a broken heart, and much fear of saying or doing anything which is wrong. They have come out of the world; they love the saints of God; they know the truth and highly prize it; and they are calling often night and day upon the name of the Lord, pleading his promises, and begging for a word from his gracious lips. All these marks and evidences are evident in them. And yet for want of clear manifestations and blessed discoveries of Christ to their soul, and a sense of pardoned sin in their hearts, many of the dear saints of God, all their lifetime, through fear of death are subject to bondage.

But what does "bondage" imply? Its meaning is best known by those who feel it most. But by "bondage" we may understand chiefly four things. 1. First, a state in which a man is *against his will*. A willing servant is not in bondage to his master; it is the free man made a slave who feels the yoke of bondage. 2. But secondly, bondage implies strong *desires after liberty*, and earnest attempts to attain it. A slave, satisfied with his slavery, can hardly be said to be in bondage. 3. Bondage again is a thing which *perplexes* the mind. It springs chiefly from guilt; it therefore shuts up the heart, and presses the soul down as into a deep dungeon. This made David cry, "Bring my soul out of prison," and stirred up Jeremiah's cry, "I called upon thy name, O

Lord, out of the low dungeon." (Lam. 3:55.) 4. Its last feature is the worst, that it is ever *looking forward*, ever *dreading future and worse ills*, and lest its present prison be but a foretaste of, and an entrance into the gloomy prison of hell.

Now the blessed Jesus took the flesh and blood of the children to deliver and bring them out of this bondage condition. He died, that by destroying through death him who had the power of death, he might deliver them from this gloomy cell. He came not only to put away their sins, but as having put them away to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isa. 61:1.) But now see how this "opening of the prison to them that are bound" meets and overcomes the bondage of which I have been speaking in each of the four points of its severe pressure. 1. Is the captive an *involuntary* bondsman? Is it a part of his misery that he who has the power of death holds him *unwillingly* fast? When Jesus comes with liberty in his heart and hands, he not only delivers the groaning captive, but makes him his own *willing free man*. 2. Again, does the captive exile *long after liberty* and make every attempt to obtain it? When Jesus opens the prison doors he gives him the liberty for which he cries, turning his sighs into songs and his groans into notes of praise. 3. Is the poor captive *perplexed* and troubled with his bondage? When the great deliverer comes, he relieves all his perplexities by dispelling all his doubts and fears. 4. And lastly, Was the sorest point of the heavy bondage the dismal *apprehension* of *worse ills* to come? When the prison doors are opened, there is opened with them a blessed assurance of eternal joys. Thus at every point of bondage the great Deliverer meets and overcomes the ills which bondage brings, the foes which bondage pictures, and the fears which bondage creates. Here our faith often fails. We do not see that sin *is* put away; that "we have," *already* have, *now* have, "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.) We do not see, or at least do not believe, that we have a merciful and faithful high priest, who "having himself suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:17, 18.) He can therefore sympathise with his

tempted, afflicted people; for he himself has passed through death, and personally and experimentally known the pangs of it. Nay, when his Father hid his face from him, he knew the power of death and the bondage which the fear of death brings; for the dark cloud which passed over earth was but a figure of the darker cloud of the wrath of God which passed over his holy soul. But he passed through it triumphantly, was delivered out of it, and is now risen to the right hand of the Father, where he lives and reigns in glory unspeakable; and, living and reigning there, he lives to deliver his people from the fear of death to which they are in bondage. As he said, "Because I live ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3.) As a proof and evidence of this life at God's right hand, he sends down from on high to his dear family many a message of mercy, many a sweet promise, many a blessed testimony, to assure them that all is well with their souls, that sin shall not prove their ruin, that death shall not consign them to endless misery; but that they are safe in the hollow of his hand, and being interested in his dying love, shall rise to be with him in one unclouded day.

But you may ask, perhaps, if this be so, why does he suffer so many of his dear children to be all their lifetime, through fear of death, subject to bondage? To this I answer, there is a needs-be for these painful exercises; that we may have our own strength and confidence pulled to pieces, that we may learn the necessity of those manifestations of Christ's love, which alone can put to flight these chilling doubts and fears. If the Lord's people could at will remove them; if they could demand a deliverance from the bondage that the fear of death casts them into, they would want no visitations of the love of Christ, no application of his atoning blood to their conscience, nor the work and witness of his Spirit in their heart. They could claim of their own free will the privilege of overcoming death, take the promises out of God's word as they stand in the bare letter, and with them fight their enemy face to face, making him as dust to their sword and as driven stubble to their bow. But being held down in doubt and fear, death waving

his dark banner over their heads, and all hope and help in self being taken away, they are made to sigh and cry mightily to the Lord for a liberating word, for a manifestation of his blood and love. Thus their fears, doubts, and exercises, the hard and heavy bondage under which they labour, fully convince them that nothing but the Lord's own voice can speak peace to their hearts, nothing but his blood purge their conscience, nothing but his love satisfy their souls.

It is then no evidence against you if you are subject to bondage; it is no mark against you if you cannot look death in the face without doubt or fear. Is it not "the children" who feel the bondage? And did not the Lord come to deliver them from it? Are you then not a child because you fear death? If you had no sense of sin, no tenderness of conscience, you would be as careless about death as most others are. Thus your very bondage, your very fears, if they make you sigh and cry for deliverance, are marks of life. And the day will surely come when the Lord will remove these chilling fears and put an end to these killing doubts. As you draw near to the brink of Jordan, the Lord will be with you to deliver you, who through fear of death, are now subject to bondage; he will extract its sting and rob the grave of its victory, enabling you to shout "Salvation!" through his blood, even at the moment when nature sinks lowest and the last enemy appears nearest in view. O what a blessed Jesus we have; what a heavenly Friend; what a divine Mediator between a holy God and our guilty souls! What love he displayed in taking our flesh and blood; what kind condescension, what wondrous depths of unspeakable grace! He loved us sufficiently to lay down his life for us. Did he not for our sakes endure the agony of the cross, the hidings of God's face, the burden of sin, the pangs of hell? And if he has done all this for us on earth, will he leave his work undone in heaven? Has he quickened you into life, made you feel your sin, taught you to seek for mercy, raised up a good hope in your heart, applied a promise to your soul, given you a testimony? He may have done all this, and yet at times your conscience may be held down in bondage and imprisonment. But it is only to make further way for his grace: to open up more and

more of his willingness and ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is only to make himself in the end more precious to you: to show you more of his finished work, more of his dying love and atoning blood, and more of what he is able to do in delivering you from all your fears. Thus, as the Adam fall was over-ruled by the wisdom of God to make manifest the riches of his eternal love, mercy, and grace, so your very doubts, fears, and bondage will be blessedly over-ruled to give you further discoveries of Christ, to wean you more from an arm of flesh, and to make you know more experimentally what the Lord Jesus Christ is to those who seek his face and hang upon and trust him and him alone.

A man who believes that he may live and die, and that safely without an experimental knowledge of Christ, will never seek his face, never call upon his name, never long for the manifestations of his love. But he who feels that he can neither live nor die without him, who knows that he has a soul that only Christ can save, who has sins which only Christ's blood can pardon, iniquities that only Christ's righteousness can cover, will be often crying to the Lord to visit his soul with his salvation, and will find no rest till Christ appears; but when Christ appears to the joy of his soul, will bless and praise him with joyful lips. And O what a glorious trophy will that man be of Christ's eternal victory over sin and Satan, when he will reign with him and with his assembled saints in one immortal day!

## **A Discriminating Ministry** (A posthumous sermon)

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, July 11, 1869

"If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." Jeremiah 15:19

None of the prophets of the Old Testament seem to have walked in so rough and thorny a path as the prophet Jeremiah. And there seems to be special reasons why it was so. First his lot was cast upon very evil days. It was just at the time when the Lord was wreaking his vengeance upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judea, through the hand of the King of Babylon. There was famine in the city, war without, and a dark lowering cloud hung over Jerusalem, which Jeremiah knew from the word of the Lord would soon burst forth into a destruction of the city and of its inhabitants. But he was very jealous and zealous for the honour of the Lord who showed him what was coming to pass. He instructed him in his judgments, and he enabled him to lay before the people what would be the consequence of their transgressions if they repented not. But nobody listened to him. Nothing but persecution met him, and but for the special providence of God, he would have lost his life when he was cast into the pit, where he sunk up to the very armpits in the mud and filth. But again, he seems to have been by nature a man of a rebellious turn of mind. God's people, like other people, are differently constituted. Some are more weak, placid, mild, gentle, unruffled; others are naturally more inclined to rise up in anger and rebellion. It was so with Jeremiah. He was not one of those smooth, gentle, easy, placable natures that nothing can ruffle. But on the contrary, the make of his natural mind was such that a mere trifle, so to speak, would stir up in the depths of his heart rebelliousness even against God. In fact, taking a view of all the prophets, we find none of them indulging in such—if I may use the expression—



daring words against the Lord Almighty, as the prophet Jeremiah. Look, for instance, at the words preceding my text: "Why is my pain perpetual"—as though he would quarrel with God because he could not get it relieved—"why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Why dost thou not speak the healing word? Why suffer my wounds to fret and rankle, when there is balm in Gilead and a physician there? Why suffer my wounds thus to fester?" Then comes that speech, which to my mind is one of the most—what shall I say?—unworthy, unbecoming speeches that man ever made to his Maker: "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" What if a man should call God a liar? It is an offence between man and man. Man cannot bear to be called a liar by his fellow; and many a knock-down blow has been the issue of one man calling his brother a liar. For man to be so daring as to speak to God what he would scarcely speak to his fellow man, seems almost atrocious. And yet there is a saving word. He says "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" The word "as" softens it down. He did not rise up in such daring as to call God altogether a liar. "Wilt thou be"—it assumes an interrogative form, which softens it still more—"wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" As though he should say to the Lord, "Thou hast promised to support me: where is now that support? Thou hast promised my enemies shall not prevail against me: see how they do prevail. Where is thy promise? Why, Lord, it is almost as though thou wert unfaithful to thy word; and as waters that promised to flow to relieve the city, and those waters dried up, wilt thou be thus to thy servant who loves thy honour, to whom thy word is the joy and rejoicing of his heart? Wilt thou be all this to him, so that thou art, as it were, like waters that fail: when I want to drink, there is no drink to relieve my fainting thirst?" Now the Lord deals very tenderly with his servant. He is a long-suffering God. He does not, as he might justly do, launch forth the lightnings of his vengeance and say, "Call me a liar! Take thy deserts." No; he speaks very gently and yet very firmly and faithfully:—"If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me. If thou return from this rebellious mood, from this fretful disposition, from these murmuring accusations, and come back to that better mind which

becomes thy position and me as thy Lord and Master, thou shalt stand before me and I will make it manifest thou hast a standing in me and before me that none of thy enemies can gainsay or resist." And then he adds the words of the text: "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them."

In these words I think we may see,

I.—*First, a condition.* I use the word with some degree of reluctance; but still it conveys the idea best. First, then, a condition: "If thou take forth the precious from the vile."

II.—*Secondly, a promise:* "Thou shalt be as my mouth."

III.—*Thirdly, a command:* "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them."

I shall have to explain, before I enter into my text, what is precious and what is vile; and how these two things are mingled together, supposing it needs the hand of the servant of God to take forth the one from the other.

What, then, may we understand by "precious?" We may understand two things by it: something exceedingly scarce and something exceedingly valuable. Now there are many things which are very valuable which are not scarce: as, for instance, the air we breathe. How it fills every place, and how we could not exist even a minute without inhaling the breath of heaven. And yet it is not rare or scarce, for it fills every nook and crevice. Again, look at the rain: how precious is the rain; how it falls from heaven and fertilises the earth and causes the crops to spring forth clothing the fields with grass and making the very valleys to sing. How precious the rain is in a season of drought. And yet only in exceedingly dry seasons like last year can it be said to be rare. Look, again, at water: how it flows in our rivers; how it gushes out of the hills and vales; how we have only to dig a few feet into the earth, and there we find this valuable substance,

water. How precious; our bodies could not subsist without it. Yet except in certain climates, it cannot be said to be scarce. But, on the other hand, a thing may be scarce and yet not valuable. There are certain minerals or metals, known only to chemists—if I were to tell you their names you could not take them home—but so scarce and so rare as to be only known by means of chemical analysis, and yet they are of no value. There are certain flowers that grow only in one or two spots in England, but only botanists value them. If you were wandering upon a mountain in Wales, and saw a flower which only grows there, you would put no value upon it, nor is it valuable except in the eyes of a botanist. Therefore, a thing may be rare and yet not valuable. But when it is not only scarce in quantity, but valuable in quality, then we stamp upon it the word "precious" in its true sense. Gold, for instance; silver, diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and precious stones generally,—these represent a value in themselves, not merely because they are very rarely to be found, but because they are useful in the way of commerce, as a medium of exchange, applied to various purposes in the arts, or sought after by kings and princes and nobility to decorate their persons. These are instances where a thing is precious, not only for its scarcity, but also for its intrinsic value.

Having thus explained the word "precious," I will do the same for the word "vile," because I wish you to see distinctly the meaning between the two, so as to carry the idea into spiritual things. "Vile" is something common, cheap, that nobody sets any value upon. That is one sense of the word "vile;" and another is, filthy, polluted, unclean, nasty, abandoned in every way, like the dirt or dung in the streets, which is only a stench and a nuisance. We have the words "precious" and "vile" in Scripture used with respect to men and women, as well as things. We read of the "precious sons and daughters of Zion;" and we read of Eli's sons "who made themselves vile, and their father forbade it not." We read that "the vile person will work villainy and the churl will speak hypocrisy." And Job speaks of himself that he was in their eyes as one that was vile; nay, he said, as he felt in his own eyes, "I am vile." (Job 40:4.) And David could say, when taunted

with dancing before the ark, "I will yet be more vile than thus, I will be base in mine own sight." (2 Sam. 6:22.) Now do you think you have caught the idea of what is precious and what is vile?

Now I shall go on to show how these are apparently mixed with one another, and how the servant of the Lord, as God's mouth, is to take forth the precious from the vile. And you will observe that the vile is more abundant than the precious, for he is not bidden to take forth the vile from the precious; that would pollute his hands with wickedness; but he is bidden to take the precious from the vile, that he may separate that which is precious to the honour and glory of God, and leave the vile to its own vileness and villainy.

Having thus led you to the words of the text, I shall show you that there are precious characters and vile characters, precious doctrines and vile doctrines, precious experience and vile experience, precious practice and vile practice; and that the servant of the Lord, who is to be mouth for God, is to take forth the precious from the vile that he may be as God's mouth.

I.—First, then, who are precious characters? They are the sons and daughters of Zion; they are those without God the Father loved with an everlasting love; they are those whom God the Son redeemed by his precious blood; they are those whom God the Holy Ghost makes his temple, in whose heart he plants the fear of God, and whom he is making meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. These are precious characters. In themselves, they are no better than others; nay, in some respects even worse, for it seems as if God had selected some of the most crooked materials, some of the vilest and worst in themselves, to make them vessels of honour meet for the master's use. (2 Tim. 2:21.) There is, therefore, no difference in themselves. The difference is wholly of God. It is his sovereign grace, and sovereign grace alone, that makes the distinction between the precious character and the vile character. Now this precious character, being precious in the sight of God, is loved with an everlasting love: precious, as bought by the love of his dear Son, and precious, as taken possession of by the Holy Ghost, he is in the sight of God of

inestimable value. It is not because there is anything in him. God looks to his dear Son: it is what he is in Christ by virtue of eternal union with the Son of God; it is because he is a member of the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ that in the sight of God he is precious.

And who are the vile? The vile are those whom God looks upon as refuse. The vile are those whom he leaves to fill up the measure of their iniquities. The vile are those who practice villainy, who manifest their hypocrisies, and live and die under vile influences that draw down upon them the awful displeasure of the Almighty.

Now these precious characters and these vile characters are apparently mingled together. There may be sitting in the same seat side by side one who is precious and one who is vile. In the same family there may be a precious one and others who are vile ones. In a church, in a congregation, there may be those who are unspeakable precious, and those who are infamously vile. Now the servant of God must take forth the precious from the vile by describing, as the Lord gives him power, what are the marks that manifest him that is precious, and what are the marks that manifest him that is vile. He must show how it is the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the heart which makes one fear God's name, believe in his dear Son, hope in his mercy, love him and cleave to him with purpose of heart, and that by those things he is manifested as precious. On the other hand, the man who is vile is secretly working iniquity against God and his people. Therefore in that sense he is vile. Now when the servant of God begins to open up these mysteries, and traces out who are precious in the sight of God and who are vile, then he is as God's mouth.

But again, there are precious doctrines and there are vile doctrines; and these precious doctrines and these vile doctrines are apparently intermixed, so that it needs the servant of God to take forth the one from the other. The doctrine of the blessed Trinity is a precious doctrine. A Trinity of Persons in the unity of Godhead, an eternal Father, an eternal Son, an eternal Spirit, and yet these three Persons all one glorious God in the indivisible

unity of the eternal essence,—this is a precious doctrine, for it spreads its grace and its glory on every branch of divine truth. It sheds its beauty and glory on the electing love of God, on the redeeming blood of Jesus, on the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of three Persons in one God, and each co-equal in Deity, casts a bright and beautiful lustre on every sacred truth of the Bible, so that without it there is no order, but all is confusion. If the blood that cleanseth from all sin is not the blood of the Son of God, of him who is God, what value or validity is there in it to cleanse a guilty conscience? If his obedience is not the obedience of God's equal, how can that obedience be imputed to the saints of God, to be their shield and shelter, to justify them from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses? If his love is not the love of the Son of God, how can that love be from everlasting to everlasting? How can it diffuse itself amongst the members of his mystical body? And again, how can he hear prayer and answer prayer and be an intercessor able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, unless deity gave validity to every act of his humanity? And so with the Holy Ghost, his divine Person in the glorious God-head, it casts a beauteous lustre on every branch of revealed truth. The Sonship of Christ,—that he is the revealed Son of the Father, to ever lie in his bosom as his own proper and real Son—is a precious doctrine; and every notion, fancy, or doctrine which opposes that is to be stamped as unutterable vile. The sovereignty of God, in choosing whom he will, in giving no account to man of these matters, but as a sovereign disposing of all men, and all events, and all circumstances, is a precious doctrine. And though there are times and seasons when that doctrine seems to militate against our thoughts and wishes, when it seems to cross our path both in providence and in grace; yet it will ever be embraced by the saints of God as a God glorifying truth, that He, as a sovereign, has a right to do what he will with body and soul, and that all his purposes are the purposes of a sovereign who can execute what he may determine to bring to pass.

What, then, are vile doctrines? Every doctrine which denies the Trinity, whatever name it be called by, is a vile doctrine. Every

doctrine which denies the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord is a vile doctrine. Every doctrine which derogates from the honour of God, the glory of God, the majesty of God, is a vile doctrine; spring from what source it may, called by whatever name, it is a vile doctrine because opposed to the grand fundamental principles of our most holy faith. That God never chastises people for sin is a vile doctrine, because it leads men to licentiousness; it hardens men's hearts in the practice of sin if God does not chastise them for their iniquities and purge them by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. Self-righteousness, Pharisaic love, legal duties carried on in a legal spirit, is a vile doctrine, because derogatory to the doctrines of sovereign grace, and opposed to the teaching of the Holy Ghost and the whole word of God from Genesis to Revelation. That men may live as they list; walk in the ways of the ungodly and have peace of conscience; do that which is evil and live in it and love it, and yet be saved without repentance, or godly sorrow, or confession, or leaving their sins, is a vile doctrine, base Antinomianism, and has caused the way of truth to be spoken evil of, for many are Antinomians in spirit and in conduct who dare not broach it in so many words. Take it, then, as shortly as I can lay it down, that every doctrine opposed to God and godliness, be it called by what name it may, is a vile doctrine, and the servant of the Lord has to take one forth from the other, has to prove every word, and give the precious doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, and set upon them God's attesting seal. And he is to denounce and testify, and warn his hearers against those vile doctrines which harden the heart, sear the conscience, and land men in destruction and perdition.

There is precious experience and there is vile experience. A precious experience springs out of the teaching of God in the soul and the work of the holy Ghost upon the heart. Every conviction of sin that springs from the Spirit's inward convincing operations is precious as being the handiwork of God. Every sigh, every cry, every groan, every tear, every honest, humble confession before God of what we have been and are is precious, because it is wrought by a divine power in the soul and the issue of it is salvation. Every sweet manifestation of the Son of God to the

soul; every glimpse, glance, gleam, or view of his glorious Person by faith; every shining in of the light of his countenance, application of his word with power, whisper of his heavenly love, drawing of his divine grace, application of his precious truth to the heart is precious; it comes from God, it leads to God, it is the work of the Holy Ghost, it prepares the soul for eternity, it is a jewel of God's own gift. Even the humblings that we experience under the hand of God, the breaking down of a hard heart, the softening of an obdurate spirit, the melting of soul under the breath of the Lord, with the going forth of supplication, confession, and desire unto the God of all our mercies to look upon us and bless us, is precious, because it is his gift and work. Every thing which brings out of self, draws to the Lord, makes sin hateful, Jesus precious, puts the world under our feet, gives us the victory over sin, weans us from the love of self, and makes the Lord Jesus precious, should be called a precious experience.

And then there is a vile experience, which is a knowledge of sin without a knowledge of salvation. Many men can speak of their evil heart and take a glory in it. There are few, speaking comparatively, and perhaps none who sit under a gospel ministry, who cannot speak something of the evil of their hearts. "O, they are so filthy, and so base, and so vile, and so black." Well, they are all that; but after all, it may be a vile experience: nothing but a burning up of nature, nothing but the shining of light upon a dark and wicked heart, without any holy mourning under it, no godly sorrow, no real contrition, no repentance, no confession, no forsaking it. Men will glory in their sins, speak of their bad tempers, how they quarrel with their wives, how cross they are with their children, how they can speak to their servants, and throw these things about as though this vile experience was the effect of grace, the fruit of the teaching of the Spirit. They can even boast of the sins they have committed, talk of the way they have been entangled, the lusts they have fallen a prey to, and throw all this about as though it was grace that had wrought a knowledge of these things in them. It is nothing but a vile experience, just so much dung and dirt of their corrupt nature, without anything of the grace of God in it. It is not knowing



yourselves sinners that will save your souls; it is not seeing what you are, black as the tents of Kedar, that will take you to heaven. You may like to hear ministers describe the depths of the fall, the sins we are prone to, the temptations we are subject to, and the evils we feel. You can sit very eagerly to listen to a minister describing his evil heart, and evil temper, and what he feels in the absence of God, what a fretful, murmuring nature he has. You can suck all that down like sweet honey and feed upon it as the honeycomb. But when the servant of God begins to describe his sighs, cries, mourning, and tears, his restless nights, gloomy days, and how he has been exercised on account of the sins he feels, you turn your ear away; you leave all that. You take all the dark, all the black, all the foul, all the filthy, all the vile, and you gather up all this filth and rubbish, and seek to make an experience of it. You say, "Ah, our good minister tells us how bad he is, and what a vile heart he has: why, I feel just as our good minister does, and if he is right I am right." You take all the filth and vileness, but leave out all the good. And he will tell you perhaps he is tempted; and you say "Yes, I am tempted." But he does not tell you he gives way to temptation if you do. He tells you Satan spreads snares for his feet, but he does not tell you he falls into them as you do. He tells you how wicked his heart is, and how easily he might be drawn aside if God permitted; and you believe all that. But you won't listen to him when he tells you how God keeps him as the apple of his eye, plants his fear deep in his heart, and turns him away from sin. You pull back your ear from all that and thus harden your hearts under a sound Gospel ministry. You feed upon ashes; a deceived heart turns you aside; you bring a lie in your right hand. Here is the vile experience.

Now the servant of God is to take forth the one from the other. He is not to keep back the evils of men's hearts, not to shun declaring the snares laid for their feet, nor the temptations into which they may fall but for God's help. He will tell you what he is and how sin works, because his heart is exercised by it. But he will not leave these things at an uncertainty, but will so take forth the precious experience and hold it up to view that it will be seen it is precious; and then your vile experience, he will take and cast

it out like filth, and set upon it his condemning seal, backed by the authority of God. And so he will take forth the precious from the vile.

And so with practice. There is precious practice and there is vile practice; and the servant of God will show you the difference. Precious practice is that which flows from the love of God, influencing the heart to every good word and work, which springs out of union with the living vine, and is produced by the sap and nutriment of grace flowing into the branches; the practice that springs out of love, not fear; grace, not the law; and the work of the Holy Ghost, and not the spawn of free-will. He will show you that precious practice is to live a consistent life, to walk in godly fear, to adorn the doctrine by the fruits of righteousness; and then he will denounce vile practice. He will thunder forth God's denunciations against all vile practice masked and robed under cover of religion. He will take one from the other and show what is precious practice wrought in the heart by the power of God, and what is vile practice as carried on in secret under the cloak of religion, and carried on in the dark chambers of imagery. And he will show, also, that all practice that does not spring out of the power of God upon the soul, that may be born of human approbation, and arise from a Pharisaic spirit, is in the sight of God vile, because not wrought in the heart by his own Almighty power.

II.—Now you see what a work the servant of God has to do, and how he ought to be instructed in his own mind to see who are precious characters and who are vile characters, what are precious doctrines and what are vile doctrines, what is precious experience and what is vile experience, what is precious practice and what is vile practice; and not only have wisdom and discernment to see the difference, but boldness to declare it; not to fear man; to stand in no dread of his congregation, but to stand before them in faithfulness and honesty, as being a steward of the mysteries of God and being responsible to God for the due execution of his office. Now this man will be as God's mouth. God will speak with authority by him to your souls. You will receive

many a sweet testimony into your conscience from him, because he will not mask over matters nor cloke over doctrines, and experience, and practice, and hide them all up in confusion. But he will speak with that authority, and that power, and that unction, and that savour, that it will be at times as God's very mouth to your soul. You will see your character described, and it will come home to your bosom, and drop as a word from God into your heart. He shall trace out your experience; he shall bring to light your profession; and the word of God will so back up what he says, that it shall come home with God's authority, power, and unction into your soul. But if a man do not take forth the precious from the vile, he never can be as God's mouth. He never can speak with authority and power; nor would his word find a place in the consciences of those who fear God's name.

III.—Now comes our last point—the precept or exhortation: "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Now a faithful ministry will drive out and purge those who cannot bear to sit under it. There are very few that can bear a faithful ministry. So when a man begins to take forth the precious from the vile, and be as God's mouth, he must expect to drive from the sound of his voice those who cannot receive the testimony; because they are convinced in their own conscience, and they fly away because their conscience testifies against them. Now what is he to do to them? Is he to go after them and bring them back? "No," God says, "let them return unto thee. Maintain thou thy post." "Well, Lord, but perhaps they are rich; we shall lose their support; they will withdraw their subscriptions; the cause will suffer; we shan't get on so well. Might not he soften it a little, not be quite so harsh, give it out in a more mild and gentle form, not speak about vile characters, and vile doctrines, and vile experience, and vile practice? Why can't he smooth matters over a little, and these people won't leave." God says, "Let them return unto thee." And if they be saints of God, and the Lord has begun his work of grace upon their souls, and touched their heart with a coal from off the altar, and made their souls to burn within them, then they will gladly come back. They may go on in error and find their hearts hardened; go amongst Arminians and free-

willers, and find nothing but bondage and death. Now the man of God is not to go after them, nor to smooth matters over, but still to maintain his ground in all faithfulness. "Let them return unto thee." And those in whose hearts God has planted his fear, in whose souls he has begun to work with his heavenly grace, will always come sooner or later, under the sound of a faithful ministry. But others take offence, go away, leave, turn their back upon the truth and the people of God; and those often perish in their own deceiving.

Do you, dear friends, stand by the cause of God and truth? Is there anything can save your souls but truth? Can error save you, bless you, comfort you, support you, be with you on a bed of sickness, pain, languishing, and death? Is there anything but the blood of Christ that can wash your guilty conscience—anything but his righteousness that can justify your needy, naked soul—anything but his love that can be a sweet balm and cordial to your bleeding spirit? Can you abide by error? abide by evil? abide by sin? abide by the world? abide by carnality and death? You can abide by truth in its power, abide by the blood of Christ revealed to your conscience, abide by the love of God shed abroad in your soul, abide by the support of his upholding hand, abide by the sweet views of his Spirit to your soul. You can die by truth as well as live by truth. Therefore, never think for a single moment of turning your back on the ways of God, for if you do, you will only walk in the ways that lead to perdition; and if you go on in them, the further you go the more you will be entangled in the maze of sin and error, and it will be a mercy if you are ever brought back. Never mind your discouragements. Keep on in the footsteps of the prophet: they will guide you right at last. Abide by the truth of God: it has saved thousands; it will save you. Therefore, whatever be the consequence, hang by the truth of God; keep close to what he has revealed by his Spirit and grace, and then you will receive the end of your faith in the salvation of your soul.

## Divine Arithmetic

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 3, 1845

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2, 3, 4

This Epistle was written to "the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad." These were not the Jewish tribes; for after that nation had rejected the Lord of life and glory, God the Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost to raise up a spiritual church consisting of believers in the name of God's only-begotten Son. The twelve Jewish tribes ceased to have a standing as the people of God; and the Christian church was then established, and succeeded in their room and place.

These twelve tribes scattered abroad, (so called because they succeeded into the room and place of rejected Israel,) are the same people as those to whom the Apostle Peter writes, "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:1, 2.) The occasion of these elect strangers being spread abroad through these various countries, we find in the Acts of the Apostles, where they are said to have been scattered through the persecution that came upon the church after the death of Stephen. (Acts 8:18, 19.)

These twelve spiritual tribes thus scattered in various places of the world, at the time that James and Peter wrote their Epistles, were undergoing severe persecutions and trials; and the storm had come upon them so unlooked for and so unexpectedly that their heads were almost bowed to the ground before it.

This is the general effect of persecution. When the cloud first breaks upon our head, it comes so unexpectedly, that it often bows us down before it. We are not prepared either for outward persecution or inward temptation, when the Lord first touches our hearts. We need therefore to be supported under persecution, and comforted under temptation, before we can be brought to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

James, then, writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, enduring a great fight of afflictions outwardly, and a severe conflict with temptations inwardly; and he bids them not be discouraged by these trials that had come upon them. He sets before them a sum in spiritual arithmetic—one not taught in schools or colleges, but one of a divine nature, made known to the soul by the teachings of God the Spirit. He says, "My brethren, *count* it"—here is a problem for you to solve, a rule-of-three sum to calculate—"count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

In taking up these words this morning, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to look at them in two points of view, in order that I may be enabled as the Lord may direct, more clearly to unfold the meaning of the Spirit therein.

I.—*The nature of these temptations.*

II.—*Their fruits and effects on the soul.*

I.—The text speaks, you will observe, of "*divers temptations.*" These words do not altogether convey the full force of the original. By "divers," we are not only to understand *different*, in point of quality, but we are to understand also *numerous*, in point of quantity; many and different. And by the word "*temptations,*" we are to comprehend not merely seductions to sin, powerful assaults of the enemy, and all that is usually implied by the expression "temptations;" but we are also to understand by it

"trials." So that would we give the full force of the two words, we must use this kind of circumlocution—*many and different trials and temptations*.

But James speaks also of believers *falling* into them, in which there is something of an experimental nature implied. The idea conveys the impression of a person walking for a given time upon a smooth road, and then on a sudden coming into a rough one; or of a person travelling along a firm path, and suddenly finding himself sinking in a quagmire; or of one who has hitherto been advancing along a flowery meadow, and unexpectedly falling into a pit where he is torn by briars and thorns.

But the word "fall," implies not merely the *suddenness* of the change, but the *helplessness* also of the creature to extricate itself from these spots of danger and difficulty.

Is not this, then, a singular circumstance, that the Apostle James, writing by divine inspiration, bids his suffering brethren "count it all joy," esteem it as a pleasure, value it as a blessing, and estimate it as the richest of mercies, that they should fall into quagmires, that their feet should be sore and weary with walking on rough and rugged stones, and that the flesh should be torn from their skin by sharp briars? This is, as I before hinted, an arithmetic not taught in the schools, but one to be made known by nothing short of divine teaching in the heart and conscience of the Lord's family.

But James has respect to the *effect* produced thereby. He is not looking upon trials simply as trials, nor temptations merely as temptations; he is estimating the fruit to be produced by them. To use an illustration. A person ignorant of agriculture, if he were to see the sower scattering large quantities of seed upon the ground, would think it a great waste of the precious corn; but he that understands the nature of ploughing, sowing, and reaping, would know that this seed thrown into the ground is consigned there with a view to harvest. So spiritually. The trials, temptations, exercises, and sorrows that God's people have to

pass through, are the precious seed, which springs up in the appointed time, and bears a bountiful crop. So that, just in the same way as we count it gain instead of loss when the farmer scatters his grain into the furrow, by comparing it with the crop that is to spring therefrom, so are we to view the troubles and trials which God's people endure, not as so much loss, but as real and positive gain; for out of this apparent loss, as in the case of the seed, will the bountiful crop of eternal glory come. As the Apostle declares, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.)

The word "*temptation*" has two significations; *first*, that which we more particularly understand by *temptation*; and *secondly*, that which is conveyed by the term *trial*.

There are several points of difference between temptations and trials. For instance: all temptations are trials; but all trials are not temptations. Temptations spring from Satan, our own hearts, and a world dead in wickedness. Trials spring from God; for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Temptations are connected with and act upon our carnal nature. But trials are connected with and act upon our spiritual nature; because they try faith, hope, love, and all the other graces and fruits of the Spirit. Temptations are more or less connected with sin; but trials are not necessarily so connected. There is therefore a broad line of distinction between temptations and trials.

Now all the Lord's family have to pass through each of these. They all have a sinful nature, and therefore must know *temptations* as springing out of that sinful nature. And as all the people of God have a spiritual nature, so they must be conversant with *trials*; for these are adapted to, and spring from the very existence of that spiritual nature. So that every one who is possessed of a carnal and a spiritual nature, in other words, every quickened child of God must know temptations and trials in his own personal experience. For the same reason, every child of God will from time to time be discouraged and cast down by



these temptations and trials; and yet he will one day or other, when he reaps the spiritual profit, (for he cannot do it at the time), "count it all joy" that he has fallen into these "divers temptations."

Let us endeavour, then, with God's blessing, to trace out a few of these *temptations* and *trials*.

i. And, *first*, let us look at some of those *temptations* that peculiarly beset God's living family.

1. What is *the world* to a child of God but one great scene of temptation? But is the world anything but man, fallen man, in the aggregate? Is it not the actings of sinful hands, the desires of sinful hearts, and the words of sinful lips? In a word, is not the world entirely made up of evils that you and I feel daily and hourly working in our corrupt nature? Just, then, as in our new nature we have spiritual communion with invisible things above, and with divine realities revealed in the word of truth; so, in our carnal hearts, we have a sensual, earthly communion with the world and all that is in it. And just in the same way as our spiritual nature loves, delights, and centres in heavenly things, so does our carnal nature love, delight, and centre in earthly things; for it never can rise above them. As long as we live in the body, our carnal nature will have sensual and earthly unions with the basest things; and there is nothing too vile or abominable for our carnal nature not to have close, sensual, earthly communion with. This, then, being the case, and there being a new principle in the child of God opposed to the evil of sin, separated from it by the power of the Spirit, bent upon eternal realities, and possessing a measure of the mind of Christ, it is through the opposition of this new principle, the temptation is felt to be temptation.

The men of this world have temptations. Satan tempts them; but they are not felt by them as his temptations. He tempted Judas and Peter; but how different the temptation in the case of Judas and that of Peter! In the case of Judas, there was no spiritual

discernment of the temptation, no resisting principle, no inward conflict: his covetous heart fell in with it, was caught with the hook, and ruined by the snare. Peter was overcome in spite of his godly fear and a heart made honest by the grace of God, in spite of his love to Jesus and his faith and hope in him. He was not caught by a bait as Judas, but suddenly overwhelmed and carried away by violence, in spite of and in opposition to his better principle.

When Satan tempts the men of this world, they fall in immediately with his temptations; they are carried away by them, drowned in their lusts, and, if grace prevent not, end eventually in destruction or despair. The same temptations assault the child of God; but they are *felt* by him to be temptations: he has in him a nature utterly opposed and averse to them; he has eyes that see, a conscience that feels, and a life that groans under them: and yet, to his shame and sorrow, he often finds himself entangled therewith.

2. Some of the Lord's people are sadly tempted with *infidelity*. I had to struggle under this temptation for many years before ever I knew that a child of God was tempted by it. I never heard it described from the pulpit; and the first place I ever saw it touched upon was in Bunyan's "Grace Abounding."

Many of the Lord's people, I believe, are painfully harassed with a *reasoning mind* producing every sort of carnal argument to tempt them to disbelieve the revelation which God has given in his word. This, where the heart is altogether infidel, is not felt to be a temptation; the carnal mind embraces it, and denies God with daring front; it espouses the cause of infidelity with open arms, and hates and abhors the truth. But with the child of God it is one of the most acute temptations, one of the most fiery trials he ever can pass through; for it saps the very ground of his hopes, and brings him to this point, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It fills his heart with distressing sensations; for he has in him a believing principle which is grieved by these vile suggestions. He not only finds this world a

barren wilderness; but a cloud of darkness rests upon the next. He knows himself to be a sinner; yet when infidelity comes in, tempting him to disbelieve the deity of Christ and the work of the Spirit, it leaves his soul without a refuge. There the workings of infidelity must be a distressing temptation to every one who is made alive in his soul.

3. Others of the Lord's family are tempted to *blaspheme and swear*. I do not know that I have sworn an oath for these twenty years, certainly not since the Lord touched my heart; but I have had many times the working of it within, though, through mercy, it never has escaped my lips. What a temptation this is to a child of God! But was not Job tempted by it, when his wife, who should have strengthened and encouraged him, proved his tempter, and said, "Curse God, and die?" Was not Peter tempted with this, when he broke out into oaths and curses, and denied the Lord of life and glory? Was not Jeremiah more than tempted by it? It is true, he did not curse his God; he was saved from that, through mercy; he was kept from passing beyond that bound but he cursed the day of his birth and the man who slew him not from the womb. (Jer. 20:14-17.)

4. Others of the Lord's people are tempted to commit the *unpardonable sin*. Some persons say, 'the unpardonable sin cannot be committed now.' But I want to know this. Is not Jesus "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Is not the Spirit, the Third Person in the glorious Godhead, unchanging and unchangeable? Has his power ceased in the hearts of God's people? Then, if men could sin against the Holy Ghost in the days of the Apostles; if men's hearts are still the same, and if the power of the Spirit upon God's people is the same now as then—why should not men now commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, as well as then? I believe it is committed by many. But none of God's people can commit it: there is a blessed hedge set round about them; they may sin deeply and foully, and fall into the basest transgressions: but they can never break the bounds so as to commit the unpardonable sin: they can never trample upon the blood of Christ, blaspheme the Holy Ghost, or

count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Satan may work in their mind all sorts of abominable things, and fill their hearts with all kinds of obscenity (those who are acquainted with these things best know to what daring lengths the accuser of the brethren can go); but he never has, and never will to the end of time plunge an elect vessel of mercy into the unpardonable sin. God himself will keep him, so that he never shall break through the bounds. But there are seasons when he will be sadly tempted by Satan to think that he has committed it; and in a fit of despair his carnal mind may even sometimes wish to do it, that he may know the worst of it. But God the Spirit will keep him; the heavenly Pilot will preserve his bark from making shipwreck upon this fearful rock.

5. But there are temptations to *sin* also. Some temptations are of a horrible kind; suicide is among them; for it is a sin to which every principle of our souls is utterly averse. But other temptations are of a seductive kind. There are temptations that drive, and temptations that draw; there are temptations that hurry on with fearful violence, and temptations that allure the soul by the cords of sensual lust. It is difficult to say which are the more dangerous. If there be a precipice, it matters little, whether we are driven down it, or fall from it unawares. If we fall, we fall, whether it be by violence or seduction.

Many, then, of the temptations which God's people are exposed to, seduce, allure, and draw them into things that are dishonourable to God, and grievously wound their own conscience. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the various seductions and allurements to sin, known only to those who painfully experience them, are continually endeavouring to draw away the child of God from the strait and narrow path. So that he often escapes by the very skin of his teeth; and merely by the mercy of God holding him up. If he walks on, it is in such a perilous path that none but the everlasting arms could hold up his soul from disgracing the cause with which he is connected, and distressing his conscience throughout the whole of his life.

ii. But we pass on to consider what is intended by the word "*trials*." I have before observed, that trials and temptations are distinct. God is not the author of temptations; he cannot do evil, nor tempt any man to commit it. That holy being Jehovah, can never, if I may use the expression, soil his fingers by touching evil. We therefore read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:13, 14.) 'But is it not said,' some might reply, (Gen. 22:1), 'that "it came to pass that after these things God did tempt Abraham?"' I answer, the word "tempt" there does not imply that God seduced Abraham into evil. It is a mistranslation, and means simply that God tried Abraham; that is, by putting him into the furnace, he exercised his faith, and proved whether he was obedient to him in all things. And therefore Paul says, "By faith Abraham, when he was *tried*, offered up Isaac." (Heb. 11:17.)

Trials, then, are of various kinds; but their object and end is one and the same; it is to try the graces and fruit of God the Spirit in the soul, and more especially the grace of faith. All the afflictions that God's people pass through are trials for their faith, whether they are afflicted in body, in circumstances, in mind, or in that way which each knows most painfully for himself. But what is the effect of the affliction? When it comes upon you, is it not to try your faith, and prove whether it is genuine? When your faith is put into the furnace, does it not separate the dross which is so mingled with it? Do not trials reduce faith into its true compass, and winnow away the chaff from the grain? Do they not bring faith to hang more closely upon the Author and Finisher of it? We may think we have great and strong faith when we have no trials, and all things are going well and smooth with us; but let painful trials come, sharp afflictions in providence, severe persecutions, bitter convictions, an arrow from God's quiver, or something that tries our faith to the centre and cuts our flesh to the very quick—does not our faith then at once seem to sink into so small a compass as scarcely to be visible? Yet at the very time our faith

shall be all the stronger, for it will hang more upon, and flee more unto its blessed and bountiful Giver and rely more simply upon a Three-one God.

Now every one of God's children must meet with trials; some are without, and some within; but each has a burden peculiar to himself, which he oftentimes thinks to be heavier than any others. It is with us in grace, as it is sometimes in nature; when one part of our body is afflicted, we think it to be the very worst place to bear the pain, and that we could endure it better in some other part. So spiritually: our trials come to us in the tenderest part, and are generally considered severer trials than any other which God's people go through. Each feels his own burden and trial, and suffers under his own sorrow; and being ignorant of the trials of another, each believer is tempted to think his trials are beyond most others sharp and painful. But let us consider.

II.—*Their fruits and effects.* James describes these as following one another: *first*, that they *try faith*; *secondly*, the trial of faith *works patience*; *thirdly*, that patience has her *perfect work*; *fourthly*, that when patience has had her perfect work, we become *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. These fruits and effects I shall endeavour now to trace out.

I have already observed that James bade his suffering brethren "count it all joy" when they fell into these divers temptations and trials: for he was looking at the end, and viewing the crops, the rich harvest, to be produced thereby.

1. It is for the *trial of faith*. If we have a grain of spiritual faith, that faith must be tried as with fire; as saith the Apostle Peter, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:7.) It has been said, with great truth, "Untried faith is no faith." We can never therefore fully and satisfactorily know that we have faith till faith

has had a trial, and has come triumphantly out of it.

But what is the first effect of trial? In many cases the first effect is to stun. It does not produce in our souls a seemingly favourable effect; it overwhelms and overpowers. When temptations to infidelity and blasphemy have come upon you, to deny or curse God, or temptations to sin and the seductive pleasures of the flesh, or some sharp family or bodily affliction, has not the first effect of it been to stun, stupify, and overwhelm your soul? I know, through painful experience, that it has been so with me. We are thrown down by the blow, and there we lie upon the ground stunned, like a man who has had a knock-down blow, not knowing where we are. But after a time the soul rises again, and is revived out of its state, like the man who has had the knock-down blow, and begins to lift up his head.

There is then a revival of the soul. But with this revival there is sometimes rebellion. Rebellion does not always work at the first; the stunning blow strikes down rebellion, as well as apparently the life of God within. But when the soul revives rebellion will work; peevishness, fretfulness, hard thoughts of God, complainings that we are thus dealt with, angry askings why these trials have come upon us; or what can be the profit of these afflictions. All this while rebellion works most painfully in the carnal mind; and of all the trials that God's people have to endure, rebelliousness is one of the most distressing. What! a creature of the earth to rebel against the all-wise Jehovah! that glorious Being, who could turn us to destruction as easily as we trample upon a beetle, and with one frown send us to hell! that a puny wretch, like man, should dare to lift up his arm against the Almighty! that ever his mind should rise up in awful waves of rebellion against such a holy, wise, and gracious God! This is a trial that puts faith into the furnace, touches it to the very quick, and proves whether or not it is the genuine faith of God's elect. Where real faith is not in the heart, this trial will drive a man from the paths of God, into the world, or into despair, or into drunkenness and open sin, and sometimes into suicide.

But where there is true faith, the living faith of God's elect there is a secret cord that will keep the soul in the paths of God. However fluctuating, weak, and wavering, or however tossed to and fro, and apparently driven from its centre, yet there is that secret band which links the soul to the throne of the Most High, never suffering it to go beyond a certain point; and this keeps it secretly and mysteriously, yet powerfully, from breaking through the bounds. All this is necessary and indispensable; there is no alternative; for faith must be tried.

There are writers and preachers that will admit there are such things as trials and temptations, and will even allow that many of God's people pass through them; but then they seem to set forth a path that may be travelled without them; such as "being drawn by love," and going to heaven safely and smoothly, without being assaulted by Satan, tempted by the world, entangled by fleshly lusts, or being put into the furnace of affliction. But all God's living people know it to be a truth, that wherever there is faith in the heart, however weak and small that faith may be, it must be tried. It is "the trial of faith," not faith itself, which is "more precious than of gold that perisheth."

2. Now this "trial of faith," which every child of God must pass through, produces a certain effect, set forth in the text. "The trying of your faith *worketh patience.*" And patience can be produced in no other way. Men cannot gather patience out of the word of God, as they gather a plum from a tree; they cannot pluck patience out of the Scripture as we may walk by a hedge-bank, and pluck a violet out of the hedge. No: patience is a grace of the Spirit, a fruit of the Holy Ghost; it must be produced inwardly, and communicated and worked in our heart by a divine hand.

But, what is patience? It implies two things: *first, endurance; and secondly, submission.*

i. It implies, first, *endurance*, according to those words, "*Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Tim. 2:3.)



Endurance is necessary to gain the victory. Do we not read, "He that *endureth* unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 24:13.) If a man runs a race, we know he must have endurance in order to arrive at the goal. In the same way we must learn endurance; and this can only be learnt by passing through afflictions and trials. Does the soldier learn warfare merely by being drilled upon the parade, and going through the appointed exercises? This may do for the yeomanry or militia, but it will not do for active service. A man must be engaged in the battle, face the enemy, hear the roaring of the artillery, see the flashings of the sabres, and often suffer grievous and painful wounds in his body; and then, after many campaigns, he learns to be a soldier. So spiritually. Am I to sit in my arm-chair, read the word of God, ponder over David's, Paul's, and Peter's experience, see the trials they endured, and learn the theory of spiritual warfare thereby? It may do to make a hypocrite, with a varnished face and a smooth tongue; but it will not do to make a "good soldier," enduring hardness as one of those whom the Lord is leading to victory. These learn endurance by trials, afflictions, temptations, and sufferings, and by more or less of the daily conflict. As the back is strengthened by carrying burdens; and the sinews and muscles of the arms enlarged by exercise; so the soul learns to endure hardness by having weights to carry, struggles to endure, and battles to fight.

ii. But again. The word "patience" implies *submission*. What is the grand point that God is bringing his people to? Do we not read that God has predestinated the elect "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren?" (Rom. 8:29.) Are they not said to "have the mind of Christ?" (1 Cor. 2:16.) And do we not read, that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps?" (1 Pet. 2:21.) But what was the most prominent point in the life of Christ? Was it not to do the will of the Father? Did he not say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me?" (John 6:38.) When enduring his dolorous sufferings in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, to which earth never has and never can witness a parallel—when the

agony of his soul pressed the bloody sweat through the pores of his skin—and he was being "made perfect through sufferings," was not this the height of his obedience, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done?" (Luke 22:42.) Now if we are to wear the image, and have the mind of Christ, we must learn submission to the Father's will as he did. But how can we learn submission, if we have nothing to submit to? What is the use of my talking of having the grace of submission to God's will, if that will never thwart mine? if that will be never unsearchable by my intellect, and as much beyond mine as heaven is beyond earth? If that will never cross mine in any particular, what can I know about submission? I may talk about it, think I understand it, and flourish a few words respecting it; but as to the internal grace of submission, I cannot know it, except I have trials, and God works it in my soul. I will tell you when we are able to submit.

We need to see three *things* prior to submission. *First*, we must see the hand of God in the trial, and that it is brought upon us by the Lord himself. We cannot see this at first. When bodily or family afflictions, cutting trials or sharp temptations come upon us, what is their keenest edge? We cannot see that they come from God. The Lord brings the trial; but he hides the hand that brings it; the cloud appears in the sky, but we see not the face of God behind it. But after we have endured the trial, we are brought to see that the Lord sent it. This was Job's trial. If Job could have seen that God sent the trial, he could have borne it: but the Lord had hidden himself. Job went backward and forward, but he could not behold him. But the moment God appeared to speak through the cloud, Job saw the hand of the Lord; he laid his hand upon his mouth, and said, "Behold, I am vile!" He fell into his right spot; submission was brought in his soul. But when there was nothing but the cloud, and no divine hand seen, he was full of rebellion and peevishness; he could not feel submission, for he could not see the hand of God in it. Thus to see the hand of God in a trial is the first step to submission.

A *second* thing necessary to produce submission, is, to believe that we are interested in those words, "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) We cannot see this

at first. I have at times been fully persuaded that no good could come out of an affliction exercising me. It has been so contradictory to flesh and blood, that I have thought the time could never come when I should see the hand of God in it, or feel any good springing out of it. But when God enables us to believe (for he alone can) that a blessed crop will one day spring up out of it for our benefit and his glory, then we are brought to feel submission.

But we need also a *third* thing to produce submission, and that is, to be fully persuaded that the trial or temptation was absolutely *indispensable*; not merely to believe that God sent it, and that good will come out of it; but to be brought to this point, to be satisfied that good could come in no other way; that the heavy trial, the severe temptation, or the cutting affliction was really necessary, to come from the very quarter it did, to be laid upon the shoulders at the time it was, and to be brought into the heart in the precise way in which it came. When we can see and believe these three things, then we feel true submission.

3. But there is not only the *work of patience*, but also the *perfect work of patience*. There is a difference between the work of patience, and the perfect work of patience. The work of patience is to submit; but till patience endures without murmuring and submits without repining it has not had its perfect work. The trial must go on, and the sufferings be endured, in order that patience may be fully ripened. When murmuring is fully silenced, infidelity thoroughly subdued; peevishness and fretfulness ceased, rebelliousness taken flight, the soul softened at the footstool of divine mercy, and melted into a flood of genuine contrition and godly sorrow—when thus viewing the hand of God, we submit to his righteous will in all things, patience has its perfect work. It is now perfected, and brought to full maturity; it is not then merely the blossom, nor the unripe fruit, but the matured crop of patience, manifested in its implicit submission to the divine will.

4. But the Apostle adds another fruit and effect of patience—*"That ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing."* There are

three fruits then produced by the perfect work of patience; 1. *perfection*; 2. *entirety*; and 3. *wanting nothing*.

1. *Perfection*. How can we understand these words? Is there such a thing as creature perfection? Certainly not. We must not interpret one part of God's word to militate against another, nor explain its meaning so as to clash with the experience of the Lord's family. The inspired word can never contradict the teachings of the Spirit in the heart.

By "perfection," we may understand two things, *first*, the soul's complete standing in Christ; its perfect acceptance in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. But we never see that we cannot become perfect by our own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, till patience has had its perfect work: we may have the doctrine in our head, and understand the theory of it; but the experience of it we cannot have till patience has had its perfect work. But when this is accomplished, the soul is brought to submission, and it becomes manifestly clothed in the obedience of Jesus. Whilst we are fretting, murmuring, and rebelling against the Lord's dispensations in providence or grace, what faith is there in the Son of God? what testimonies or intimations of mercy are there from the Lord? or what fruits and effects are there of his grace? But when we are brought to lie still, then patience has its perfect work, and the soul shines forth manifestly clothed in the Person and work of the Redeemer.

But by *perfection*, in the Scriptural sense of the word, we may *also* understand maturity and ripeness in the divine life—what the Apostle calls being "of full age," (Heb. 5:14, *literally*, "perfect.") This maturity and ripeness in the divine life is always produced by trials and temptations, and God's working through them the grace of patience, and bringing forth its perfect work in the soul.

2. But there is another word added, "*entire*." This means 'having every part complete;' literally, 'possessing the whole of everything allotted to us.' And this respects not the standing of the soul in Christ, but the work of the Spirit upon the heart. The

new man of the soul is proportionate in all its parts; every member and grace of the Spirit grows together. There is no enlarged head and withered heart; no strong arm and feeble limb; no dwarf, giant, nor deformed cripple among the family of God. The new man of grace is perfect in all its parts and in all its proportions. And when the new man of grace grows thus altogether, the believer is "entire," every part having its full proportion. You may have observed many persons in the religious world, professing to have faith, strong faith, almost to remove mountains, who have no humility, simplicity, brokenness, nor contrition; no tenderness of conscience, godly fear, deadness to the world, nor separation from the things of time and sense; an enormous faith, but a most scanty proportion of its fruits. Is not this a delusion? and is not hypocrisy stamped upon the very profession of it?

The Lord, then, in order to give every member and grace of the Spirit its due proportion, brings trials, temptations, and exercises; and this discipline causes every branch of the new man to grow together in perfect harmony. As faith grows, hope enlarges, love increases, humility deepens, patience strengthens, consistency brightens, the life is changed, and the soul becomes more truly conformed to the image of Jesus. Trials, temptations, and exercises produce this, by winnowing away, purging out, and separating what is carnal, gross, and sensual. So that by cutting off and cutting out that which is earthly and carnal, they leave the new man of grace to grow forth in all his blessed proportions. Am I afflicted? it strengthens my faith. Is my faith strengthened? my hope is increased. Is my hope increased? my love is drawn forth. Again. Is my hope strengthened? prayerfulness, panting after the Lord's presence, and desires after the blessed revelation of himself increase in proportion. Do these things increase? They produce more patience. Does patience increase? It produces more consistency. So, just as one grace flourishes in the soul, there is a beautiful growth in all. Faith is not like a sucker that grows from the tree, drawing away all its sap, which must be plucked up in order to preserve the parent stock; it is rather the stem, from which all the branches grow in beautiful proportion.

The faith of the Christian is not the twining ivy that lives upon, and eventually strangles the parent stem; but a divine root, from which all grows in just proportion, in beautiful and blessed harmony. A believer thus becomes entire: "one grace is not starved that another may fatten; one grace is not weakened that another may be strengthened. But faith being strengthened, patience has its perfect work, and the believer becomes entire; not that he becomes more perfect in Christ, but because he has every fruit and grace of the Spirit growing in exact proportion and harmony.

3. *"Wanting nothing."* Before he was afflicted, he went astray; but now he keeps God's word. Before the trial of faith, he was spreading all abroad; but after it came, it shut him up in a narrow compass. Before, he little knew whether the anchor of hope would bear a hard strain. Before, he was not certain whether his love was genuine, or whether he had true patience. There were many fruits of faith unripe, many graces of the Spirit in imperfect exercise, many members of the new man apparently feeble. But when trials came, the Lord through them produced patience, and eventually brought forth its perfect work.

Thus the soul becomes not merely actually, but also manifestively entire: it lacks nothing. Every grace and every fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in blessed harmony and beautiful proportion; not a single limb or feature of the new man is defective in the soul. Jesus himself is in the heart. Do we not see it so? Those who are most tried, have they not most of the likeness of Christ in them? Where am I to look for humility, prayerfulness, love to God's people, simplicity, uprightness, the image of Christ? In an unexercised, hardened professor with the doctrines of grace upon his lips, and as dead to all vital godliness as Satan himself? I may see a distorted likeness: I may see a charnel-house white-washed over, full of dead men's bones and uncleanness; I may see a clean outside cup and platter; but I shall look in vain beneath the varnished face for the beautiful image of Christ in his soul. To see that, I must go to the perplexed, exercised, suffering children of God walking in the path of affliction, put into the furnace of

suffering, and at times well-nigh drowned in the waters of sorrow. *There* you will see the mind and image of Christ; *there* you will see those who are "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

Now, do you think you have had the sum worked out? We have had a problem to handle and bring out the solution. There were these figures—"divers temptations;" and the sum to be brought out was, "all joy." Take the mass of troubles, multiply the figures as much as you please, you will still find the sum total to be "joy." Well it might puzzle the acutest schoolmaster to bring out this. But when we see what the Spirit does in the heart of God's people, what sweet arithmetic does "the wonderful Numberer" (Dan. 8:13, *marg.*) bring forth! This we may not now see; but when God the Spirit shall calculate the sum for us, then we shall see and feel too, that divers temptations, many afflictions, and grievous sorrows are to be counted all joy, if they work in us the mind of Christ, conform us to the image of Jesus, and "make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." If this be the sum, and this the solution, then the most afflicted people, the most deeply tempted, and the most painfully tried, have reason to bless God the most. Above, there are no degrees of joy or glory; but as regards this time-state we may surely say, if small afflictions bring out but a small sum total of joy, very great afflictions will bring out a great sum total of joy. If a row of three figures is to bring out only a row of three figures of joy, then a row of ten figures of temptation and trouble will bring out—ten figures shall I say?—a hundred of spiritual joy below, and a thousand figures of joy in glory above untold and untellable. The Apostle says, "count it all joy." He was a master of divine arithmetic. Nor was his brother Paul below him in the noble art of spiritual calculation; for he counted the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in him; and casting up the figures for the Lord's people as well as himself, says to them (2 Cor. 1:7), "Our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

## **DIVINE ENLARGEMENT AND SPIRITUAL OBEDIENCE**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 10, 1845

"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Psalm 119:32

I was endeavouring to show on Thursday evening a connection between the precept and the promise; and I observed that, whenever the precept and the promise are linked together, if we are enabled to perform the precept, God is sure to fulfil the promise. But there is a connection of another kind between them—that namely betwixt the precept itself, and the **power** to perform it. The word of God is full of precepts, but we are totally unable to perform them. We can no more, without divine operation, perform the precept, **(that is, with a single eye to the glory of God, from heavenly motives, and in a way acceptable to the Lord)**, than we can, without special power from on high, believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God. We need a peculiar power to be put forth in our hearts, a special work of God the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to fulfil in the slightest degree the least of God's precepts spiritually. The way in which we perform the precept, when we do perform it at all, is set forth in the words of the text, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

In taking up the subject this morning, I shall endeavour to unfold it according to the two clauses of the text; but in so doing I shall invert their order; and, with God's blessing, I shall endeavour, **first**, to trace out the mind and meaning of the Spirit in the words, **"When thou shalt enlarge my heart;"** and, **secondly**, **"I will run the way of thy commandments."**

I.—Before we come to examine the subject closely, it will be desirable to give a little explanation of two points—What is intended by the Holy Ghost by the expression **"heart;"** and, as



things are best seen by their contrast, to explain what it is to have a contracted heart, in order that by the contrast we may understand the better what it is to have an enlarged heart.

1. By the word "**heart**" in the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost means more than one thing. Sometimes, for instance, He means by it that corrupt, depraved principle, which we derive from Adam. "The **heart** is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9) God saw "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's **heart** was only evil, continually." (Gen. 6:5) "A heart," Solomon says, "that deviseth wicked imaginations." (Prov. 6:18) In all these passages, the expression, "heart," means that corrupt nature which we derive from a fallen progenitor. There is another signification which the Holy Ghost has attached to the word, which I may define in one short sentence, "the feelings of the soul Godward." It is, therefore, sometimes taken for the **understanding**. Thus we read, that God gave Solomon "largeness of heart, as the sand upon the sea shore." Here it means wisdom and understanding. Sometimes it means **affections**, the tender affections of the soul, as in numerous passages where David speaks of his heart "inditing a good matter," "panting after the Lord; \_\_\_ rejoicing in his salvation," or else sorrowing, mourning, or cast down. And sometimes, it signifies **conscience**, as where God said of Josiah, "Because thine **heart** was tender." (2 Kings 22:19.)

2. This heart, then, or new nature, is susceptible sometimes of **contraction**, and sometimes, as divinely wrought upon, of expansion. The heart of a child of God, viewed spiritually, is a tender exotic; it is not a hard, rough, native plant, that stands every storm, which no frost nips and no drought burns. It is a foreign plant; for it comes down from heaven, the abode of eternal purity, and dwells in a man's bosom, with all the tenderness of a plant from a warm country. Now these tender feelings Godward are susceptible of contraction. They resemble a hot-house plant. Open the windows, expose it to the chilling blasts of this cold, inclement, northern clime, it shrinks, the tender buds refuse to expand, and the whole plant droops and

dies. But let the windows be closed; let the bright sun pour his warm rays through the glass roof upon it, and the same plant, which so contracted, shrivelled, and withered away under the blast, opens its tender bosom and sends forth its sweet fragrance. So with the new-born soul. There is that which shuts it up, and that which opens it; that which makes it shrink sensitively into so small a compass as scarcely to be seen, and that which draws it forth and causes it to send abroad its heavenly odours.

We will look then, with God's blessing, at some of those things that contract, straiten, and shut up the heart, before we look at the causes and nature of what expands and enlarges it. The new heart of grace is exceedingly tender. And therefore there are many things that will cause this tender heart to shut up and contract itself.

i. One is **guilt**. Whenever guilt lies upon a man's conscience, it shuts him up altogether in his feelings Godward; it narrows, it contracts his heart. There is no room in his soul for divine enjoyments; there are no divine consolations shed abroad, no inshinings of divine light, no incomings of heavenly love.

ii. Another is **unbelief**. O what a narrowing, contracting, and shutting-up power is there when unbelief works powerfully in a man's carnal mind! How the tender plant of faith shrinks into a small compass before its chilling blasts! How unable then are we to receive the truth in the love of it—unable to act upon the perfections of the Lord of life and glory—unable to come forth into the light of His countenance, unable to enjoy any one testimony of His manifested favour; unable to realise a single mark, or testimony of the grace of God being in the heart!

iii. **Darkness of mind** is another thing that contracts and shuts up a man's heart Godward. Many flowers, when night comes on, hide themselves as it were from it; their petals gather up and close over the bosom which, during the day, expanded itself to the warm rays of the sun, defending it from the cold dews and

chilling breaths of the night. So spiritually. How darkness of soul **(and all the Lord's people are brought to mourn and sigh under felt darkness)** contracts the heart! How it closes up every gracious feeling! How it checks every going forth of the soul in the actings of faith, hope, and love! What a veil it spreads over the hidden man of the heart! So that there is nothing good or gracious apparently in exercise.

iv. **Deadness, coldness, torpidity of feeling Godward**, that wretched state in which many of God's people are so continually,—how this shuts up, contracts, and narrows the heart Godward! How unable a man is in this dead, cold, torpid state, to enlarge his own soul! Does he attempt to pray? He has no power to pour forth a single desire. Does he attempt to read? He can scarcely get through half-a-dozen verses without wandering. Does he come to hear? There is scarcely anything that even his outward ear receives. He is unable to fix his thoughts and affections, unable to realize the presence, love, and power of God in his soul. Does he attempt to converse? He has scarcely a word to say, shut up in his feelings toward the family of God, shut up in his feelings toward the Lord Himself.

We must know by painful experience what it is to have these narrow, contracted, shut-up hearts, that we may by the contrast know what it is to have an enlarged, expanded heart. We cannot know the one except by knowing the other. It is this miserable feeling of contraction, which makes us know the difference betwixt these painful sensations and of an enlarged, expanded heart.

II.—This leads me to enter more fully into what it is to have **an enlarged heart**. What is the meaning of the word **enlarged**? The idea is this—the making of **an opening**, so as to give **a wide space**. Thus, the Lord promised to the children of Israel that He would "enlarge their border;" that is. He would give them more ample room; that they should not be confined to a narrow space in which their population should exceed its limits; but that He would so extend their boundary as to give them ample width

for their increasing numbers! Thus the word conveys the idea of an expansion, a removal of all that is narrowed up and contracted, by giving a wider coast. a more ample border.

Now none but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people, can give them spiritually what Jabez prayed for "O that thou wouldest enlarge my coast!" (1 Chron. 4:10.) None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godward, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

Having seen what is meant by an enlarged heart, let us look at **the way** whereby God is pleased to enlarge it.

1. It is by the special operation of God the Spirit upon the soul that there is ever felt any enlargement of heart Godward. For instance; when he **applies any portion of His word with power, that** enlarges the heart; "the entrance of thy word giveth light." The very nature of divine light is to expand the heart into which it comes. As darkness shuts up, so light opens; as darkness freezes, so the word of God sealed with power melts. "He sendeth out his word, and melteth them." (Ps. 147:18.) Truth revealed to the soul has a liberating power. "Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

2. **A sensible realization of the Lord's presence** enlarges the heart. When the Lord is absent, when He hides His lovely face, when He does not draw near to visit and bless, the heart contracts. There is no going out to Him, no coming down of, sweet communications from Him; the heart is shut up in itself, contracted in its own narrow compass. But when the Lord is pleased to favour the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul, so as to receive Him in all His love and grace. To use a figure I have before alluded to, the heart is often like a flower beaten down by the rain, prostrated by the wind, surcharged with moisture, overpowered by the dews of the night, unable to lift itself up, dropping downwards, with all its petals

contracted. But let the sky clear up, let the beams and rays of the glorious orb of day shine forth, the flower, whose petals before were closed, expand themselves to receive the warmth of the mid-day sun. So it is with the God-fearing soul. When the dew of night rests upon it, when darkness covers, when the cold blast beats, when the rain drifts upon it, there is no unfolding, no enlarging. But when the Sun of Righteousness breaks forth, the drooping heart then expands all its bosom to the warm rays, and lifts its bending head, which before had been sunk down by the cold mists.

**3. The unction, savour, and power of the Holy Spirit,** whenever felt in the soul, produce an enlargement of heart. The absence of the dew of the Holy Ghost leaves the heart shut up in its own darkness. But when dew, savour, and power rest upon the soul, they immediately by their secret, penetrating, unctuous influences expand and enlarge the heart; they soften its rigidity; they melt down its harshness. Whereas before it was narrowed and contracted, so as not to open itself to any one divine feeling; no sooner does the softening dew and melting unction of the Holy Ghost touch a man's heart than it enlarges, opens, melts and expands itself before the Lord.

I have hinted that the word "**heart**" in Scripture has more than one signification. Sometimes it means **understanding**, sometimes **conscience**, and sometimes the **affections**. Now whenever the heart is enlarged by the internal operations of God the Spirit, it is enlarged in these senses.

i. The **understanding is enlightened**; we read, "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:45.) And we find David pleading earnestly, "Give me understanding and I shall live." (Ps. 119:144.) It is a great blessing to have an understanding heart; not to be tossed to and fro with every wind of error; not to be caught with every delusion of Satan; but to have a sound mind, established in the truth as it is in Jesus. But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, He opens the understanding; He gives an insight into the

Scriptures of truth; He shews us the mind of Christ; He brings a sweet light into our soul, whereby we read the Scriptures with the same light and in the same spirit by which they were inspired. Thus we enter into the meaning of passages we never knew before; we understand mysteries, which before we were unacquainted with; we feel our minds to open, expand, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus in greater simplicity and godly sincerity.

ii. But there is also **an enlarging of the conscience**. If our heart is contracted, our conscience is not sensitive nor tender. Have you not observed, that when your mind was contracted, your affections toward God cold and dead, that your conscience was not sensitive, that sin was not that burden to you as at other times—that you could play with it, walk upon the borders of it, venture upon forbidden ground, dally with evil, did not feel this and that thing to be inconsistent with the will and word of God, which you felt to be so at other times? Now when your heart has been enlarged, when your soul has felt the power and operations of the Spirit, your conscience becomes more sensitive—as it is said in Isaiah of the human nature of Christ—"of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Sin is more seen to be sin; evil is described in things where we did not see it before; the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" is more deeply felt; the worldliness and carnality of others that did not when we were cold and dead much affect us, now that we are under the inshinings of God the Spirit, become irksome and burdensome. Thus, as the understanding is enlightened to see, the conscience is made more sensitive: as we get a deeper insight into the Person, work, and blood of Jesus, the conscience takes a wider range, and is made more alive and more tender than it was before.

iii. Besides this, **there is an enlargement of the affections**. Our affections will waver in the same way as our understanding and our conscience. When our understanding is dark, and our conscience is hard, then our affections are cold; but when the Lord is pleased by the entrance of His word to give light in our

understanding, and to make the conscience more tender and sensitive, then there is an enlargement also of the affections.

Have you not felt at times as though you had not a single grain of love towards the Lord of life and glory? Has not your heart often been as an adamant, which neither judgment nor mercy, threatening nor love could move? And have you not been, when in that state, unable to love God's truth or His people—yea, rather felt your heart filled with the most fearful hardness, and enmity towards them? But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, these affections, which before had been shut up, expand, breathe themselves forth, and flow out and flow into the Lord of life and glory. There is a clasping Him in the arms of tender affection, and a desire to live and die in His embrace.

4. When God enlarges the heart He enlarges **every grace and fruit of the Spirit.**

i. For instance. There is **faith**. Faith in the soul sometimes sinks down to the very lowest ebb; there seems at times to be scarcely one grain of it left. We have not a single spark of faith in living exercise. The hand which should take hold of Christ's strength is as if paralysed; there is no putting it forth to receive strength out of His gracious fulness. But when God the Spirit, by His secret power and unction enlarges the heart. He enlarges faith: as the Apostle says. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith **groweth** exceedingly." (2 Thess. 1:3.)

This is an enlargement of faith; and just in proportion to the enlargement of faith, do we take in the object of faith. When our faith is very weak, it is like the hand of a little child. Its tiny fingers can only grasp little objects, and can scarcely hold them when grasped. So when faith is small it is unable to take hold of great things; and if it take them, it is unable to hold them. But when the hand of the child is increased to the brawny fingers of a man, then the same hand, which before was unable to grasp little substances is now enabled to lay hold of great burdens. So with

faith in the heart; it is in some as the hand of the child, it is in others as the hand of the adult. The hand in the one case is weak, in the other strong. But the hand of the child differs only in size and strength from the hand of the man. When then the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the fingers of the hand; as we read of Joseph, "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." (Gen. 49:24.) So when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the sinews and muscles of living faith, and presenting Christ before it, enables it firmly to embrace His Person and work, His atoning blood, His justifying righteousness, all that He is and has for God's poor needy family.

ii. So also, when God enlarges the heart, He enlarges **hope**.

Anchors, you know, are made different sizes. You may walk in the Queen's dockyard, and there you may see anchors for a boat, and anchors for a three-decker. Yet all anchors are made in the same way, and are designed for the same purpose; and the little anchor that holds the boat is as useful and as much an anchor as that which holds the three-decker, so spiritually. There is hope in the heart of the babe. But the hope in the heart of a babe is but as the anchor of a boat; yet it holds that babe as firmly as the anchor holds the boat to which it is moored. But as the Lord increases hope, He increases the size of the anchor; and as the vessel and its anchor always bear a proportion to each other, so when He enlarges the size of the anchor He increases the size of the ship. Nay more, as He increases the size of the ship, He increases its burden: for these two are proportionate. He increases a man's trials, perplexities, difficulties, and sorrows. And thus, ship, anchor, and burden are all enlarged together.

Thus, when He enlarges the heart He enlarges a man's hope. It takes a more vigorous hold within the veil; it enters more deeply into the presence of God; it takes a firmer grasp of covenant engagements, electing love, the immutability of God's purposes, and the unchangeable nature of the great eternal I AM. Have you not felt at times your hope sweetly enlarged, so that it almost



attained to the "full assurance of hope?" Scarcely a cloud remained between you and God; and you believed you should ride triumphantly into the haven of bliss and peace? and having these blessed sensations in your heart, you could part with life itself at that moment to fall into the embrace of your God. Now this was a sweet enlargement of your hope.

iii. In the same way when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges its **love** towards Himself and His people. How cold are our hearts too often toward the Lord! and, as a sure and necessary consequence, how cold towards the brethren! Sometimes we seem even to dislike their company; and if we see them coming down one street, we would gladly take another turning in order to avoid them. How averse too from the Lord's ways! How cold in prayer, cold in reading, cold in hearing, and cold in doing anything to the glory of God! How backward, how opposed to every thing holy, heavenly, and spiritual! But when God in mercy enlarges the heart, He also enlarges the affections to love the Lord, to love His word, to love His people, to love all that savours of the precious name of Jesus.

iv. There is also an enlargement **of the mouth**. "**My mouth is enlarged** over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation." (1 Sam. 2:1.) It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." (Prov. 16:23.) When your heart is contracted, when your soul is shut up, when your affections are chilled, there is no enlargement of the mouth, especially if you have any tenderness of conscience. Hypocrites and dead professors can talk about religion at all times. "But a prating fool shall fall" whereas the Lord's people are often shut up. and have not a word to say upon divine things. If there be no sweet enlargement of the heart, there is no enlargement of the mouth; and when there is no life nor feeling in the soul enabling it to speak of the things of God, to speak of them at all is but a burden to them. But when the Lord enlarges the heart, then there is an enlargement of the mouth. The lips speak freely, simply, with

savour, dew, and unction, of the things that God has done and is doing in the soul.

v. There is also an enlargement of **the steps**, as David says. "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." (Ps. 18:36.) This is a strengthening of the feet, so that they are enabled to take longer steps. Sometimes from weariness we stumble, can scarcely drag one limb before another, get so faint and tired that we seem unable to move one step further in the ways of God. But when the Lord enlarges and strengthens a man's feet and steps, He enables him to move more actively forward, and to run more eagerly in the way of His commandments.

III.—This leads me to the second part of the text, the connection of the precept with the power given to perform it: "**I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.**" David was no legalist: he was no Arminian perfectionist; he was not drawing upon the strength and wisdom of the creature, but he was looking up to the Lord to work a certain work upon his soul. When that certain work was wrought upon him, then, and not till then, would he, or could he perform the precept. How often have you seen the precept handled in the way of which the Lord speaks as done by the scribes and Pharisees of old! "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt. 23:4.) Nothing is more easy than to take a bundle of precepts into the pulpit, and tie them round the necks of the Lord's people like an iron collar. But how many of them does the minister perform out of it? Every child and servant of God taught by the Spirit knows that he cannot perform one precept except as the Lord enlarges his heart. This deep sense of our helplessness does not foster sloth, nor lead to licentiousness; for guilt and condemnation are felt from the non-performance of the precepts; and our desire and prayer, when we are in our right mind, are, that the Lord would enlarge our heart, for we love to run the way of His commandments.

What are these commandments? And how do we run in the way of them? I will endeavour to show you.

The Lord in His word has given several commandments; and these commandments we perform when the Lord enlarges our heart. For instance.

1. The Lord commands us **to believe in the name of His dear Son**, as the Apostle John writes, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 3:23.) But we cannot believe in the name of Jesus, any more than we can make a world, until God enables. Believe in Jesus! receive Him by precious faith into my heart! feel the efficacy of His atoning blood in my conscience! bathe my blissful soul in the sweet enjoyment of His dying love! I do this? Before I can, of myself, do this, I must be able to say, "Let there be light, and there shall be light." But when the Lord by His grace and Spirit enlarges the heart; when He drops His dew, unction, and savour into the soul; when He draws near to it, and makes it draw near to Him; when this blessed Sun of Righteousness shines forth through the dark cloud, and warms the cold dark soul, then it can no more not believe in Him than before it could believe in Him. We can no more refuse to believe when faith comes into the heart, than we can believe before faith does come. When God enlarges the heart, and draws forth the affections, then we run in the way of this commandment. We do not believe as a duty; we do not believe as a precept; nor do we believe even as a privilege. But we believe as a blessing. We believe as we see an object with our eyes. We open our eyes, and we cannot but see. So when faith opens its eyes, it sees Jesus; nay, it cannot but see Him.

2. Another commandment is, **to repent**. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." What! repent! Have the heart broken with contrition! feel godly sorrow! experience the flowings forth of grief towards a crucified Lord! Can I do this? It is utterly beyond my reach. I may shed crocodile tears. I may work myself up into

fleshly excitement; I may fall upon my knees, lacerate my back, refuse to eat my meat, and lie upon the ground. But to feel a broken heart, melted down into compunction and godly sorrow—the man that feels what an adamant he carries in his bosom knows well that it is the pure grace of God alone that can give him repentance. I believe the Lord brings all his people to that spot of which Mr. Hart speaks—when the question was not whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether I will do this for the Lord, but whether the Lord in mercy and grace will do this for **me**. The great I sinks then into absolute insignificance; and the creature is brought down to its true spot—abasement and helplessness. But when the Lord enlarges the heart, with this enlargement is there not the grace of penitence? Is there not the tearful eye, the convulsive sob, the inward grief of soul? Is there not real gospel repentance and sorrow felt in a broken and tender heart? I am sure there is this.

3. God commands us **"to love one another."** "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." (John 13:34) Can I of myself feel this love? I may pretend to do so; I may do as one of old did, who came to his brother with a very fraternal salutation, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and then smote him under the fifth rib with a sword. I may say, 'Brother this,' and 'Sister that'—'how I love you!'—'what affection I feel for you!' I might, if God did not keep me honest, play this part of a varnished hypocrite. But I cannot feel, nor create this true love, without a special work of the Spirit on my soul. But when He enlarges the heart, and melts the soul at his footstool, He gives love to Himself: and with that love, He gives love to His people, pure affection: not a feigned, but real desire for their spiritual welfare; not a few canting phrases, but a true feeling of brotherhood; not a mere expression of 'brother' on the lip, but brotherly affection in the heart.

When He enlarges the heart, we do not want to go amongst our brethren to say, 'Brother,' or 'Sister;' we feel them in our very soul; when we are alone with God there is a tender affection

flowing forth out to them of our heart, an embracing of them in our soul. Nay more, we can forgive our enemies when the Lord enlarges our heart. If we can see them in the right spot, where we would see them, we can forgive them, though they have been most unkind to, and cruelly treated us. I have felt, that when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, anger, enmity, prejudice, bitterness, malevolence—those unclean birds all take flight, and simplicity, tenderness, humility and love all live in the soul.

4. The Lord commands us **to deny ourselves, take up the cross, put off the old man, and walk as becometh the gospel.** Can we do this? We cannot. We may affect a popish austerity; we may put on a hypocritical visage; we may look all sanctity and holiness; we may cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, and put an extra coat of whitewash on the sepulchre. But as to that inward crucifixion, that inward deadness to the world, that inward putting off of the old man and putting on of the new, which the word of truth speaks of, we cannot attain to, except God the Spirit work in us both the will and the power. But when God enlarges the heart, then there is no burden in God's ways; His precepts are not grievous; it is a pleasure to walk in them; and there is a sweet gratification in obeying them.

**"I will run the way of thy commandments."** Not lag, nor loiter, not turn aside, not faint, not falter. "I will run" eagerly, actively, as a lover runs to his beloved bride—"I will run" cheerfully the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart.

5. So with **the ordinances,** the ordinances of the Lord's house—baptism and the Lord's supper. These are not grievous; they are not burdensome, when the Lord enlarges the heart. When we are narrowed up, shut up, contracted, these ordinances of the Lord's house are burdensome to us. We hate the very sight of the table spread with the emblems; we have the most horrible feelings of rebellion against the ordinance of baptism; yea, we feel every infernal sensation that Satan can stir up in our minds. But when the Lord enlarges our heart, there is no burden then; whatever

be the precept, whatever be the ordinances, we can run in that way with cheerfulness, freedom and liberty.

6. So with respect to every **precept of the gospel**. whatever it be, we can run in the way of God's commandments when He enlarges our heart. There is no running in any other way. All other service is legality; all other obedience is but the froth and spawn of free-will, nothing but the mere natural obedience of the creature, not the spiritual obedience of the child of God. But let us look at this. Is it our happiness, is it our pleasure when we cannot run the way of God's commands? Do we lay the inability upon God, or pack it upon the old man? and say, It does not matter, I cannot obey them: but when God gives me the power, I shall. This is the very essence of antinomianism, the very spawn of licentiousness, the worst abuse of gospel grace.

The Christian is in one of these two spots for the most part; sometimes shut up, contracted, cold, dead, torpid. But this is his grief and misery. In this state of feeling, he cannot run the way of God's commandments. But is he pleased with being a loiterer? No: it is his grief and trouble that he cannot run in the way of God's commandments. This evidences the work of God the Spirit upon him; he would do it, but he cannot—"the good that he would, he does not." But it is **the will** being on the side of God which proves the reality of grace; it is the heart and conscience being enlisted on the side of the Lord that proves God is at work on his soul.

On the other hand, the children of God are sometimes in this state. Their hearts are enlarged, their souls strengthened, and their feet are enabled to run the race that is set before them. This is their joy, their happiness, and their delight.

Now can you trace out these two things in your conscience? What is the use of my standing here to speak these things? Is it merely to amuse you? Is there not something deeper wanted than that? You have a soul to be saved or damned; you are a child of God or not; the grace of God is in your heart, or it is not; you are on the

broad road to hell, or on the narrow road to heaven. Have you no concern about it? What! stand upon the brink of eternity, and have no anxiety respecting it! If you are a child of God, you will have this deep concern at times in your bosom.

Can you trace out in your soul the distinct existence of the two things I have endeavoured to handle? Do you know what it is to be shut up, cold, dead, and stupid? Is this your grief and burden? You say, it is. It is a good thing if you can say so with an honest heart. Look at the converse. Did you ever know what it was to have an enlarged heart? Did mercy, grace, peace, blood, and salvation ever cast out these grievous enemies of your soul? If so, it enlarged your coasts, it strengthened your borders. Did you ever experience what is said of the church, that she shall "fear" **(rather flutter, or palpitate)** "and be enlarged?"

Did your soul ever experience the unutterable sensations of divine enlargement? When this came into your heart, did it produce sensible expansion Godward, enlargement of understanding, conscience, and affections; so that you walked at liberty, and had sweet testimonies that God was your God? And how do you feel as to the precepts of God's word? Are they sometimes burdensome? Are they sometimes pleasant and delightful? They will be burdensome when we are shut up; and they will be delightful when we are enlarged. When shut up, nothing so difficult; when enlarged, nothing so easy. When shut up, nothing so painful; when enlarged, nothing so pleasing. When shut up, afraid to look at them; when enlarged, able to enter into their length, breadth, and meaning. When shut up, seeing no beauty in them, and only viewing them as a task-master; when enlarged, contemplating them as the will and word of a kind parent, and desiring to obey them, because God has so graciously and plainly revealed them. Thus, by these distinct ebbings and flowings, these distinct sensations in your conscience—by tracing out the work of the Spirit therein, we may at times come to some decision whether God the Spirit has begun and is carrying on the work of grace in our conscience, or whether we are dead in an empty profession.

The Lord clear up the difficulty (where it is felt to be a difficulty) in the hearts of His trembling ones. The Lord decide the doubtful case; and shew them, that their spot is the spot of God's children—that they are walking in the footsteps of the flock—that their God is with them, and will be with them, to lead them in a right way, and to bring them to "a city of habitation."



## **THE DIVINE GIVER OF GRACE AND GLORY**

Preached at Oakham, Rutland, on Lord's Day Afternoon, July 9th, 1854

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." Psalm 84:11, 12

What a pure language, as recorded in the Scriptures, the saints of God spoke in days of old! Would we know the true language of Canaan, it is to their words that we must listen. But in what mainly consists the purity of the language which thus fell from their lips, and is preserved by the pen of the Holy Ghost in the Word of truth? In this—that they give all the glory of their salvation to God; that they ascribe no strength, wisdom, or righteousness to the creature; but yield the whole praise to the divine Creator, that unchanging and unchangeable Benefactor, that merciful Father of lights from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift, both in providence and grace. Nor is this confined merely to the actual words of prayer and praise, declaration or assertion, uttered by the saints of old. It pervades the whole of the sacred volume; and it is mainly this ascription of the whole glory to the Lord which has impregnated the Word of truth with such inexpressible sweetness and savour. There God is exalted on high as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all His works in creation, providence, and grace. His sovereignty, wisdom, and power; His majestic rule, government, and authority; His eternal righteousness, and yet infinite love, mercy and compassion, are all there set forth as ordering and arranging all human events, and subordinating every circumstance to His own glory. And as all this is seen in harmonious connection with the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer's name distils from the sacred page like ointment poured forth. In reading, therefore, the Word of God, we are not offended or stumbled, nor is our mind in any way

pained, as is so often the case in human writings, by declarations express or implied of the dignity of man or the worth of the creature. The value of creature attainments in piety and religion, the surpassing merit of alms deeds and benevolence, of bowings and crossings, of mumbled prayers and sprinkled water, have no place in the Book of God. His heavenly fingers have there written down the true character of man, as under every phase alike sinful and vile—a worm of earth, a child of dust, fallen, guilty, weak, and miserable. And the same heavenly pen has placed the Lord also in His right position—God over all, blessed for ever; the Giver of all good; the Ruler of all men and all events; the Source of all grace and of all glory. If we have not eyes to see, if we have not hearts to feel this pervading element of the Scriptures of truth, we do not understand them by the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and the Word of God is not to us life and spirit, but a mere dead letter, without influence, efficacy, or power.

I need not take up time, or occupy your attention this afternoon, by recapitulating what I said in the morning as to the connection of these verses with the preceding portion of the psalm. I endeavoured then, to the best of my ability, to show how the Lord God was "a sun and a shield." I will now, then, with His blessing, proceed to the remaining portion of our text, which consists of three clauses, containing as many gracious declarations.

I. That the Lord is the Giver of grace and glory.

II. That He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.

III. That blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and in Him alone.

I. "The Lord will give grace and glory."

i. As it is the appointed office, nay more, the peculiar glory of the sun to shine, and that out of his inexhaustible fulness, so that the more he shines the more glorious he is, so it is the glory of God

to give out of the infinite fulness of His goodness and love; and the more He gives, the more is He glorified thereby. We sometimes find in man what I may perhaps call a sparkle of this divine nature; for we read that the Lord does make His people "partakers of the divine nature," that is, not those essential attributes of Deity, which are incommunicable to the creature, but that image of God "in righteousness and true holiness" after which the new man is created. There are those who had they the largest fortune, would feel greater pleasure in giving it away, than others have in spending it or adding to the accumulated heap. It is a sweet trait wherever seen, though unhappily a rare one. But I once knew a gentleman who was blessed with this disposition, and who was said to have had in his lifetime three fortunes. One he had lost in business; another he had given away; and a third he had when I knew him. But how limited, how scanty is the utmost, the most enlarged benevolence of man! Lovely as is the sight of this reflection of the divine nature, measured by the kindness of God it is but a beam in the water compared with the fulness of the sun. Exalted, then, as He is above all human praise, the Lord loves to give. As He "loveth a cheerful giver," so is He in Himself, beyond all comparison and conception, that which He loves to see in the partakers of His grace; and thus He gives to His people "every good and perfect gift" as bountifully and ungrudgingly as the sun gives light and heat.

If we had a spiritual view of, and a living, actual, influential faith in this part of the character of God, how it would enlarge our narrow hearts; how we should come to His gracious footstool as to that of a free and bounteous Benefactor, saying before Him in the simplicity of a little child, "Lord, I am poor, enrich me; Lord, I am hungry, feed me; Lord, I am naked, clothe me; Lord, I am sinful, forgive me; Lord, I am helpless, take pity and compassion upon me; Lord, I am weak and wandering, ever stumbling and falling—hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe; I have nothing, and am nothing; give me what Thou seest good, and make me what Thou wouldest have me to be." In this simple, childlike, affectionate way, the saints of God prayed of old; and were we

favoured with the same filial confidence, mingled with godly fear, we should draw out of the Lord's heart that which is in the Lord's heart to bestow. James gives us good counsel in this important matter: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

ii. But having thus far dwelt generally on the character of God as plenteous in mercy and goodness, let us come a little more closely to particulars, for it is in the free and bounteous bestowal of peculiar favours and mercies that His grace shines forth with such distinguished lustre. There are two things mentioned which it is said the Lord will specially give. These are "grace and glory." But let me remark, by the way, that there is to my mind something very sweet in the mode of expression here employed—"He will give." It does not say, "He doth give," or "hath given;" though both are true; but, He "will give;" as if nothing could restrain Him from giving; as if giving were so a part of Himself, such an eminent attribute of Deity, that as long as He is God He will give. When He gives, then, it is of "His royal bounty," of which that "largeness of heart as the sand on the sea-shore," given to Solomon, was but a faint reflection. Thus, whatever favours He may have already given to those who fear His name, He will still continue to give them more and more, because He can do no other to the objects of His bounty. In all that he has already given them there has been no exhaustion; and in all that he will for the future give them there will be no deficiency. Like the sun, the emblem by which He has chosen to represent Himself, the more he gives, the more He has to give. What is the brightest feature in earthly love, that relic of Paradise? That the more it gives, the more it has to give. The very nature, the essential characteristic of love is—to be an ever gushing fountain, flowing out unceasingly towards its object; and the more love there is in the heart, the more it flows out inexhaustibly and ungrudgingly, only asking for a similar return. To show kindness to the object of its affections is no task for love. Its self-rewarding delight is to communicate of itself, and to kindle in the bosom of the person beloved the same flame that burns in its

own. So God, in giving grace to the objects of His eternal love, is never weary of giving; for love flows out of Him as unceasingly as light and heat flow out of the glorious orb of day.

iii. But what are we to understand here and elsewhere by the expression "grace," which, as the fruit of His eternal love, He is here said especially to give? "Grace" means, literally, "favour;" and, as expressive of the love and mercy of God, signifies His pure, unmixed, unmerited favour. This entire absence of merit in the persons favoured is essential to the very nature of divine grace; for, as flowing from the bosom of God, it is of that pure and heavenly nature, that could you (which mercifully no man can do) but infuse into it any the least particle of merit, you would by that infusion destroy it. A few grains of arsenic would convert the most nutritious food into the most deadly poison; and there are chemical liquids of such a nature, that were you to put a few drops of another liquid into them, it would destroy their character altogether, and make them a completely different substance. So, could you by any means infuse into divine grace any creature merit and human worthiness, the infusion of two or three drops of these earthly substances would not only pollute, I might rather say poison, grace, but would change its very nature. It is thus the apostle argues concerning grace and works—"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Irrespectively, then, of all human merit or worth, the Lord giveth grace. But does the expression mean that God gives grace to everybody? Why, to believe so would be opposed to the very evidence of our own senses. Of this we have daily, hourly proofs. Hundreds and thousands live and die, almost before our eyes, without grace. Without going any further than this solemn fact, which meets us at every turn, is not that a sufficient proof that God does not bestow His grace upon all? For, were His grace given to all, it would in that case necessarily follow that all would and must be saved. But leaving out the case of the profane, we may ask another question as regards the professing. Are not many of these enemies to the very doctrine of free, distinguishing grace? How, then, can those be partakers of

grace who fight with such bitter and unrelenting enmity against it? It is self-evident that God does not give His grace to them; for, were they blessed with its possession and enjoyment, they would not, could not, fight against it or despise it; but would love it, delight in it, and manifest their possession of it in their life, conduct, and conversation. We have thus, in addition to the Word of truth, the evidence of our own spiritual senses that God does not bestow His grace upon all. No; He only gives it to the objects of His eternal favour and choice; and upon those He bestows it without reservation, let, or hindrance, without stint or grudging.

iv. But we may now examine more particularly the different branches of the grace which He bestows upon them. A sense of His favour made experimentally known; a manifestation of pardon through atoning blood; a revelation of His dear Son to the soul in His glorious Person—Immanuel, God with us; in a word, all that is comprehended in that expressive sentence: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," may be considered as included in the grace that God gives. But we shall chiefly dwell upon what are usually called the graces of the blessed Spirit.

1. The first grace, in this sense, which He gives, is grace to *believe*. Faith, according to His own inspired declaration, is "the gift of God." And this thoroughly coincides with the experience of all the living family. We cannot believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to any purpose, to any help or hope, salvation or deliverance, comfort or consolation, except as God Himself, by His blessed Spirit, raises up faith in our hearts. But you say, perhaps, that you do believe in Jesus Christ. Well, if you do believe in Jesus Christ, happy are you. It is only by grace, I am sure you are thoroughly convinced, that anyone can savingly believe in His Person, blood, and righteousness. But remember this—that to believe in Jesus Christ is not a mere notion floating in the head, but a solid reality experienced in the soul; and that there are certain fruits which ever attend upon a living faith in the Son of God. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have peace with God; and your heart is purified from the love of the world. If you believe in

Jesus Christ, you have power with God, and have answers to prayer; if you believe in Jesus Christ, the burden of sin and guilt is taken off your conscience, and the love of God flows into your soul. A notional, nominal faith in Jesus is in the power of anybody; but to believe in Him to the saving of the soul, to present deliverance and future bliss, is no act of the creature, but is produced solely by the power of God; and it is the fruit of grace and grace alone.

2. *Hope*, again, is another fruit of the grace which the Lord gives; for we cannot hope in His mercy, to any real comfort and encouragement, except through grace. It is, therefore, called in the Word of God, "a good hope through grace," grace being its only original fountain, and grace its only continuing stream. Many will tell you that they have a hope in the mercy of God; but, examined by the Word of truth, and the experience of the saints, what sort of a hope would this, for the most part, be found to be? Will it stand the trying hour? Will it endure when heart and flesh fail? Will it ride out the storms of indignation, which will burst upon the head of the impenitent and unbelieving, or face the inflexible justice of an angry God? A good hope through grace will stand every storm, and live at last; but that good hope through grace is the gift of God. It is therefore called by the apostle "an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and entering into that within the veil;" and he says of it that "it maketh not ashamed," the reason being that it flows out of "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:5).

3. *To love the Lord*, His ways, people, cause, and truth, especially Himself, so as to feel the flowings forth of affection towards the Person of Immanuel, and to cleave to Him with purpose of heart, is also a gift of God's grace. If we know anything of ourselves, and of our natural helplessness to any good word or work, we shall surely feel that it is only by the communications of His love to us that we can love Jesus, or the people of Jesus, or the way, Word, cause, and honour of Jesus. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." There is the source. "We love Him because He first loved us." There is the stream.

It is grace, then, and grace alone, that produces these divine affections in the soul; for "love is of God," He being its eternal fountain; for "God is love," and "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

4. *Repentance* also unto life, that godly sorrow for sin "which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of," is a special gift of God; for no man ever truly repented of his sins except by grace. Satan may persuade men that they can repent whenever they please; but spiritual repentance, as the apostle declares, is the express gift of an exalted Jesus—"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). A hard heart can never melt itself into contrition and godly sorrow for sin. A frozen heart can never dissolve itself into that meek penitence of spirit, that intense self-loathing and self-abhorrence, that holy mourning over a suffering Man of sorrows, that thorough forsaking of all evil, that godly tenderness of conscience, that thirsting after pardon and the blood of sprinkling, without which repentance is but a notion and a name. To produce this divine repentance, we are thoroughly helpless and powerless; nay, even when we have backslidden from the Lord, we cannot bring a sense of guilt upon the conscience; nor can we create in our souls any such spiritual views of a bleeding Jesus as shall melt us into holy sympathy and godly mourning with Him in the garden and on the cross.

5. *Resignation*, also, to the will of God; submission to His righteous dealings in providence and grace, a yielding up of body and soul, family and substance, to do with them and us as it seemeth to Him good, is His own gift, and springs wholly of His grace. We may talk of being resigned to God's will, and of submitting to all His righteous dispensations. Such talk, and it is often but talk, is easy enough for those who know nothing of the waywardness and rebellion of the heart of man; and such talk will do very well when God's will and ours are not opposed, and all things about us and within us smile like the sun upon the summer sea. But how is it with us when the Lord crosses our inclinations



in our nearest and dearest interests; when His knife cuts into our flesh sharp and deep? Can we then humble ourselves into the dust, and say, with meek, holy resignation, "Thy will be done?" We may perhaps attempt to use the words from the mere impulse of conscience, or as a Christian duty; but the feeling of quiet resignation, the humble lying before the throne, so as to kiss the rod—can we produce this? Whenever produced, it is the pure gift of God's grace.

6. *Humility*, again, that comely robe with which the Lord clothes His people, is not this also a gift of God's grace; and a most blessed gift, for it throws beauty over all the others?

7. Had I time to enter into them, I might dwell upon other gifts of God's grace, as *simplicity* and godly sincerity, *tenderness* of conscience, *filial fear*, a *desire* to please Him, and a dread to offend Him, and all those outward fruits and good works which are such sweet evidences of grace, and only grow on the gospel tree. What do we not owe to grace? Without grace, we are and have nothing; with grace, we are and have everything worth being and having. Without grace, we are wretches in the worst sense of the word, clothed with filthy garments as Joshua the High Priest when he stood before the angel. With grace, we possess all things, and are clothed with the perfect robe of Christ's righteousness. O the difference between him who possesses grace and him who possesses it not! In the eyes of most they may seem now to differ but little; but O! with what different eyes God views them! The partaker of grace may be very poor in outward circumstances, very tried in mind, cast down in soul, burdened in conscience; often writing bitter things against himself; but O! how highly favoured, though he live in a garret or die in a ditch. No language framed by the mind, or uttered by the lips of man, can describe a thousandth part of the real blessedness of those to whom the Lord has given grace. And all that they have received is but a pledge of more; for He who has given them what they already have, will surely go on to give them still; for we read, "He giveth more grace." All their sins, sorrows, infirmities, hardness of heart, darkness of mind,

misgivings, doubts, fears, trials, exercises, and temptations, will and can no more hinder the incoming of God's grace, than the darkness of the night hinders the rising of the sun. His grace will subdue their sins, deliver them out of every temptation, and preserve them to His heavenly kingdom, where grace is swallowed up in glory.

v. And this leads us to the point that He not only gives "grace," but "glory."

These two are necessarily connected with and flow out of each other; for wherever the Lord gives grace, He in and with that grace gives glory. We therefore read, "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Thus He has already made them, even while on earth, partakers of His glory; and this by making them partakers of His grace; for as in the bud is the bloom, and in the bloom the fruit, so in budding grace is blooming glory—grace being but glory begun, and glory being but grace finished.

But what is "glory?" Viewed as future—it is full consummation, it is to be with Jesus in realms of eternal bliss, where tears are wiped off all faces; it is to see Him as He is; to be conformed to His glorious likeness; to be delivered from all sin and sorrow; to be perfectly free from all temptations, trials, burdens, and exercises, to dwell for ever in that happy land, "the inhabitants of which shall not say, I am sick:" where a weary body, a burdened conscience, a troubled heart, a faint and weary mind, are utterly and for ever unknown. In a word, it is to have a glorified body reunited to a glorified soul, and for both to be as full of happiness and holiness, bliss and blessedness, as an immortal spirit can hold and an immortal frame can endure, drinking in to the full, with unutterable satisfaction but without satiety, the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. But no human heart can conceive nor human tongue unfold in what the nature and fulness of this glory consist; 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" (1 Cor. 2:9). Yet all this glory will the Lord give to those upon whom He has already bestowed His grace. He gives them grace now, to bring them through this wilderness world, this vale of tears, this scene of temptation, sin, and sorrow; and when He lands them on that happy shore, He gives them there the fulness of His glory. Then will be fully accomplished the Redeemer's prayer and will—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Their right and title to the enjoyment of this predestinated inheritance are securely lodged in the hands of their covenant Head; and He living at God's right hand to save them to the uttermost, all their temptations, enemies, sins, and sorrows can never hinder them from reaching the shore on which God has decreed they shall safely land. Satan may spread a thousand snares to entangle their feet; not a day or scarcely an hour may pass that they are not burdened with indwelling sin; a myriad of lusts may start up in arms from the depths of their carnal mind; and many a pang of guilt and thrill of despair may seem at times wholly to cut them off from eternal life. But yet, where the Lord has given grace He will give glory; for when He gives grace with the left hand, He gives glory with the right; yea, we may say that with both hands He gives at once both grace and glory; for as grace and glory flow out of the same loving heart, and are given by the same loving God, they may be said to be given by both hands at one and the same time. A portion or foretaste of this glory is given on earth in every discovery of the glory of Christ; as the Lord speaks, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them"—already given them; and this He did when "He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed on Him."

II. But we advance to still further discoveries of the Lord's goodness. It is therefore added, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." There may be some here, as there are many in God's suffering Church below, who seem unable to rise to the full experience and enjoyment of what we

have been endeavouring to unfold. They can believe that for others there is grace in present possession, and glory in future enjoyment; but they cannot believe for themselves that they now partake of the one, or shall hereafter enjoy the other. They are well persuaded that the Lord will give grace and glory to those who are His; but when they look at themselves, and at what is continually felt or feared in their own bosom—when they feel how cold and lifeless they are from day to day, how barren, worthless, unfruitful, and unprofitable—they are often tempted to cry out, "Can ever God dwell here? Can there be any grace, even a spark, in a heart like mine?" It would almost seem, then, as if the Lord, speaking by His servant David, here casts upon them a loving look, and penned these words for their special comfort: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." There are those who walk uprightly, very uprightly, in the fear of God, and yet have little comfortable or abiding evidence that they are at present partakers of God's grace, or will be hereafter sharers of Christ's glory. But this one evidence they certainly do possess, though they can take no present comfort from it, that they walk uprightly before God and man. Let no one, however deeply experienced or highly favoured, despise this evidence of grace in others; and you who walk uprightly from a living principle of godly fear have here a marked testimony from the Lord Himself that He has a special regard for you.

i. But what is it "to walk uprightly?" O, here is the grand difficulty in religion. We may talk, we may preach, we may hear, we may seem to believe; but it is when we come to act, to walk, and to carry out into daily and hourly practice what we profess, that the main difficulty is felt and found. "The soul of religion," says Bunyan, "is the practical part;" and it is when we come to this "practical part" that the daily, hourly cross commences. The walk, the conversation, the daily, hourly conduct is, after all, the main difficulty, as it is the all-important fruit of a Christian profession. To walk day after day, under all circumstances, and amidst all the varied temptations that beset us, uprightly, tenderly, and sincerely in the fear of God; to feel continually that heart, lip, and life are all open before His all-penetrating eye; to do the things

which He approves, and to flee from the things which He abhors— O, this in religion is the steep hill which it is such a struggle to climb. We can talk fast enough, but O, to walk in the strait and narrow path; to be a Christian outwardly as well as inwardly, before God and man, before the church and the world; and in all points to speak and act with undeviating consistency with our profession, this is what nature never has done, and what nature never can do. In thus acting, as much as in believing, do we need God's power and grace to work in and be made manifest in us.

ii. But let us look a little more closely at what it is "to walk uprightly."

1. Viewed as to our relation with God, one part of upright walking is to confess our sins before Him; to tell Him all our slips, wanderings, backslidings, and departings; in a word, whatever we feel condemned for and guilty of in the court of conscience, to make a clean breast of it. Upright walking before God is not to make the best of ourselves, but to make the worst of ourselves; yea, to make ourselves out as black as we feel in the worst of times, under the keenest feelings and most dismal sensations. To confess our sins with all their aggravations is to make straight paths for our feet; and without it there is no walking uprightly.

2. Another branch of walking uprightly before God, as He bade Abraham, when He said to him, "I am the Almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect (marg., "upright")—is to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus. This is to do as the wise man urges, "Let thine eyes look right on, and thy eyelids straight before." And as the apostle speaks, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." He that looks unto Jesus so far walks uprightly, as he is not fixing his eyes on his own righteousness, but turns them away from self to look unto Him that sitteth at the right hand of God. In a similar way that soul may truly be said to walk uprightly who walks onward boldly and firmly, without even turning to the right hand or the left, in the strait and narrow path, hanging upon the strength of Christ, and of Him alone.

3. He, too, may be said to walk uprightly before God who labours to be conformed in heart, lip, and life, to the precepts of the gospel; to take them for his rule and guide; to seek to do those things which the precept enforces, and flee from those things which the precept forbids.

4. But there is also a walking uprightly before men; and he who is upright and honest in all his dealings; who is perfectly square in all his daily transactions in business; who would not, for any consideration, break his word or do anything unbecoming the profession that he makes, and this not from legality and self-righteousness, or mere natural integrity, but from a principle of godly fear, is one who walks uprightly.

5. To this we may add, that he who walks before the church with tenderness of conscience, with simplicity and godly sincerity, speaking only as his own of the things which God has done for his soul—is one who walks uprightly.

Now, many can come in with this description of a partaker of grace who cannot and do not rise to the sweet enjoyment of manifested mercy, or to a deliverance from guilt and bondage. Promises applied with power, and the consolations of God in the soul, are things which they seem to fall short of. These sure testimonies are too high for them to reach unto. They desire them most earnestly, for they feel their deep need of them, and know, in some measure, how sweet they are from what little they have tasted of them themselves, and what they observe of their savour and effects in others, and as described in the Word of God. But through doubt and fear, the unbelief and abounding evils of their heart, they are kept on short commons, and as yet are not admitted to feed in the green pastures and lie down beside the still waters of manifested love. Yet they walk uprightly, most uprightly; nay, they often, by their godly walk and conversation, put to shame those who have a deeper experience, and can speak more fully and clearly of the delivering mercy of God. There are some who are thought and called "weaklings" in the professing church, who, by their self-denying, consistent life,

by their manifest tenderness of conscience, strictness of walk, and watchful attention to their words and ways, put to shame, or at least ought to do so, those who have a clearer experience both of law and gospel.

iii. Upon those, then, that thus walk uprightly, the Lord looks down with pleasure and approbation; for so to walk is as much of His grace as if they were favoured with great manifestations. Let not, then, those who have had great manifestations despise those who have not been so highly favoured, if they see them walk uprightly; but let them rather admire their Christian walk and conversation, the fear of God so evidently dwelling in their heart, their tender conscience, humble lips, and circumspect lives. But, on the other hand, let those who walk uprightly place no dependence upon their good conduct and upright walk; nor let them shoot their arrows against those who are blessed with a deeper experience, because, perhaps, they do not walk so circumspectly as they. Let not the weak judge the strong, nor the strong despise the weak. They are both redeemed by the same precious blood, taught by the same Spirit, sanctified by the same grace, children of the same God, and heirs of the same glory. You who are blessed with a deeper experience, if you should be left to slip and stumble, may have reason to envy those who walk uprightly. And you who walk uprightly need not envy those who have been more blest than yourself, if you see in them the want of that circumspection with which God has blest you, for most certainly, next to being saved and being blessed with a knowledge of it, the greatest mercy which God can bestow upon a child of His is to enable him to walk uprightly.

iv. But look at the fulness of the promise given to such: "*No good thing* will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." How much is contained in the expression, "No good thing!" In the very way in which the promise is couched, there is, to my mind, something very sweet. You may be tempted sometimes to say, "The Lord withholds from me everything which seems to me to be good; the sweet shinings in of His countenance; the manifestations of His favour: the sealing application of His blood and love, all are

withheld; and for want of these blessings, I seem to be and have nothing." To meet this desponding feeling, the Lord says, "I will withhold no good thing from you that walk uprightly." Now, consider and weigh over what you think are good things, and such good things as the Lord only can bestow. "O," say you, "I should call it a good thing to be perfectly sure of my interest in Christ." Well, the Lord will not withhold that good thing from you. "I should call it a good thing to have a sweet promise applied to my soul by the Lord's own mouth." Well, if you walk uprightly, the Lord will not withhold that good thing from you. "I should call it a good thing to have my conscience sprinkled with atoning blood." The Lord will not withhold that good thing from you, if you walk uprightly. "I should count it," say you, "a good thing to have a sweet manifestation of the Saviour to my soul, and be favoured with a blessed sense of His presence and dying love." The Lord will not withhold that good thing from you who by His grace walk uprightly. And so I might travel through all the good things God has to give, and all that the heart of man can receive, and then I should keep within the limits of the promise in my text, and fall short, very short, of exhausting its fulness. For the positive declaration of God is, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Nor let us forget that this promise includes favours in providence as well as in grace. No good thing, then, in providence, as well as no good thing in grace, shall you ever want; everything that is really good for you, measured, however, by God's wisdom, and not by your lusts, whatever the Lord sees thus good in providence will He bestow upon you. It is not in His heart to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly, whose conscience is tender, in whose heart the fear of God is, and whose life is circumspect according to the precepts of His gospel.

Do we not see this promise continually fulfilled in the experience of God's family? Many have gone through life downcast and troubled, scarcely able to say anything for themselves, and hardly daring to indulge themselves with a hope of getting to heaven at last; yet they have walked uprightly, most uprightly, and when they have come to die the Lord has withheld no good thing from



them. He has then blessed their souls, even to overflowing, with a sense of His mercy and love, and they can then say, what perhaps they could never say fully before, that no good thing has He withheld from them, for they have now the sweet enjoyment of them all.

III. The Psalmist then closes the whole of this expressive and beautiful Psalm with a burst of praise: "O Lord of hosts," he cries, as if his heart was so full that he could only give vent to it by pouring it forth in admiring, adoring words, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." It is as though he looked up into heaven, and saw the Lord surrounded by myriads of glorified spirits made perfect, hosts of redeemed saints, more than the stars of the sky for multitude. And viewing how all these had safely reached that glorified shore, he felt the blessedness of their having trusted in the Lord, and in the Lord alone. "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

1. But what is it to trust in God? This, too, is wholly of His grace. Before we can trust in God, we must know Him. You cautious tradesmen, who are so very careful not to lose a shilling of your money, do you trust people whom you do not know? You must have confidence in a man before you can trust him. You want to know his character before you can give him credit in your books. So, how can anyone trust in God until he has some confidence in Him, till he has some acquaintance with His character?

2. Trust in God also implies total self-renunciation. The moment that I trust in myself, I cease to trust in God. The moment I take any portion of my confidence away from the Lord and put a grain of it in myself, that moment I take away all my trust in God. My trust in God must be all, or nothing. It must be unreserved and complete, or else it is false and delusive. Is not the Lord worthy to be trusted? And if He is worthy to be trusted at all, is He not worthy to be trusted with all? What real confidence could a man have in the wife of his bosom if he could trust her with one key, but not with all? Is that full confidence? So, if we can trust God for one thing and not for all, it shows that we have no real trust

in Him. A man has no real trust in his wife who cannot give her all the keys. A man has no real trust in God who cannot give Him all his heart, and put everything into His hand—family, property, body, and soul. The province and work of true faith is to put everything into the hands of God, keeping back no part of the price. It is this secret reserve that God hates; there is hypocrisy on the very face of it. Trust in God for nothing, or trust in Him for all. God will not take a divided heart. Give Him all, or none. And is He not worthy of it? Has He ever disappointed you whenever you have really put your trust in Him? Does He not say, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say My people, We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee?" (Jer. 2:32).

But David saw how few there were that with all their hearts did trust in God. This feeling seems to have made him say, "Blessed is *the man*," that peculiar man, that rare individual, "that trusteth in Thee!" The blessing of God rests upon that happy, that highly-favoured man. He is blessed for time and for eternity. He has the blessing of God even now in his soul. O! how rare it is for us to be in that sweet, blessed frame when we can put our trust wholly in God; trust Him for life and death; trust Him for all things, past, present, and to come. Yet, without a measure of this faith, there is no solid peace, no real and abiding rest. And to this you must sooner or later come; for you cannot carry your own burdens without their breaking your back. But when you can cast your burden on the Lord, then you will surely find sweet relief.

May we not, then, join heart and voice with David, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee?" Such a one will never be disappointed. The Lord will hear his prayer, the Lord will bless his soul, will be with him in life, support him in death, and take him to be with Him in eternity.

## Divine Husbandry

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, August 14, 1845

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness." Psalm 45:9, 10, 11

The text contains a very sweet description of the way in which God fertilizes the earth, and causes it to produce food for the use of man. But I should fall very far short of the mind of the blessed Spirit here, if I limited the meaning of the words merely to the natural productions of the earth, and to the way in which God causes those productions to spring forth. There is doubtless an experimental meaning in the words, a vein of spiritual truth couched beneath the figure. I always have been, and always hope to be, an enemy to what I may call "a false spiritualization" of God's word; for as there is a true spiritualization, there is also a false one. But if we observe three rules of interpretation, I think that a false spiritualization will not easily be put on any text. *First*, the spiritual interpretation must be strictly based upon, and closely coincide with, the *literal* one. *Secondly*, the interpretation must be in every point agreeable to the analogy of faith, and consistent with the teachings of the Spirit in the hearts of God's children. *Thirdly*, there must be a savour, more or less, connected with, and flowing forth from it into the heart of the preacher, and thence into the heart also of the hearer. I hope, in endeavouring to explain the mind and meaning of the Spirit here, I may not fail in any one of these three rules; in other words, that my interpretation may be *true*, may be *consistent*, and may be *experimental*. The Lord only, I know, can give the blessing.

In speaking upon these words, I shall make no formal divisions; but viewing the text as an experimental description of the work of God upon the soul, I shall take the points as they lie before me, beginning with the first process, and going on to the consummation. But we must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit, in speaking here of the work of grace upon the hearts of God's children, follows out that mode of cultivation which is adopted in, and is suitable to, Eastern countries. We must discard from our minds the system of agriculture in this country, and keep before us the mode pursued in the East, in order to see the analogy between the process described in the text, and the work of grace upon the hearts of God's people.

I.—The first point to which I would call your attention is, the *subject* of the operations, set forth in the text under the word *earth*—"Thou visitest the *earth*." The earth naturally is but the mere soil in which all its productions grow; and in itself is utterly unable to produce anything suitable for the food of man, except it undergo special operation. The dull, brutish earth can never without cultivation produce out of its bosom food for the use of man. So it is with respect to man's heart by nature; it is as incapable of producing anything gracious, heavenly, spiritual, and acceptable to God, as the natural earth is unable spontaneously to bring forth those fruits and crops which are for man's sustenance.

The earth is in more than one Scripture set forth as typical of the soul of man. For instance: "Ye are God's husbandry;" that is, your soul stands in the same relation to God the spiritual husbandman, as the earth stands in relation to the natural cultivator. Again: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Has the earth ears to hear? Does God address himself to the natural soil? No; he speaks to the inhabitants of the earth—to man, whose body he formed out of the dust of the ground. So that we have Scriptural warrant to interpret the word "earth" as typical of the soul of man.

1. But what is the first word in the text, introducing the whole

process, so to speak, of divine agriculture? "Thou *visitest* the earth." The earth, man's soul by nature, lies waste and void, overrun with briars, thorns, and thistles, and naturally incapable of striking forth spiritual culture. "Thou visitest the earth;" 'thou lookest upon it in its desert state; thou beholdest it utterly devoid of life; thou seest what it is naturally, incapable of producing anything spiritually good.'

2. But God does not merely visit the earth with his eye, so as to *mark it out* for future culture, but he also visits it by the *communication* of his precious grace. He visits the soul by regenerating it through the operation of the Holy Ghost; by making it a partaker of a new and heavenly nature. And the first touch of the divine finger upon the conscience, the first entrance of spiritual light, the first communication of heavenly life, is summed up in the expression, "Thou visitest." What a gracious expression it is! Here is the earth, utterly unable to raise up in itself anything acceptable to God. But in mercy he visits it, looks down from the height of his sanctuary upon the elect soul, dead in sin; and in his own mercy and grace, unasked for (for the Lord is unsought when the earth bears nothing but that which is fit for the fire), he visits the soul with the light and life of the Spirit.

II.—But the text goes on to say, "*Thou visitest the earth, and watered it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.*" that is to say, everything fit. The first grand process in the East, indispensable to all cultivation, is to irrigate the soil. In this moist climate, the chief feature is humidity; but in those burning climes, the chief feature is dryness. We, in our humid climate, are obliged to drain the land to make it bear fruitful crops; but in those hot countries, they are obliged to irrigate it and cause streams to pass over it, in order to make it fit for the plough. It is so hard, so dry, so burnt up with drought, that unless it is irrigated and watered the plough cannot pierce the soil. Thus we see the necessary process pointed out by the Spirit of God here by watering it. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it." Before, then, it is ploughed up, before the seed is

committed to the bed, it is irrigated and watered. But how? It is explained in the text. "Thou greatly enrichest it *with the river of God*, which is full of water." This "river of God" is the river of mercy and grace that flows out of the bosom of a Three-one Jehovah. It is the same river which Ezekiel saw in his vision, that came from the temple, flowing by the altar, and entering into the salt sea to heal the waters, and make them sweet. It is added, "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezek. 47:9.) It is the same river of which the Psalmist elsewhere speaks, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (46:4.) It is the same river that John saw in vision, and which he describes: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1.)

This "river," then, "full of water," is the eternal flowing forth of mercy, grace, truth, and love out of the bosom of a Three-one God. And this mighty river irrigates and waters every soul that God visits. I do not mean to say that the first communications of grace to the soul are *manifestations* of pardoning mercy; but the very first watering and enriching of the soul by the river that is full of water, flows out of the hidden mercy and grace that lie stored up in the bosom of God for his elect family. Until the soil of the human heart is moistened and softened by the flowings-in of the flood-tide of grace; until some measure of this overflowing and ever-flowing fountain of mercy gushes out of the Redeemer's heart into the sinner's conscience, there is no breaking down of his soul before God, no preparing and fitting it to receive the truth in the love of it, no seed-bed in which the word of truth may germinate. Therefore, after the Lord has visited it, then comes the watering and irrigation by this "river that maketh glad the city of God," so as to prepare it for the reception of the word of life; as we read, "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it."

But previous to preparing and sowing it with corn, after it is irrigated, there must be *the ploughing*: the irrigating is to prepare it for the plough. In its dry, hard state, the plough could not pass through. There must be a softening of the heart, a breaking down of prejudices, a humbling of the soul, a melting of the spirit, proceeding from the divine watering, so as to soak into the depth of a man's soul, before the divine plough can rightly enter into his conscience and plough it up, so that the seed may find a bed in which to germinate. Do we not find it so? Is not the law often preached in all its curses, without reaching the sinner's heart? But when the sinner's heart has been visited by God's grace, and when it has been humbled, broken down, and prepared, then the plough is put in to break up the soil, and to draw a furrow in which the seed may find a bed, and germinate. It is thus the heart becomes fit and prepared for the word of life. The object of the ploughing, as we shall see when we get further into the text, is to make a ridge, and a furrow; as it says lower down, "Thou settlest the furrows thereof." Now, if there is no plough passed through the conscience, there can be no ridge, and no furrow. A furrow implies a ridge; and a ridge implies a furrow. A ridge and a furrow are both produced by the plough passing through the conscience. This breaking up of a man's heart, this bringing to light the worms and maggots and black soil that lie underneath, this tearing up of whole crops of weeds, this driving of the plough through all the briars and thistles that cover the human heart, prepare the soil for the seed which God has provided for it.

This "corn," or seed, is the word of life. The Lord himself, in the parable of the sower, explained that the seed sown was the word of God; sown instrumentally by the undersowers, and made effectual unto salvation by God the Spirit.

This seed, then, is *truth*, received into the heart; the truth concerning the Person of Jesus, as the God-Man Mediator, "God over all, blessed for ever;" the truth as respects his atoning blood, as shed to put away sin; the truth as regards his glorious righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe;"

the truth as it respects the internal operations of God the Spirit upon the hearts of God's family. It therefore comprehends all that in Scripture is called, "the truth as it is in Jesus." And to have it sown in the heart is called "a receiving of the love of the truth, that we may be saved;" (2 Thess. 2:10); and a receiving Christ especially, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." (Col. 2:6; John 14:6.)

Now, until God in mercy has visited the heart; until he has irrigated it with this "river of the water of life," which greatly enriches it by communicating its fertilizing properties; and until it has been ploughed up and broken, and the ridge and furrow traced for a seed-bed for the corn, there can be no reception of the truth in love. In the parable of the sower, the seed was cast forth, and fell upon different sorts of soil; but it only found a seed-bed in the good and honest heart. Some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air devoured it up. Some fell on stony ground, where there was no depth of earth, for the plough had not passed through it. Some fell among thorns, where the stream had not passed to soften and irrigate it, and so make a seed-bed. The good and honest heart, made so by God's grace, alone had a seed-bed for the corn to germinate in and grow.

Any other reception of truth than this will never profit the soul. If we have never had God's grace visiting the soul, never had any communication of life and light out of the fulness of Jesus; in other words, if this river has never shed its sacred streams over our souls, and if the plough of conviction has not passed into our conscience, so as to turn up our deep corruptions to view, and prepare the heart for the reception of the word, whatever be our knowledge, whatever our profession, whatever our consistency, we have not yet received the love of the truth. And here lies all the difference betwixt a honest-hearted child of God, taught of the Spirit, and a conscience-seared professor. They receive the same doctrine; but the one receives it into a honest and good heart, made such by the grace of God; and the other receives it into his natural understanding, without any divine life or power in the conscience.



III.—But after the seed has been safely committed to the furrow, there is another process pointed out in the text: *"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settest the furrows thereof."* Irrigation takes place on two occasions. The earth is first irrigated to make it soft to receive the plough; the plough is then passed through it to make the furrow; and after the seed has been committed to the soil, then there is another watering, "to settle the furrows thereof," and "to water the ridges abundantly;" a second irrigation, after the seed has been committed to the furrows, to make it germinate and grow.

This is carried out experimentally in the hearts of God's people. When we first receive the love of the truth, it is through the blessed Spirit putting that truth into our heart. But is there not a further pouring out of his gracious influences and divine operations, so as to water the ridges and settle the furrows of the heart, in order to cover the seed, and make it moist and tender to germinate? Unless this tide of the same pure river flows over the ridges and furrows, the seed is not properly buried, nor is it in a fit state to germinate downward, and bring forth fruit upward. When we first receive the love of the truth, we receive it in power. "Our gospel," says the Apostle, "came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5.) But do we not need the same Spirit again and again to water that truth which has been implanted, and settle the furrows of the soul; so that it becomes settled down into an enjoyment of, and a firm adherence to, the truth as it is in Jesus?

IV.—But we pass on to what takes place after the second irrigation, *"Thou makest it soft with showers."* We have had two irrigations; we have had two copious waterings; we have seen how, by the river of God, the soil has been fully saturated. But in those burning climes the effect would soon pass away; the Lord therefore not merely speaks of the water of the river, but he speaks also of the showers from on high. The bottles of heaven have to do their work, as well as the river of God.

Thus after the Lord's people have received the love of the truth, and after they have received a clear testimony in their conscience, they may never perhaps all their lives long have such sweet enjoyment; they may never again have the river pouring into their hearts its copious streams; they may never be moistened and saturated in every ridge so completely and fully as when they first knew the Lord. But are they unwatered because that tide does not pour forth an equally copious stream? No; the Lord has another method of watering the soul after its receiving the love of the truth. "Thou makest it soft with showers." Every now and then communications of grace descend in still showers upon the heart, which is thus kept moist, tender, and soft by the dews and rains that fall from on high. Have not you, that know the Lord by divine teaching, found this in your experience? You have come parched to hear the word; your soul has been dry, barren, and dead; but the Lord has opened the word with life and feeling to your soul. Then there was a shower. It did not come with all that overflowing sweetness which you had in days past; still there was a softness communicated, and your parched soul was refreshed, just as the dry chapped soil is refreshed by the droppings down of the rain from above.

V.—But "He also blesses the springing thereof." He not merely makes the ground soft with showers, but also blesses the springing, after the seed has been committed to the furrow. The first operation in nature is to send forth a root, and the root buries itself downward in the soil. So it is with the word of God received in the heart. It does not lie there, as a pebble in the soil; as torpid and as inert as a stone in the street. It is a living thing, just as the seed-corn in the earth is a living thing. As the seed-corn puts forth a root, so the truth received in the love of it puts forth a root in the souls of God's people; it strikes its tender yet strong fibres into the heart and conscience, and penetrates into a man's very being, so as to take firm and fast hold of his conscience and affections. And thus the springing thereof is connected with, and depends upon, the shooting of the root downwards.

But besides this, there is the *springing of it upwards*; the springing up of the soul toward God; the going forth of heavenly affections; the mounting up of living faith to its Author; the budding forth of hope towards its Giver; and the springing up of love and affection towards its Shedder abroad. And how sweet it is to experience something of the springing up of divine life in the soul; to feel the power of the truth we have received into our understanding, and believed on in our conscience! And though we often seem to have no religion worth the name, and to be utterly destitute of vital godliness, yet how sweet it is, now and then, to experience the springing up of divine life in the soul! If we have never experienced this springing up in the soul, what right have we to think ourselves Christians?

Have we, for instance, any springing up of *godly fear*? As we read, "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. 14:27.) The property of a fountain we know is to gush forth. When sin then comes before us, when temptations present themselves, when Satan is laying some snare to entangle our feet, the fear of the Lord will at times spring up in the soul. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

There is also sometimes a springing up of *faith*. There is a looking unto Jesus; a viewing by the eye of faith his glorious Person, his atoning blood, and justifying righteousness; there is a casting of a longing, languishing look towards his dying love.

Sometimes there is a springing up of *hope*—"a good hope through grace;" that when body and soul part company, we shall be with the Lord; that we shall not perish in the waste howling wilderness; but that when death comes we shall depart to be with Jesus. How sweet it is at times to feel this springing up of hope, this blessed anchor, that enters into the very presence of God!

How sweet also, at times, to feel the springing up of *love* towards the Lord of life and glory, and in secret moments, when no eye

sees, no ear hears, to experience the secret risings up of tender affection towards him!

There is also the secret springings up of *tender affections* towards God's people. When we come into their company, and our hearts become knit together in tender sympathy, we feel a measure of love and affection, and union and communion with them spring up spontaneously in our souls.

There is a springing up likewise of *reverence towards God's great majesty*; a springing up of *humility*, so as to fall down at his footstool; a springing up of a *teachable broken spirit*, to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear his words, with the temper and feelings of a little child: a springing up of *heavenly-mindedness*, so as to set the affections upon Jesus at the right hand of God; a springing up of *faithfulness*, so as to be zealous and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; a springing up of a *single eye to the glory of God*, so that what we say or do may be said or done more or less to the honour of God. Now all this is the springing up of truth in the heart, of that seed which God has committed to the soul, and which he waters with his grace, in order that it may bear fruit to his glory.

The Lord blesses this springing. There are some perhaps of God's people who can scarcely trace out in their hearts anything of this springing up. They have been deeply exercised and tried by sin and guilt upon their conscience; but they cannot honestly say that they have had clear communications of grace and mercy, and received the love of the truth. They hardly dare call themselves the children of God. Yet when we look at that which takes place in the secret chambers of their heart before God, we find the springings up of a living faith, hope, and love, and of every other grace of the Spirit that God himself has planted in the soul. The Lord blesses the springing thereof. If the Lord did not bless the springing, no sooner did the tender plant rise out of the soil, than it would be nipped by the cutting winds, or devoured by the caterpillar; it never could live out half its time, much less rise up to bear solid fruit. But the Lord graciously keeps alive and

blesses the springing up of everything good and gracious which his own hand has planted in the heart.

What a mercy it is to be able to trace out any springing up of these blessed things within! for we know that we are utterly unable to create them in ourselves.

VI.—But it adds: "*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" As though he would say, "Let us take the whole circle of the seasons. Let us not merely look at the spring-time, when the corn is in the blade. Let us not look merely at the summer, when the corn begins to ripen. Let us look at the autumn, at the harvest time, when the corn is gathered in. Yea, let us look at winter, when we eat the fruits of the earth." Thus we find the Lord going round in a gracious circle. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." Then if the Lord has blessed the springing thereof, he will bless its subsequent stages; he will bless the ripening of the corn, as well as the first committal of it to the seed-bed; he will bless the gathering of it in, as well as the waterings, and the springings up of it; and thus will crown the whole revolving circle with a gracious harvest.

After the seed has sprung up, is there not a long series of months before it is matured? "First the blade," as the Lord speaks, "then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." After the Lord has watered the soul abundantly with his mercy and grace, and after he has blessed the springing thereof, we should expect that all things would go on smoothly. But we see it is not so in nature, and I am sure it is not so in grace. We read (Psa. 74:16, 17), "The day is thine, the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun: thou hast set all the borders of the earth; thou hast made summer and winter." Now, night in nature is as indispensable for the ripening of the fruits of the earth as day. The earth is so constituted, and the seasons are so adapted to it in their beautiful variation, that every change is indispensable for the maturation of the seed. The alternation of night and day is particularly indispensable to its growth. So spiritually. After the Lord has committed the seed of truth to the soul, and after he has blessed

the springing thereof, is that all? Is there not something more to be done? Does it now bring forth fruit? Is there not some further process necessary? Surely. In order that there may be maturity, there must be an alternation of seasons.

1. For instance, there must be *night*. How painful it is for the living soul, after he has enjoyed some of the beams of day, to have to pass through a dreary night! But I believe all the Lord's people know more or less what it is to walk in darkness. They do not feel in their souls those sweet in-shinings that they long to experience. They have not those gracious breakings in of the Sun of righteousness that their hearts earnestly long after. They have "to walk in darkness, and have no light." In this state, we often call in question all that the Lord has done for our souls. We actually cannot believe that the Lord has done what we in time past believed he had done. The work of grace is so obscured, the evidences so beclouded, the mind so perplexed and confused, that however clear our experience may have been at the time, now that darkness covers the soul, we feel unable to form a right judgment even upon our own experience. But this night is necessary for the strength of the soul. Were it all day, the plant would spring up rapidly, and grow so flaccid, so luxuriant, and so tender, that it would break down by its own luxuriousness. There is a certain stage in which it needs to be strengthened; and this strength is given in the night season, by withdrawing those influences of the sun which would draw it up too luxuriantly. So spiritually. We need to be strengthened. Did not the Apostle learn this lesson? How did he learn it? Was it by basking in the beams of the Sun of righteousness? Was it by enjoying sweet manifestations of the Lord of life and glory? Was it by having all his evidences brightened and made conspicuous? Not so; but by having a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. He thus learnt his weakness, and when he learnt his weakness, he also learnt the strength of Christ made perfect in his weakness; so that he could glory in his infirmities, not as infirmities, but because the glory of Christ rested upon his soul in his infirmities. So these spiritual night seasons, though all things seem then to be against us, yet strengthen the soul. We begin in

the night season to look out for the work of God more conspicuously. We begin to feel more clearly the difference between the teaching of God and the teaching of man. We come to this point, that in these dark seasons God alone can give us light, and in these cold dead seasons God alone can give us life. Now, this is real strength—real strength, because we learn it in our weakness, and learn by that where our real strength lies. The work of grace upon the heart must be tried. If it be a feeble work, it must be tried feebly; if it be a strong work, it must be tried strongly. But whatever the depth of the work of grace upon the heart, it must have trials in order to prove it genuine. These night seasons, then, prove whether the work upon our heart be genuine or not. We can travel on very comfortably by day; but when night comes, and we are unable to see our way, we must lean upon our heavenly Conductor, or most assuredly go astray. While we can see our evidences, we can go cheerily forward; but when darkness covers them, we begin to look out for help, and want the everlasting arms spread forth for our support, lest we fall into pitfalls and quagmires. Thus we learn the secret of our strength in these night seasons.

2. Again. In all climates there are *cold* days to be endured, as well as hot days. We, in our folly, sometimes think we could manage the seasons better than the Lord. Sometimes we would not have these wet days, and at other times these dry days, or these cold nights. We think, in the vanity of our hearts, that we could arrange these things better than God. But when harvest is gathered in, and the crops laid up in the barn, then we see how much more wisely God has ordered these matters than we could have done. The very cold has an effect upon the goodness of the fruit. If the Lord "crowns the year with his goodness," then every chilly night, every stormy day, must have a ripening effect upon the corn, just as much as the warm beams of the glorious sun. Do we not often painfully feel the coldness of our heart Godward? Have we not often mourned and sighed on account of the hardness, barrenness, and leanness of our heart in spiritual things? And can we think this is really for our good? But "all things work together for good;" and therefore these cold, dry,

barren seasons must be among the things that work together for our good. What good, then, do I get by passing through these cold, dead, insipid seasons? I get emptied of fleshly religion. If I did not know by painful experience the coldness and deadness of my heart Godward, I should make an idol of self, be filled with false zeal, think I could do something in my own unassisted strength, talk and act as an unemptied, unhumbled pharisee, and wear a fancied crown of creature holiness. But when I feel as cold towards God as though I had not one spark of grace, as dead in my feelings as though the light and life of God had never come into my conscience, as utterly unable to move my soul Godward as the earth in the frost of December is unable to clothe itself with the verdure of July, then I learn this great lesson—to distinguish between the teachings of God in the heart, and the mere zeal and activity of nature. Is not this real strength? Is not this necessary for maturing and ripening the fruits and graces of the Spirit in the heart? By enduring these nipping blasts, I learn whence "all my fruit is found," all my strength proceeds, all my faith flows. Yes: by passing through these cold seasons, I learn to prize the feeblest ray of warmth, as well as to be thankful for the smallest mark of favour. I learn, too, that if I have heavenly affections and spiritual desires, God is their author and giver. I learn also, having no righteousness of my own, to receive with a thankful heart communications of grace and mercy out of the fulness of Jesus: and I learn that they are free and sovereign, because they are undeserved, and because I am utterly unable to raise them up in my own soul.

3. But there are *storms* also, as well as cold nights and wintry days. We see the storm sometimes beats down the tender blade; but we do not see that at the same time it washes off the vermin that drink up the juices and would eat out the heart of the young corn. The thunderstorm and the hail all do their part in killing those things that would prevent the maturation of the crop. So spiritually. If I am a Christian, I have to pass through storms, to have fierce trials from the devil and persecutions from the world—many hard blows from sinners, and many much more cutting blows from saints; I have to endure the unkindness of



enemies, and what is more painful, the unkindness of friends. I am not to be a coddled up child, whom its mother takes such tender care of as to keep it ever by the fire-side corner, if I am to be a hardy, vigorous man. I must go forth into the storm—I must endure the winter's piercing cold, and the summer's burning heat—I must endure till the vicissitudes of seasons, if I am to bear them uninjured. So spiritually. Am I to be matured in the Christian life? Then all luxuriant growth must be checked. It is like a youth shooting up rapidly, while a fatal disease is about to cut him down in the bloom of life, and hurry him to an early grave. A really hardy and vigorous growth will deepen and widen, as well as heighten the plant. Then we must pass through these storms that are necessary for the due maturation of the fruits of the Spirit. The stormy seasons that we may have to endure will do our souls good, because they come from the Lord, and execute certain purposes. Say, for instance, I am leaning too much upon the arm of a friend. Well, a storm shall come, and separate me from that friend. Does that do me harm? Not if it bring me to lean more upon the arm of Jesus, and make me follow more closely after him. The storm, in passing over my head, has *then* done me no harm, but real good. It may perhaps have beaten down my religion, and obscured my evidences. There may even be the flashing lightning of God's anger, and the lowering clouds of vengeance, and heavy showers of hailstones. But if these storms wash away and beat down those lusts that creep round my soul, and would insinuate themselves so closely as to eat out the heart of vital godliness, I have reason to thank God for the storm that beats off these vermin. I have reason to be thankful even for the pelting hail and cutting rain, though it lacerate the feelings, as the hail wounds the plant, if it kill those caterpillars which would otherwise eat into the kidney of the wheat, and destroy the very heart of the crop.

4. And then, when the corn has been ripened by this succession of day and night, this circle of the seasons, comes the last stroke of all, *the gathering into the heavenly garner*. How the Lord's people shrink from this stroke! The Lord Jesus has taken away the sting and destroyed the power of death; and yet how often

the fear of death brings God's children into bondage? But can the corn be harvested in any other way than by cutting it from the stalk? Or can our souls be taken to the bosom of God by any other way than cutting us from the earth? That stroke, when it comes, may be less cutting, perhaps, than we now think. But how cutting in prospect it is as to the families whom we leave behind, the relations whose tears we see in anticipation, the widow or husband for whom we feel more tenderly than for ourselves! Yet that last cutting stroke is indispensably necessary to gather the soul into the heavenly garner.

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness." All thy paths in providence, and all thy paths in grace, though they often be in the deep waters; yet thy paths all drop fatness into the soul, making it rich and fruitful, so as to bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God.

Now, the real children of God may not be able always to trace out the spot in which they are, but they will be, if under divine teaching, in some one spot marked out in the text. There are some, then, whom the Lord has but just "visited," whose hearts he is making tender, whose consciences he is dealing with and working upon, giving them an ear to hear the truth, bringing them out of self, knitting them to the people of God, and teaching them to enquire the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. They have many things to contend with—right eyes to pluck out, right arms to cut off; many thorns and briars still growing in their hearts; many worldly lusts entangling their feet; doubts and fears working in their mind, or infidelity perpetually striving within. Yet with all this, they set their faces Zionward; however cast down, they are not cast away; however falling, yet rising up again, with tears and cries asking the Lord to be merciful.

There are others perhaps who have had "waterings." They have felt the incomings of the divine tide. When hearing the word, when reading the Scriptures, when alone upon their knees, or when thinking upon divine things, they have felt a tide of indescribable sweetness, bearing all before it; tears have gushed

from their eyes, and their hearts have been melted and dissolved. They cannot tell how it came, or whence it came; yet it has melted them down, and brought them completely out of the world and from dead professors.

Then, perhaps, there are others in this congregation passing through another part of the process, having the corruptions of their hearts turned up to view, and the secret lusts that sometimes get the better of them. There are, perhaps, others who are full of love to the truth, who are looking to Jesus, and to whom his name is as ointment poured forth. They have desires springing up and pantings after the knowledge of him and the power of his resurrection—secret breathings forth of ardent affection, and flowings forth of living faith. These have received the love of the truth, and from time to time feel the springings up of faith and hope in the Lord of life and glory, of love towards his name, mingled with reverence, humility and, godly fear.

There may be others passing through dark seasons, in which there is no light; through cutting blasts, nipping nights, and cold days, that shake their faith to its very centre.

Yet the Lord crowns the year with goodness after all! And when he puts in the sickle, and gathers his saints into the garner above, each will bless the Lord with joyful voice, each will give the Lord the glory, that he has crowned the year with goodness; that superabounding grace has reigned through righteousness; that matchless love has triumphed over all; that in all his dealings, however painful, in all they have had to pass through, however seemingly adverse, yet goodness and mercy have followed them all their days, and they shall dwell in the house of God for ever. Happy is the soul that can find any of his experience in these words! The least is as safe as the greatest; the feeblest as secure, in the purpose of God, as the strongest. "Happy are the people that are in such a case! yea, happy the people whose God is the Lord."

## **Divine Omnipotence, or Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Afternoon, July 4, 1869

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Gen. 18:14

The doubts and fears to which God's people are subject are very different from the obstinate, persistent unbelief of the ungodly. The very term indeed itself shows that there is a vital and radical difference between them, as the common expression "doubts and fears" is never applied to the wilful, obstinate unbelief of the wicked, but to the want of faith, or rather of the assurance of faith, in the righteous. Thus, though the word "doubt" implies distrust and unbelief, yet it is not so much a doubt of the truth of God's word, or of the way of salvation by free and sovereign grace, as a doubt of personal interest in the love and blood of Christ; and the very expression "fear" implies a desire to be right in the sight of God, and a dread of being wrong, neither of which marks is to be found in wilful and obstinate unbelievers. I do not, however, say that doubts and fears do not partake of sin; for they spring from an evil heart of unbelief, and, therefore, there is a stain of sin attaching to them, as we see evidently marked both in the Scriptures, and in the judgment which an enlightened conscience passes upon them. Who can deny, for instance, that the doubts of Abraham, which he manifested when twice he denied that Sarah was his wife, were in themselves sinful? And we know the judgment that Hart passes on his own doubts, where he says:

"I groan, and grieve, and cry, and call  
On Jesus for relief;  
But, that delayed, to doubting fall,  
Of all my sins the chief."

From these testimonies from Scripture and experience we may safely conclude that doubts and fears do in themselves partake of the nature of sin. Yet, if we look at the way in which the Lord

dealt with the doubts and fears of his people in the days of his flesh, we shall find that he dealt with them very differently from the way in which he dealt with the fixed, determined, wilful incredulity and infidelity of obstinate unbelievers. Thus, when, at the bidding of his gracious Master, Peter walked upon the water, as long as he looked to the Lord by faith he could step boldly and fearlessly on; but when "he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." But observe how the Lord dealt with him and with this fit of unbelief. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:31.) Do we not see from this instance how tenderly and gently our gracious Lord reproved his unbelief, dealing with it more as an infirmity than condemning it as positive sin? Look again at the case of Thomas, who seemed for a time so shut up in unbelief, that he positively declared nothing could convince him that the Lord had risen from the dead, unless he could actually see in his hands the print of the nails, put his finger into them, and thrust his hand into Jesus' side. How strongly must unbelief have wrought in him that he should require such a test. And yet how tenderly and graciously did the Lord deal with him, when eight days after, Thomas being then present, Jesus stood again in their midst. "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." (John 20:27.) So when the unbelief of Thomas melted as snow before the gracious presence and gentle reproof of his risen Lord, and he answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God," how kindly and yet how faithfully did our Lord reprove his unbelief: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29.) I may perhaps call Thomas an unbelieving believer. That he was a believer, is evident, both as being a chosen disciple, and as consorting with the rest of the disciples after the resurrection; but that he could not and did not believe that Christ had risen bodily from the grave, is no less plain from his own declaration. The Lord, therefore, dealt with his faith and his unbelief, tenderly

cherishing the one, and faithfully yet gently reproofing the other.

We gather from these and similar testimonies that though doubts and fears in the Lord's people do partake of the nature of sin, yet our gracious Lord dealt with them more as infirmities than positive, actual, wilful transgressions.

But now contrast these tender and gentle reproofs of the doubts and fears of his disciples with the way in which our Lord dealt with obstinate, wilful unbelievers. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." (John 8:24, 44, 47.) "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see: therefore your sin remaineth." (John 9:41.) "But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." (John 10:26.)

But again, doubts and fears in the saint of God are often *temptations* springing from the subtle suggestions of Satan working upon an unbelieving heart. In this case they do not positively and actually spring from a man's own willing or unwilling unbelief, nor are they fostered and indulged by him, for they are very burdensome and grievous to his spirit, contrary to the teaching of the Spirit in him, alien from the life of God, and opposed to his earnest desires and sincere breathings God-ward that he would give him a living faith to the saving of his soul. But they spring from the working of Satan upon our carnal mind, and the stirring up by the enemy of our souls of the unbelief that dwelleth in us. Doubts and fears may be known to be temptations of this kind when they distress the mind, and oppose themselves to that life of faith in the Son of God in which consist all our present safety and satisfaction, and all our hope of eternal glory. Doubts and fears, then, being temptations, the Lord does not deal with them as he deals with positive sins. He himself was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And having been tempted as we are, so far from casting our temptations into our face as so many sins, he rather sympathises with us in and

under them, as a merciful and faithful High Priest. Thus, though, as I said before, doubts and fears have in them the nature of sin, yet the Lord knoweth our frame, remembereth that we are dust, and dealeth with them, and with us, as encompassed by them, rather as infirmities that will ever cleave to us, than as those positive and actual sins which wound conscience and draw down his displeasure.

We see this clearly exemplified in the cases of Abraham and Sarah. The Lord gave Abraham a promise that he should have a son by Sarah when he was well stricken in years, on that remarkable occasion when he appeared to him in the plains of Mamre; and he repeated the promise in Sarah's hearing. Now Sarah was naturally barren, and to that was now added old age, rendering her, so to speak, doubly unfruitful. When, therefore, standing in the tent-door, she heard the Lord telling Abraham, that he "would certainly return unto him according to the time of life" (or as it might be rendered "in the reviving year," that is, the following Spring), "and lo! Sarah his wife should "have a son," she, full of incredulity rather than unbelief, laughed within herself, saying, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure"—that is, the pleasure of bearing a son in my arms—"my lord being old also?" Now this laughter of Sarah was not the laughter of scorn and contempt, still less of enmity or infidelity, but was rather the laughter of incredulity doubt and distrust of the Lord; and so far was clearly sinful. But she laughed with a kind of incredulous joy, as if the promise were too good to be true; and yet her very heart leaped in her at the thought and prospect, as she said, "Shall I of a surety bear a child which am old?" But the Lord did not deal with it as he dealt with the sin of the sons-in-law of Lot in not believing his exhortation, "Up, get thee out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city;" nor as he dealt with the antediluvians in not listening to the voice of Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, when moved with fear, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and by this act as well as his preaching condemned the world. (2 Pet. 2:7; Heb. 11:7.) But he dealt with it tenderly and gently, as a father dealeth with his children. "And the Lord said unto Abraham, wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying,

Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." (Gen. 18:13, 14.)

In our text the Lord asks Abraham a question, leaving it to him to supply the answer: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

This, then, is the question which I have to answer this afternoon; and, extending it somewhat beyond its original intent, I shall answer it in two ways.

I repeat the question: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" I answer to it, *Yes*.

I repeat the question: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" I answer to it, *No*.

Thus you will have to listen this afternoon to a "Yes" and "No" sermon. I trust, however, that my Yea, will still be Yea, and that my Nay, will still be Nay; and thus you will not have a "Yea" and "Nay" sermon, though you will have a Yes and No discourse; for I shall endeavour, by the help of God, to show you that there are things too hard for the Lord; and to show you also, by the help of God, there are things not too hard for the Lord.

If, then, I am enabled to carry out my aim and intention, when I have taken up both sides of the question, and handled them in harmony with the word of truth, and the experience of the saints, I think you will be able to see what is, and what is not too hard for the Lord.

I.—It perhaps a little startled and surprised you to hear me say that things were things too hard for the Lord; for it seemed to you as if I thereby denied that he was possessed of infinite and omnipotent power. Let me then endeavour to clear up this difficulty; for the nature of God's almighty power is often much misunderstood.



i. In order, then, to understand this subject aright, we must draw a distinction between God's *absolute* power, and what we may call his *ordinate* power. As regards God's *absolute* power, with him all things are possible, those things excepted which do not imply a contradiction in terms, or which are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, or which are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done. That there are such things I shall presently show; but I must first explain what is meant by God's *ordinate* power. It is so called because the object of it is all things which God has ordained and decreed to be done; and having thus ordained them, he must perform them because of his unchangeableness. We have both of these powers expressed in those words of our gracious Lord: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:53, 54.) The *absolute* power of God is implied in the expression that he could presently give him more than twelve legions of angels; but our Lord added, "And how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" There he acknowledges God's *ordinate* power; for having ordained and decreed that his dear Son should die, he could not save him from death but by breaking his decree. We thus see that God's power acts only according to God's will, and that what his will orders and arranges his power effects. His will is the spring of his actions, and his power acts in harmony with it. Thus the Psalmist says, "He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased," no more, no less. (Psa. 115:3.) And we find the apostle speaking of the power of God as not only subordinate to his will, but also to his counsel, for he says of him: "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11), where we see that what the will of God ordains, his wisdom guides, and his power effects. In fact, the power of God, or rather, the exercise of his power depends upon his will, for the will of God is the supreme cause of everything in time, and his power is but his will perpetually working and bringing forth his eternal purposes. This explanation may seem to some of you dry, or difficult to understand; but it is necessary to be clear in such important matters, for unless we

have right views of the nature of God's almighty power, we may make sad mistakes from not seeing how beautifully and gloriously it harmonises with all the rest of his revealed perfections.

Having thus explained a little what is meant by the power of God, I shall now show you that though the power of God is in itself infinite and omnipotent, yet there are things which God *cannot* do: 1, some things from being impossible in *their own nature*; 2, some things as impossible to *his own being*; 3, some things as impossible to *his glorious perfections*; and 4, some things impossible because of *his ordination*. It is by showing the nature of these things that I shall best answer the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" by saying, "Yes; there is."

ii. You must bear in mind, then, that omnipotence is but *one* of God's attributes, and that we must not sacrifice the other attributes of the divine nature to his omnipotence, as if it could be viewed distinct from or at variance with them, or could be put forth in opposition to them. A person might say, "If God is almighty; if he is omnipotent, there is nothing which he cannot do." I deny that. There are things God *cannot* do, because to do them would be contrary to the essential purity of his nature, and all that characterises him as the God of holiness and truth. Does not the Scripture bear me fully out here? "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." (Heb. 6:18.) There you see a limit to omnipotence: it was impossible for God to lie. Again, "He cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2:13.) Again, "God, who cannot lie." (Titus 1:2.) Are not these Scriptural declarations which set a limit to God's omnipotence? It is impossible for God to lie because of his faithfulness. As he cannot die because he is life itself; as he cannot deceive because he is goodness itself, so he cannot lie because he is truth itself. In fact, he is omnipotent because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent if he could. To lie is in man weakness not strength, for liars are almost always cowards. If, then, God could lie, it would not only contradict his purity and faithfulness, and remove from under us the very foundations of our faith, but be in itself weakness, not power. There is an inability arising from weakness,

and there is an inability arising from perfection. If the sun could diffuse darkness as well as light in the air, it would be from weakness in the sun, not from strength. You see, therefore, that, if I may use the expression, God's moral nature, the essential attributes of his infinite holiness, must never be made to clash with his omnipotence. God cannot cease to be; and as God cannot cease to be, he cannot cease to be everything whereby he is God. He cannot cease to be holy, pure, righteous, just, as he cannot cease to be everything which is loving, merciful, and gracious. We must take all the perfections of infinite Deity, all the attributes that are concentrated in the divine character, and not set one against the other, as though God's omnipotence could break through others of his divine attributes. Because God is almighty, he cannot do things contrary to the perfections of his divine nature. We say sometimes of an upright, honest, and excellent man, "He cannot do such a thing." If we hear his character slandered, or some gross accusation laid to his charge, we say at once, "I don't believe it; the man could never do such a thing." Why? Not because it was impossible for the man, a sinful man, to be betrayed into an unjust or sinful action; but because we believe there is that in the man's moral character, and especially if a partaker of grace, there is that in the power of grace in the man's heart which would not suffer him to do the thing laid to his charge, though as a poor sinner, left to himself and the power of temptation, he might do anything that is base and vile. How much more shall we refuse to believe that an infinitely pure God can do anything contrary to the purity of his divine nature. Thus you see there is a limit to God's omnipotence, arising from the very perfections of his unspeakably pure and holy nature. In this sense, then, to do anything that is unjust or unholy, is too hard for the Lord; for to do so would be to deny himself, and be weakness not strength.

iii. But now I must take this point a little further and show that there are other limits to God's omnipotence besides the perfections of his nature. Observe, then, that a thing having taken place, it is impossible that it should not have taken place, so that God himself cannot alter it. Do you understand me? Take

the case of the fall. The fall has taken place; our first ancestor sinned in the garden and fell, foully fell; and all those who were in his loins fell with him. That fact having taken place, it is beyond the power of God to alter its having taken place. He might have prevented it before it took place; he may over-rule it for our good and his glory; he may bring out of it that which shall be matter of eternal praise; he may make it the occasion of displaying the exceeding riches of his grace. But God himself cannot alter a fact which has taken place from having taken place. Thus, though God may prevent sin before it is committed, yet when sin has been committed, it will always be true that sin was committed. Though God pardoned the sin of David and the denial of Peter, yet it will be eternally true that David fell into sin; that Peter denied his Lord; nor can God himself make these sins not to have been committed when once they had been done. But observe the consequence which might arise if God could make a thing past not to be past. Then he might make himself not to have made a promise to Abraham, nor to have sworn to him an oath that he would be a God to him and to his seed after him. If, therefore, there were a power in God to undo that which was past so that it should never have been done, there would be no certainty of revelation and no foundation for faith. God at his pleasure might alter, disannul, and destroy all that he has himself done by sending his Son to die, if it were possible that that which has been done might be said never to have been done. Thus what might seem to some a want of power in God and a limit to his omnipotence, is at once his highest perfection, and our greatest security.

iv. But now observe what follows from these necessary limits to God's omnipotence. The two limits chiefly are,—1st, that he cannot do anything contrary to the perfections of his own infinitely pure and holy nature; 2ndly, that he cannot do anything contrary to his revealed will; for to do the first would be contrary to his infinite holiness, and to do the second would be contrary to his infinite veracity and faithfulness.

1. But what a solemn and important bearing this has upon his

dealings both with his enemies and his friends; for see the consequences of his not being able to do any thing contrary to the perfections of his infinitely holy nature. His justice, for instance, demands the punishment of sin; and therefore, he cannot but punish it. He cannot pass it by, because it would be inconsistent with his intrinsic righteousness, with his holy majesty, and his absolute justice to pass by transgression without taking any notice of it. This would make him like those heathen gods who either did not notice sin at all, or sanctioned it by themselves committing, according to the popular belief and the tales of the poets, the worst of crimes. Thus it is impossible for God not to punish sin, either in the person of the sinner, or, as he chose in the depths of his infinite grace, in the wondrous scheme of redemption, in the Person of the surety.

Again, God cannot take into his own bosom anything or any person that is vile, filthy, or unclean. As I was speaking this morning, the filth must be purged before the cloud of God's presence comes. It is, therefore, morally as well as spiritually and scripturally impossible that God should take into heaven, the city of his own eternal abode, the seat of his celestial glory, the mansions of endless holiness and happiness, any thing or any one who is filthy, vile, and polluted. How plain is the Scripture here: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27.) And again, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (Rev. 22:14, 15.) What a solemn word of warning is this against those who live and die in their sins, unwashed, unjustified, unsanctified, and, therefore, without any meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is, therefore, impossible for God to make a man happy except by making him a partaker of his own holiness. He could not make a man truly happy as a sinner, that is wickedly, wilfully, and

wantonly continuing such, without any deliverance from its guilt and filth, its power, love and practice; for sin will ever breed misery and wretchedness, and would do so in heaven itself, could he be admitted there with sin still working in him. It is the devil, the author of all wickedness, the murderer from the beginning, the enemy of God and of man, who, miserable himself, seeks to make all men miserable by stirring up in them the sin of their nature, and breathing into them all the pride, malice, enmity, wrath, and rebellion against God which ever work in his own infernal mind, that would turn heaven itself into hell.

As then it is impossible for God to take into his bosom anything sinful or unclean, so it is impossible for him to take into the enjoyment of his eternal bliss and blessedness any one unrenewed in the spirit of his mind and not made a partaker of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, and without which he could not be happy, if even he were allowed to gaze upon the holy and blissful countenance of God in glory.

2. Again, it is impossible for God to act contrary to the declaration of his will, as revealed and made known in his own word. This is a part of that ordinate or ordained will of God, of which I have before spoken. He has given a revelation of his mind and will in the word of truth, and there it stands for ever and ever as a glorious revelation of God's fixed, eternal counsel, from which he never can depart; it being the transcript of his mind, stamped with the seal of his own veracity, and specially attested by his own oath and promise. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God's word can ever pass away. This made the Psalmist say—"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." (Ps. 119:89.)

You see, then, my friends, that there are things which are too hard for God; and you must observe from them what an awful bearing this fact has upon the state and case, present and to come, of the impenitent, the unbelieving, and the ungodly. If it is impossible for God to lie, if he cannot deny himself, if he can do nothing contrary to the perfections of his pure and holy nature,

where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? If it be inconsistent not only with the perfections of God, but with his revealed mind, not to punish the transgressor; if he cannot take to heaven the impenitent, the unbelieving, the unregenerate, it must be an impossibility for such to be saved, living and dying in their carnal state. To do so would be too hard for the Lord, for it would make him deny himself, break his word, and violate his own infinite and glorious perfections.

v. But now let me present to you another view, another aspect of the same truth; and I think you will see in it that which meets the case of God's people, as well as that which meets, in what I have already explained, the case of his enemies. Thus, if it frown upon the one, it smiles upon the other; and if it be a mountain of brass to shut out the ungodly from the glories of heaven, it is for God's people as Mount Zion that never can be moved, but standeth fast for ever and ever. Has God then said he will by no means clear the guilty? Then he will by no means clear the guilty; and those that live and die under the guilt of sin, will live and die uncleared by God, and as such, will stand amenable to his justice and eternal wrath. But has God said that he will pardon iniquity, transgression, and sin in his people, in those that seek his face: in those that repent of, confess, and forsake their sins, who look unto, believe in, and hang upon the Lord of life and glory, and have no hope but in his blood and righteousness? He will be faithful to that word, for it is impossible for God to lie, either by belying his promises or belying his threatenings. And thus the veracity of God, which stands as a wall of fire against God's enemies to shut them out of the heavenly city, stands as a wall of fire round about God's friends, for he himself is "the glory in the midst." As, then, it is impossible for God to lie, every promise is armed with the faithfulness of God to accomplish, as every threatening is armed with the faithfulness of God to execute.

Have I not, then, in some good measure, fulfilled my promise, that I would endeavour to shew you that there are things too hard for the Lord? And will you not now bear me witness, that in drawing that narrow line, I speak in harmony with the word of

God, in which he has revealed himself as a God of holiness and truth, and that such a view of the subject, which I believe it is impossible for any rightly taught Christian to gainsay or deny, has a very important bearing upon the state and standing both of the godly and ungodly, both of those that fear God and those who fear him not.

II.—But now I shall take the other side of the question. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" To that I shall answer "No." As I have shown there are things too hard for the Lord, because contrary to his infinite perfections and revealed will and word; so I shall now show there is nothing too hard for the Lord which runs side by side, and moves in harmony with the manifestation of his will in the word of truth.

If you recollect, I drew a distinction between God's absolute power and God's ordinate power, and showed that the power of God always moves in concert with his will; for his power affects only that which his will ordains and his wisdom guides. So that the power of God is, as it were, subordinate to his wisdom and his will; for his will is the supreme cause of everything that occurs in time, and thus his power is but the perpetual working and constant efficacy of his omnipotent will. But we know not what the secret will of God is until made manifest, and therefore must go to his holy word, which is his revealed will, there to learn what the power of God is able to do and will do. Everything, therefore, that lies within the compass of God's will, as revealed in his word, can be and will be executed by the power of God. Now in this sense I may again ask the question: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And I answer "No." But now let me apply this to particular cases; and

i. First to *difficulties and perplexities in Providence.*

There may be times and seasons with you when there seems much against you, as regards your calling in life and the earning of your daily bread. Times are hard with you, and you scarcely



know how the matter will turn, as mountains of difficulty present themselves on every side. Now, when these hard times and these providential dispensations come upon those in whom grace has not taken up its blessed abode, and to whom, as unacquainted with God and his dear Son, no throne of grace is presented to their mind as a place of resort, and no sweet promise is held forth in the word of truth to sustain their sinking hearts, oppressed by the power of temptation, or carried away by a sense of shame and by fears of what may be the eventual consequence of their present embarrassments, they will often run from this world upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and to escape the shame of man, will rush unbidden into the presence of God. Their money, their credit, their reputation being all gone, and there being no prospect before them but poverty and disgrace; having no God to go to, no promise of help or deliverance on which they may hang, and no door of hope for time or eternity open to them, they yield to the temptations of Satan and the suggestions of despair, and put an end to their miserable lives. Now take a child of God: he may have the same or greater depths of poverty, for we little know to what straits some of the Lord's people are reduced. I was reading the other day, in manuscript, a little memoir, which I hope one day may be published, of a gracious woman, who had been, from a spinal complaint, laid upon a bed of affliction for many years, with a mother only to nurse her. Now, for a considerable period, the whole income to support them both was four shillings a week and two loaves of bread, out of which two shillings were required for firing, her complaint requiring frequent fomentations, so that for three years they never knew the comfort of a drop of tea and had to subsist on a scanty supply of bread and a little coffee; yet this poor afflicted creature was so supported by the power of God, and though often hungry in body from positive want of food, yet was at times so fed with the bread of life that she could rejoice in her tribulation. Now, what a contrast with the miserable suicide, whose case I have depicted, is a scene like this. Look into that little cottage and see a poor, emaciated, afflicted creature, not only suffering continual and exquisite pain, but pressed down on every side by the depths of poverty, and yet bearing up against it all with the support of the

Lord, and eventually brought forth into a wealthy place, not merely as regards the soul, but even as regards the things of providence; for when her case became better known, and the dark clouds which had gathered over her head from false accusations had been rolled away, her wants became fully supplied to the end of her life. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Did not she prove it so? And why should not you? Has he not declared that "your bread shall be given and your water shall be sure, that the gold and the silver are his and the cattle upon a thousand hills?" how again and again God's poor tried people have proved that the Lord can raise up friends to help them, when all their own help was gone, can open doors in the most unexpected manner, when those once open seemed all shut, and send them everything which they may require to relieve their pressing wants. If, therefore, any of you be tried in circumstances, and scarcely know what way to take, give not way to despondency. Take no sinful way of extricating yourself; but wait upon the Lord in prayer and supplication. He will provide. He that fed Elijah by the aid of ravens; he that caused the widow's cruse not to fail; he who could supply the wants of thousands with five loaves and two small fishes; he who could rain manna down from heaven in the desert, and bring water from the rock; is he unmindful of thee, O thou of little faith? Wait on him, seek his face, put your hand to no evil thing, and you will find he will appear for you in providence, to the joy of your soul. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Has he not appeared for you in times past? Have you wanted any one good thing? Have you ever gone for three years without tasting a drop of tea from actual poverty, and lived upon a little bread and a few dregs of burnt coffee, without sugar, and suffering intense pain all the while both night and day?

ii. But now, take the case spiritually; for the text extends itself far beyond the domain of providence, and embraces the whole domain of grace.

1. It may be, that you are pressed down with a sense of *guilt upon your conscience*. You may be one of those in whom the Lord

is beginning to work by his Spirit and grace. I would not willingly pass over any case; I shall, therefore, begin with the beginning. The spirit of judgment, of which I was speaking this morning, may be now in you, bringing to light all your secret sins, and passing judgment upon them; and the spirit of judgment, which is sitting in judgment upon your sins, may have been followed up in you by the spirit of burning in a fiery law, condemning and cursing you, and bringing a sense of the wrath of God into your soul. Under and in this fiery trial, your sins seem to be so great and aggravated, your feelings under them so acute, and your conscience so sore and raw, that you cannot believe that pardoning love and saving mercy can ever reach your soul. But may I not say, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Have there been no saints before you, in whom there has been the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning? Have none but you felt the curse of God in a broken law? Have none but you seen the evil of sin? Have none but you felt its guilt and burden laid upon your conscience? Have none but you sunk into despondency, gloom, doubt, and almost despair? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Then why not you receive mercy and pardon at God's hands? Why should not the Lord extend to you the same manifested mercy, shine into your soul, lift up upon you the light of his countenance, speak peace and pardon to your heart, apply the blood of sprinkling to your conscience, and reveal his dear Son to you as he has done to thousands before you? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Has he not sent his own dear Son to die for sinners? Did he not come to seek and to save that which was lost? Does not his blood cleanse from all sin, and why not you from your sin?

2. Or, you may be much oppressed by a sense of *the evil of your nature*; you may have had, in times past, glimpses and glances, sips and tastes of the Lord's goodness and love; and gone even further than that—had a sweet assurance of your interest in the precious blood of the Lamb. But the great deep was not then broken up; the evils of your heart were not brought to light; temptation had never assailed you, and your sins had never been raked up from the bottom of the pit of the horrid depths of your

fallen nature. But now, the Lord has, for his own wise and gracious purposes, given you to see the evils of your heart, by breaking up the fountains of the great deep, and showing you what you are as a sinner in his holy and pure eyes. But this makes you doubt and fear, question the whole work of grace upon your soul, and often sink very low in despondency, as not being able to perceive a grain of grace in your heart. But is anything too hard for the Lord? Would not one word from his gracious lips dispel all this darkness, remove all these guilty fears, chase away these apprehensions, and bring your soul into sweet peace? You know it would; and this is the reason why you are secretly crying to him to speak a word to your soul, and to lift up upon you the light of his countenance. Here is the smoke going up out of your heart, of which you heard this morning, rising up to the Lord in many an anxious desire, fervent cry, secret sigh, hidden tear, earnest groan, that he would break through the dark clouds that hover over your mind, and speak peace and consolation to your soul. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Has he not appeared for you in times past, and brought you out of as deep, if not deeper trouble?

3. Or you may have *backslidden* inwardly or outwardly, brought great guilt upon your conscience, chased away the dear Comforter, harboured filth in the sanctuary, and thus driven away the cloud, so that the smoke no longer seems to rise, or if it rise, only to choke you, make your eyes smart, and lodge in your throat as if it would rather stop your breath than mount up as sweet incense. As in the figure of smoking flax, you may have just enough life to cry, just enough feeling to moan, just enough power to look to the Lord from the very ends of the earth, and to have no hope or help but in him; for there has that been wrought in you by his Spirit and grace which will give you no rest, except in calling upon his holy name. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is then this your present case too hard for him? Does he not say, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22); and again, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away from him?" (Hosea 14:4.) How suitable are these promises to your case, and is it too

hard for the Lord to fulfil them? One word from him, one soft whisper, one sweet smile, one heavenly touch, one gracious breaking in, would set all things right, make every crooked thing straight, and every rough place smooth, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

4. But you may have great *temptations*, and those temptations may be either of a very seducing and alluring nature, or of a terrific and violent kind. Satan suits his temptations to the character that he is seeking to draw aside. He knows our weak points; he sees exactly where to lay the snare. He knows it would be in vain to bring carnal delights, sensual gratifications, and the lusts of the flesh before some because they would be at once rejected; for there is in them naturally that firmness of moral principle, which would immediately reject, and not be entangled in them. Now these he assails with his fiery darts, hurls the artillery of hell hot and fast into their carnal mind, and sets on fire all that combustible material of which it is full. But when thus assailed, they cannot believe it possible that a child of God should be subject to such feelings, exposed to such temptations, or ever have such vile and horrible thoughts and ideas working in his mind. Yet is anything too hard for the Lord? How, in one moment, he can rebuke the tempter, bid him flee, remove all these temptations that distress your soul, and so deliver you from them that they shall never more return, or at least not with their present power.

5. Or you may be placed, on the other hand, in very *critical circumstances*, where snares are being laid for your feet in all directions to entangle you in those lusts to which I have already alluded. Your calling in life may bring you into circumstances and amongst persons where you are continually assailed by temptations suitable to your flesh, and you are so perpetually exposed to them, and so brought into contact with some peculiar tempter, that you feel as if one day you must fall by his or her hand. Is anything too hard for the Lord? How, in a moment, by his providence or his grace, he may remove the temptation from you, or you from the temptation; or he may break the neck of it,

that it may have no more strength; and either place you in circumstances where you shall not be tempted in like manner as you now are, or arm you with grace and strength to withstand it, resisting even unto blood, striving against sin. It is a subject on which I cannot enter as fully as I could wish; but I know the temptations to which young persons, both male and female, are subject, and that none can escape them but by the power of God. How many young women in service, or as assistants in shops, or as engaged in those occupations which bring many of both sexes together, are exposed to continual solicitations, sometimes under an offer of marriage, to draw them aside; and how soon one false step, one giving way to temptation, may plunge them into sin and misery.

6. Or you may have to walk, in your journeyings onward, in *various paths of tribulation*; you may have, for instance, deep and trying *family* afflictions, and such a gap may have been made in your affections by a most distressing bereavement, that you feel as if it never could be repaired. A dear wife, a beloved husband, a darling child, may have been taken from your embrace, and so deep at present is the wound, that it seems to you it never can be healed. But is anything too hard for the Lord? If the object of your tender affection has died in faith and love; if you have a sweet testimony that he or she is with the Lord, and that he is wiping away the tears from his or her face, should not this be a balm to your bleeding wounds? And though nature ever will and ever must feel these heavy strokes, yet there is in the consolations of the gospel, when applied to the heart, a balm for every wound. If, then, the Lord should be pleased to drop into your soul a sweet sense of his presence and love, it will reconcile you to the painful bereavement.

7. Or, without experiencing these painful personal bereavements, there may be many *distressing things* in your family which cause you much pain and anxiety. You cannot see that in your children which you desire to see, and perhaps very much that it distresses you to see. But how many of the Lord's people have had these family trials before you. Abraham, Jacob, Job, David, all of whom

were amongst the most highly favoured saints recorded in the word, had their deep and painful family trials; but the Lord overruled them for their good, and granted them submission to them.

8. Or a circumstance may have taken place which seems of so *peculiar* a nature, that, according to your present feelings, nothing ever will or can reconcile you to it. There has been that blow struck in your warmest and tenderest affections, or against your character and Christian reputation, or that trying circumstance in Providence, or that most unexpected and painful occurrence in your own family, or that mysterious visitation in your own experience, that it seems to you as if nothing could ever make you see the end or object of it, and that it was permitted or ordained of God for the good of your soul. The dispensation at present is very dark and mysterious; you can get no light upon it as to the why or wherefore this is come upon you; you search the word to obtain some help there, but find nothing to meet the case. You wait anxiously under the preached word, if you can get any light or help from the mouth of God's servant; you look to the Lord himself with prayer and supplication, but it seems as if he shut out your prayer, and would give you no intimation that what has occurred should eventually work together for your good. But is anything too hard for the Lord? The time may come, and doubtless will come, when you will see the hand of the Lord conspicuously in your present trial, and so far from saying that you never should see the day when good would spring out of it, you will see it to have been one of the greatest blessings in your life; that the deep trial through which you were called to pass, and in which you felt convinced, so obstinate was unbelief, that you never should see the hand of God in it, was brought upon you by his special hand; and you will not only see the hand of God in it, but see a hand of love and tender mercy and rich compassion, in bringing upon you that particular occurrence, so that you would not have been without it for a thousand worlds.

9. Again, under the *weight of a daily cross*; under the burden of a body of sin and death; under the various struggles you have to

encounter as you move onward in the path of divine life, it often seems to you as if you could and should never *hold out to the end*; and you continually fear and apprehend that when the end comes it will find you wanting; that when you have to lay your head upon your last pillow, and there is only a step between you and death, that then all your doubts and fears, and all your guilt, sin, and shame, will lie upon your conscience as a load to press you down into despair, or be a millstone tied round your neck to whelm you in the very depths of hell. You paint to yourself a thousand fears, encompassing you in your last moments; you see yourself lying upon the bed of death; you seem even to hear the rattles in your throat, and to feel the sweat coursing in cold drops down your brow, and the last enemy seems to show himself in sight long before he comes; and you say, "Will it be with me on a bed of death as I often feel now? Shall I be as dark then, and as helpless then, and as much pressed down by doubt and fear then? Will the Lord be as silent then as he is now? Shall I have to die in the dark as I have often walked in the dark? And shall I leave no testimony behind for the comfort of the dear family of God, amongst whom I have lived and walked, or to be a balm to those dear relatives who shall watch my dying pillow? Lord, how am I to die—with thy presence in my soul, or with a cloud resting upon me, so that those around my bed shall not clearly know whither my soul is bound—for heaven or hell?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? How many through all their life, from fear of death, are subject to bondage. How many have painted a gloomy death as almost their certain lot. But none of their fears have been verified: instead of having the death they feared, full of darkness and gloom, it has been one of light and life; and instead of being pressed down with guilt and fear, their soul has been rejoicing in the Lord under the sweet shinings in of his manifested love. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Has he not smiled upon a thousand deathbeds, and why not upon yours?

But, my friends, the Lord will make us feel that though his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear, yet he is to be enquired of. He is indeed a God that worketh wonders; apparent impossibilities are nothing with him;



he has but to speak and it is done. But he will make us know his power by making us feel our weakness. He will often keep at a great distance, and for a long time, in order to make us value his presence. He will make us sink very low that he may lift us very high. He will make us taste the bitterness of the gall and wormwood of sin that we may know the sweetness of manifested pardon. He will teach us to abhor ourselves in our own sight, and loathe ourselves for our abominations, before we shall see and know ourselves washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and to stand before him without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The Lord in one sense is easy of access upon his throne of grace, but in another very hard to be got at. He invites his dear people to come and spread their wants before him; he encourages them with a thousand promises; he says in our text, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" But he will make us set a due value upon his visitations: they shall not be given to us very easily or very frequently that we may not hold them cheap. It is not "ask and have" immediately. We have to learn what sin cost our dear Redeemer; we have to see the holiness and majesty of God; we have to learn that though mercy is free, and grace superabounds over the aboundings of sin, yet it must be got at after many a struggle, many a cry, many a sigh and groan, and many a fervent petition; that though all fulness dwells in the Lord the Lamb, and he invites us to come and take of the water of life freely, yet it is guarded on every side by many things that would drive us back. And thus he teaches us to put due value upon his grace, upon the visitations of his countenance and the words of his lips. They cost the dear Redeemer the deepest agonies of body and soul and sufferings of which no finite mind can form a conception; and, therefore, are not to be given out without teaching us to know through what channel they came, nor what it cost the blessed Son of God to give out of his fulness those supplies of grace by which he enriches our need.

Thus, though there is nothing too hard for the Lord, he will try faith and patience before he bares his arm. He tried the faith of Abraham, and the faith of Sarah, and the faith of Jacob, and the faith of all his saints of old; but he never was unfaithful to his

word. They found in the end the benefit of trusting. They looked to him and were lightened, their faces were not ashamed, and in the end they reaped the benefit of all their sorrows and all their sighs in a full manifestation of his pardoning love.

I would have you, therefore, look at both these sides of the question; and I would, first, say a word to those who think that God is easy to be entreated, and that they have nothing to do but to ask that they may at once receive. Here men deceive themselves. Indeed it is the grand deception of the day. They are invited, by preachers of all denominations indiscriminately, to come to Christ, to make use of Christ, and take hold of Christ, and they think, from the way in which sometimes they are exhorted, sometimes warned, sometimes scolded for not coming at once, that to come to Christ is almost as easy as it is to come to breakfast or to come to dinner; and that Christ can be taken hold of by the hands of a natural faith, almost as readily and as easily as a man takes a loaf from off the breakfast table and cuts himself a slice. Thus they perish in their sins, deluded by their own ideas of free-will, and, deceived by their ministers who preach to them, as if they had power to come to Christ if they would but do so. Hundreds die in unbelief, under the idea that Christ can be had recourse to whenever they please and his mercy found whenever it is sought. Now I would not, now I dare not set any limit to God's mercy. It endureth from generation to generation. It is to be built up for ever; and mercy, and mercy alone can save a sinner. Nor would I set any bounds to the grace of God; for where sin abounded, there doth grace much more abound. But I would say this, that mercy and grace are not to be played with, and not to be trifled with, not to be thought common things that any man can take or leave just as he pleases, or to be hawked about for common use, and offered in baskets full from door to door. I would say this, that the things of salvation are very precious and costly, as springing out of the counsels of God's infinite wisdom, the treasures of his boundless mercy, and the depths of his superabounding grace, as manifested in the gift of his dear Son, and in what he suffered to make them effectual to salvation. And as God sets a great value upon his own mercy

and grace, he will teach us to set a great value upon them too. This he teaches us by making us know what we are in the Adam fall; by giving us lesson after lesson of our own sinfulness, misery, wretchedness, and helplessness, and often keeping us very long without a word to relieve our fainting mind or support our sinking spirit, that we may set a due value upon that which God so highly esteems, and not count the blood of sprinkling to be a common thing, despise the riches of God's grace, or think salvation is to be had at man's beck and call; but to set God's value upon that which God himself declares is so valuable.

And yet in the end it will be found that every promise of God will stand; that all his declarations will come to pass; and that nothing is too hard for the Lord except to save a sinner not interested in atoning blood, a sinner not regenerated by the Spirit of God, a sinner who lives and dies in impenitence and unbelief. But for those in whose heart the Spirit and grace of God are at work to give them repentance unto life, a living faith in the Son of God, a good hope in his mercy, and a love to his name—I say to them, "Is anything too hard for the Lord to do for such and in such, seeing that he gave his only begotten Son for them, and has manifested the purposes of his grace by beginning a sacred work upon their heart, which he himself will bring to perfection for their eternal good, and his own immortal glory?"

## **DIVINE SEPARATION**

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Morning, 13th August, 1843

"For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Exodus 33:16

I think the transaction recorded in this chapter is the most remarkable of any that we find in the history of the children of Israel. Consider the circumstances and what preceded this divine interview betwixt Moses and God. It was after the children of Israel had made and worshipped the golden calf, after they had so sadly provoked the Lord by their base idolatry, that he suffers himself to be prevailed upon by the prayers of Moses, the typical Mediator, to shew forth his mercy and grace; and not, as he speaks, to "consume them in the way".

What was it, then, which peculiarly called forth these words from the mouth of Moses? The Lord had said to him: "Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Exod. 33:1.)

The Lord put, as it were, by this speech, the children of Israel into the hand of Moses. It is as though he had thus spoken: "I will indeed fulfil my promise. I said I would take them into the land of Canaan; I will do so; but I will do no more; I renounce the direct charge of them; they have so provoked me to anger that, though I will fulfil my promise, so that none shall call me an unfaithful God, yet I will do no more than I have promised to Abraham. Do thou take them up; do thou lead them; do thou receive this charge at my hands; for I relinquish it." Now this was the most cutting stroke that God could have given to Moses: for his soul was so deeply penetrated and possessed, as every child of God's

is, with a sense of his own helplessness and nothingness, that such a speech as this from the mouth of the Lord seemed a death-blow to all his hopes; and it was this, therefore, that led him to plead so earnestly with the Lord that he would do **more** than barely fulfil his promise by taking them to the land of Canaan. He says, "If thy **presence** go not with me, carry us not up hence", as though he would sooner stay where he was, and die in the wilderness, without moving a single step forward; as though he would rather God did not fulfil his promise at all, than deny them his presence, and not go up with them.

And thus Moses, as the Psalmist says, "stood before him in the breach." (Ps. 106:23.) He was the typical Mediator; and the Lord condescended to hear his prayer, and assured him that "His presence should go with him, and that he would give him rest". This sweet promise led Moses to put up the prayer contained in the text, that affectionate and powerful plea with Jehovah. "Wherein," he says, "shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

I think, in these words, we may find **four** distinct steps of divine leading poured out.

I.—The original source and fountain of all the blessings the soul enjoys in time or eternity, "**finding grace** in God's sight".

II.—The fruit of finding grace—that the Lord, **by his presence, goes up** with the soul.

III.—The **knowledge** of the Lord's manifest presence, both in the souls of those that receive it, and in the consciences of others. "Wherein shall it be **known here** that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight."

IV.—The fruit and effect of God's manifested presence—**separation.** "So shall we **be separated, I and thy people,** from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

I. We will look, then, with God's blessing, **first,** at the original source and fountain of every spiritual blessing that the soul receives in time or for eternity. It is all couched in that one expression, "finding grace in God's sight". It was said of Noah, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (Gen. 6:8.) The rest of the world did not find that grace. It does not say that Noah obtained acceptance with God on the score of merit, or on the footing of his own good works. The only reason why Noah and his family were preserved in the ark, whilst the rest of the world were swallowed up in the waters of the deluge, was this, that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord".

**(i)** But the very expression itself will bear to be analysed, for there is a sweet vein of truth in every word of it. First, then, the word **grace.** What is "grace"? It is the free, unmerited favour of God in the person, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, manifested to the vessels of mercy. There is nothing, indeed, more easy than to pick up a few sound notions about **grace;** and perhaps there are few persons in this chapel who are wholly ignorant in their judgment of what "grace" means; but when we come to a vital experience of it, to a real spiritual knowledge of it, as brought into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, then we see a wide distinction betwixt a mere notional acquaintance with grace in the judgment, and a spiritual and supernatural reception of grace into the soul.

The seat of free-will is not so much a man's head as a man's heart; and, therefore, a few notional opinions about grace in the head can never touch the seat of the disease. If I have a wound in my head, there is no use putting a plaster on my arm; if I have an affection in my heart, there is no use prescribing for a pain in my head; we must have the remedy just where the malady is. Now that wretched spawn of free-will, that proud opinion of merit, that miserable self-righteousness, which is the very

element of creature religion, has its seat in the heart; and, therefore, out of the heart does it continually pour forth its poisonous breath. In order, then, to give a mortal stab to this self-righteousness, in order to pluck up by the very roots, and pull away the quivering fibres of this wretched free-will, which is interwoven with every nerve, vein, and artery of our nature, we must have the power of God to come into our heart. In order then, to understand, feel, and appreciate what grace is, we must first learn the depth of our ruin, we must know the plague and leprosy of sin, and thus come into that spot of which the Lord speaks by his prophet—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isai. 1:5, 6.) To stand before God a mass of filth and corruption; to feel that it is almost impossible that God can ever look down with pity and love upon such a wretch; to believe that there would be as much mercy for Satan himself, if there were not a Mediator who has taken our flesh into union with himself—to have some of these painful feelings wrought into his heart will teach a man his need of grace.

Now, till a man has grace in his heart, there is no use putting a few notional opinions about grace into his head. His heart will still be fortified in free-will and self-righteousness, until a firm stab is made at the conscience, and until there is a real home-thrust by the sword of God himself into the soul, so as to cut asunder the very nerves and sinews of creature merit, and delusive hopes.

It is then no longer a mere parrot sound with him but it is the very marrow of vital godliness lodged in his soul, and sweeter to him than honey or the honey-comb. And if a man does not get hold of grace in this way, he had better be an Arminian at once, and stand forth in his true colours, a free-willer in head as he is a free-willer in heart, a Pharisee to the backbone, without the mask of a Calvinistic professor.

**(ii)** Now this grace is "**found.**" It is not earned, nor merited, nor worked into; but it is **found**; and if a man never "found" it, he

never had it. It is stumbled upon, so to speak, as the Lord sets forth in the parable of the man who found the treasure hid in a field. (Matt. 13:44.) The man was not thinking about the treasure. He was, we may suppose, ploughing in the field. He had no idea that there was gold beneath the clods. But he finds it all on a sudden, in the most unexpected and unlooked-for manner, and for joy thereof "goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field". So it is with the way in which grace is found. It comes so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and so sweetly into a man's soul, that when it comes he is like a man who has found something which he had no conception of till he had found it. He had no idea what it was, not how it was to be got, nor whence it was to be had; but when it came into his heart he found that he had a treasure there. The treasure which the man found in the field was much sweeter to him, because unexpectedly found, than if he had earned it penny by penny. Its coming in so peculiar a way, from the surprise and joy produced, doubled and trebled the value of the money. Thus, when grace visits the earth in an unexpected moment, and drops down like the dew of heaven into the soul, it is valued much more than if laboriously earned penny by penny. The sweetness of the gift is doubled by its unexpectedness, and by its coming in such a marvellous and miraculous manner.

**(iii)** The expression, too "**in God's sight,**" adds great sweetness to the word "**find;**" as though God's eyes never could see anything but grace on behalf of his people; as though, when he looks upon his elect, he does not look upon them as they often look upon themselves, but as they stand in Christ. When we look upon ourselves, we often see ourselves the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most vile, the most unworthy, the most earthly and sensual wretches that God can permit to live; at least, that is the view we take of ourselves when we are really humbled in our own eyes.

But God does not so view his people; they "have found grace in his sight"; he views them as they stand in the covenant of grace, "complete in Christ", accepted in the beloved "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing". Though he sees, so far as to chastise



their sins and backslidings, yet, in viewing their persons, he beholds them as they stand in the holiness and righteousness of their Covenant Head. And thus they "find grace in his sight" the eyes of the Father being so taken up with the beauty and glory of his only-begotten Son, that his eyes being perpetually fixed upon Him, they are perpetually fixed upon his people as they stand in Him. And thus he does not see his people as they often see themselves, full of wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores but clothed in the perfection, beauty, and loveliness of their head and husband; and thus "they find grace in his sight".

II.—But what is the fruit and consequence of finding "grace in God's sight", as stated in the text? It is this—that God **goes up** with them—"For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us?" Moses was not satisfied with the **doctrine** that he and the people had found grace in God's sight. If Moses could have been contented with the mere doctrine of justification: if he had been a dry doctrinal Calvinist, we never should have had this prayer from his lips; he would have said "O, all is right; the everlasting covenant stands ordered in all things and **sure:**' God's people can never come short of the promised inheritance: they are all sure to get safe to Canaan; for God's promises must ever stand". But as he was not a dead, dry doctrinalist, he was begging and crying for the presence of God in his soul. He was nor satisfied with a notional opinion about God's presence, nor a doctrinal sentiment about finding grace in his sight—**that** would not do for his poor cast-down soul: but he cried, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence". As though he had said, "Let me die where I am, rather than go forward, if thy presence does not go with me".

And then he says, "Wherein shall it be known?" What proof will there be, what testimony, that we have found grace in thy sight? For, Lord, it does not satisfy our souls that thou tellest us we have found grace in thy sight, unless thou dost something more? Thou must go up with us". He appeals to the Lord himself, and asks him the very question, "Is there any other way whereby it

can be known that we have found grace in thy sight? Is not this the grand manifestation of it? Is not this the way that it is opened up and made known to our consciences, in "that thou goest up with us?" You may depend upon it, then, that every soul taught by Moses' God, and blessed with the same spiritual power and presence which he was blessed with will never be satisfied with the mere notion, with the bare knowledge, that God's people have "found grace in his sight", unless the Lord specially manifest it in his heart and conscience, so as to go up with him experimentally in his soul.

But see where Moses and the children of Israel had to go to, and what a path they had to walk in, to get there. A waste howling wilderness lay before their eyes, where were fiery flying serpents, and perpetual drought, with a burning sun above, and a scorching sand beneath, in which they must inevitably and speedily perish unless the Lord gave miraculous supplies. All therefore—their very existence—depended wholly and solely upon this point, whether the Lord went up with them; if he did not go with them, no manna would fall from heaven, no water would gush out of the rock, and Jordan could not be passed, nor the promised land won. So God's people, whose eyes are spiritually enlightened, to see their own helplessness, feebleness, and wretchedness, are brought to feel, the Lord must go with them every step of the way, and lead them, and shine upon them, or, with all they have known and experienced, they must utterly faint by the way.

What a death-blow does such a text as this give to all dead notional assurance! Who had ever seen the power of God so signally and miraculously displayed as these children of Israel? What an experience they had to look back upon! Can any notional professor in our day bring forward an equal or similar one? Brought out of Egypt with a high hand; carried by a miracle through the Red Sea, their enemies overwhelmed in its deep waters before their eyes; fed by daily supplies of manna, and drinking day by day miraculous draughts out of "the rock that followed them", might they not have folded their arms and said, "We are sure to get to Canaan. Why do we want the Lord's

presence to go up with us? Our past experience is enough; and surely, we can rest upon the doctrine". No; Moses could not rest upon a doctrine, however true. He must have the Lord's felt presence to accompany him, or he would rather die, and not go a step further. And thus whatever God's people may have experienced in times past; if the Lord leave them, down they sink into all the deathliness, carnality, and wretchedness which they felt before. He must appear as much to their souls **now** for every fresh difficulty as he appeared to their souls before in former difficulties; nor can they take a single step aright unless he work in them "to will and to do of his good pleasure".

This going up of the Lord, experimentally with the soul, is in some sense a feeling of his presence, some clear testimony that the Lord is upon its side. But how was this brought about in the experience of the children of Israel? By one continual tissue of miracles it was that the Lord manifested his presence among them. It was not trifles that called forth his power, but such difficulties as nothing but a miraculous interposition could remove. And what a wisdom there was in God's leading his people through the wilderness! If they had gone through a cultivated land, where they could have sown and reaped their harvests, and lived on their flocks and herds, would God's miraculous interposition have been continually required? But their being led through the wilderness, "a land that was not sown," (Jer. 2:2.) made them want a miracle at every step. So it is with God's people spiritually and experimentally during their earthly pilgrimage. Could their own wisdom find out, or their own strength enable them to walk in God's way when found, they would not want to have miracles displayed on their behalf. Free-will, indeed, infidelity and unbelief, reject miracles as matters of spiritual experience. **Their** way is a reasonable way; but the way by which God takes his people to heaven is an unreasonable way. The way in which free-will and self-righteousness walk is a natural way; the way in which God leads his children is a supernatural way. The road which sense and reason treads, is a common-place, every-day, turnpike road; but the path into which God guides his people is an out-of-the-way, hidden path, which

the vulture's eye hath not seen, and so beset with difficulties, that well nigh every step of their journey requires a miracle to be performed. I do not mean an external miracle, such as Christ wrought in the days of his flesh, but an internal miracle in soul experience. There are, for instance, blind inward eyes to be opened, deaf hearts and ears to be unstopped, paralytic soul-joints to be strengthened, spiritual enemies to be overcome, powerful temptations to be subdued, a heart of stone to be taken away, and a heart of flesh given; and God's mercy and grace to superabound over all the abounding of sin. The people of God find every step they take so beset with exercises and trials, and they have such a dead, stupid, unfeeling, unbelieving, proud, ignorant, self-righteous heart, that, though they may see the way in which they should walk, they cannot, in their own strength, take a single step in it; and thus they find and feel that, before they can take a single step forward, God must give their feet and ankle-bones strength. (Acts 3:7.)

Before they can see an inch before their eyes, the Lord must give them spiritual eyesight; so that if they feel any softening, or melting down of spirit, or any sense of God's gracious presence, it is as much an internal miracle wrought in their heart as when God opened the windows of heaven, and dropped down the miraculous supply of manna for the children of Israel. Feeling, then, as all God's people do feel, what an intricate, dark, mysterious path they have to walk in, and how unable they are to take a single step forward, except as God takes hold of their foot, and puts it down for them in the road; and how helpless to lift up a hand, except as the everlasting arms lift it up for them; they are absolutely as unable to go forward in the life and walk of faith, without the Lord's going up with them, as the children of Israel would have been in the wilderness, had the supply of manna and of water been suddenly withheld.

III.—But we pass on to consider the **knowledge** of this. "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight". Moses pleads with the Lord upon this footing—"how shall it be known?" We find Moses often making

use of this argument, as—"Wherefore (Ex. 32:12) should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains", as though—I speak it with reverence—he would touch God's honour; as though he would say, "Lord, think of thine own character; consider thine own glorious name. What will be said against thee, and against thy faithfulness, if thine anger be hot against them, and thou consume them as thou hast threatened?" He appeals to God's jealousy for his own glory and honour; so that we may paraphrase his words thus, "Lord, thou hast brought us out of Egypt; hast divided the Red Sea into parts; hast led us step by step up to this moment. Now, Lord, if we never reach Jordan, and never enter the land of promise, but pine and die in the wilderness, because thou wilt no longer go up with us, what will be said by thine and our enemies? How shall it be known that thou art our God? Egypt and Canaan will rejoice when they learn that we have perished by the way".

Now, I believe this is the way in which God's people sometimes plead with him. "Lord, what will the enemies of truth say if thou leavest me when I need thy special succour? If, when I come to die, for instance, thou dost not then support my soul, dost not smile upon my heart, dost not enable me to leave a blessed testimony behind, if I die in the dark, will not the enemies of truth rejoice!" Or, "Lord, if a temptation assail me, and I am suffered to fall; or if my besetting sin attack me, and I am overcome by it, will it not disgrace thy name and cause?" O, how the soul will sometimes plead with the Lord upon this footing, that it will be, so to speak, a stab at God's honour, and open the mouths of his enemies if he do not this and that for the soul.

Such was Moses' plea in the text. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest up with us?" The manifested presence of the Lord in their midst was the only satisfying testimony that they had found grace in his sight. And may we not apply this to ourselves? And I am sure that, if you are the Lord's, nothing but his testimony can satisfy your souls. I am sure nothing can ever

satisfy me, either as a Christian or as a minister, but the Lord's own testimony in my conscience.

And this, too, is the way by which it is known, not only to yourselves but to others. For when Moses pleaded with the Lord he was not merely speaking of the personal enjoyment of God's presence in his own conscience, or of the manifestation of it in the hearts of God's people among the children of Israel; he was looking at it in a wider and more general point of view even than that, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth"; that is generally and universally to friend and foe, Egyptian and Canaanite, as well as to the children of Israel. Why the enemies of truth themselves are to have an evidence in their consciences that God is with this people; an unwilling evidence I admit; an evidence in spite of themselves. They must see, by the Lord's crowning the word with his blessing, by his building up to himself a church that walks in all the ordinances of his house blameless, which speaks, lives, and acts in the fear of his great name, and adorns the doctrine in all things; by your love to each other; by the image of Christ stamped upon your hearts, lips, and lives—I say, even our enemies must be silenced, if not satisfied, if such testimony of God's favour and presence are found among you. As David said of old, "Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." (Ps. 86:17.) And, again—"The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. 112:10.)

IV.—But what is the grand manifested effect of all this work in the conscience? **Separation.** "So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". The effect, then, of the Lord's going up with the soul, is separation—and, mark, universal separation—"from all the people that dwell upon the face of the earth". And what is the cause of this separation? Not only because they believed

doctrines different from what the Egyptians believed; not merely because they outwardly worshipped Jehovah when the people of Egypt worshipped bulls, monkeys, birds, and serpents; not only because they had the tabernacle, and the sacrifices, and the ark of the covenant. These were, indeed, reasons for separation, but not the chief; not the one which Moses brings prominently forward in the text. That was the going up of God with them, his manifested presence in their assemblies, and in the hearts of his people. It is these alone which can effectually or vitally separate us from the profane and the professing world. Persons may, indeed, and do separate on other grounds. Some, for instance, separate from a place and people, because the doctrine preached by the minister does not suit them. It is a good ground of separation where God has not caused his own blessed doctrine of grace and truth to drop as the rain, and distil as the dew into the heart of the minister, and therefore he cleaves to Arminianism and free-will. But to separate merely for the sake of doctrine is what a man may do and be still dead in a profession.

Many separations and schisms, again, arise solely from party spirit. A church falls to quarrelling upon no point of truth or conscience, but on some unimportant trifle, or perhaps malicious report; and they become so embroiled that reconciliation is out of the question; and so the next step is separation; God's glory never sought, his honour never considered, but a wretched party spirit splitting asunder the church, and forming the only ground of separation. But this is, indeed, a most miserable ground. A separation to be upon good grounds must be a separation for truth and conscience; and not merely for truth and conscience, but also for the power of the gospel. Truth and conscience are, indeed, a good ground of separation if a church walk disorderly, or if it slight and despise either of the ordinances of the gospel; but, to make the ground thoroughly firm and sure, and satisfy the soul completely, we must have something more spiritual and experimental even than that. The power and presence of God must have left the place before we can comfortably leave it. And this conclusion will not be hastily come to in a tender conscience. The fault will be again and again charged upon self before it is

laid anywhere else. But when, after repeated trials, and after continual crying to the Lord that he would bless the word to our souls, and when, after going again and again, we find that no power or unction rests upon the ministry, but that all is barrenness and death, **that** will be a sufficient ground for separation from any ministry whatever.

And this is the way in which God's people, for the most part, are separated from dead professors. He brings powerful convictions of sin into their consciences, and creates a hungering and thirsting after felt pardon and peace, and a feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction with everything short of the power of the gospel in the conscience. They are thus usually internally before they are externally separated; they are often wretched and miserable as craving what they cannot obtain, and for a long time perhaps lay the charge on themselves before their eyes are open to see where the fault really lies.

But to separate will often be a hard conflict; and I confess I like to see a sharp struggle, for I know I had a strong contest about it myself. In these hard struggles we are brought to see and feel things which we never saw or felt before; and when, at last, the cord is effectually cut, you are much surer of your man, and the work is clearer in his conscience than if it had been done in a hurry. I have compared some people's change of religion to a man going to a river to bathe; he stands hesitating awhile upon the bank, and, having mustered sufficient resolution, at length jumps into the water; but he finds it very cold. And what does he do? Why, he sneaks out again, and crawls back upon the bank. So it is with many persons in respect of religion. They jump out of the world into a profession, or out of Arminianism into Calvinism, or out of the Church into Dissent; and when they have jumped in, they find it is not altogether what they expected. Trials, persecutions, temptations assail them; the thing is not so agreeable as they anticipated, and what do they but sneak out again, and stand cold and dripping upon the bank. But, if a man has been led on by degrees, having had "line upon line, and precept upon precept," fastened in his conscience; if the power of



truth has been worked into him, grafted into him, planted in him by the hand of God, so as to take a vital root in his soul, he is much more likely to stand in the day of trial than if it had been a thing which he had received in a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks. The religion of the one is like a flower that has a root to it, and which grows in the natural soil; the religion of the other is like a cropped flower, a nose-gay which soon withers away, and is then only fit for the dunghill. "The root of the matter" is in the one, being watered with dew from heaven; and, the God of all grace communicating increase; he will "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine". This religion will not be a deception, like some of the flowers sold in the streets of London; but there is a root to his religion, and therefore it will not be dried up by the sun of temptation, but, being planted in the house of the Lord, will flourish for ever in the courts, of his God.

We ought, then, to weigh well what is the ground of our separation, whatever it be, and feel well convinced that it is God's work on the conscience, and has sprung from His own teaching in the soul. Persons have said of me sometimes, "O, he will go back; So-and-so has returned after seceding as he has done, and he will do so too". I have sometimes used a homely figure in reply; I have said, "Did you ever see a stagecoach horse, who has been yoked to a coach for some years, until he has been quite broken down, and unable to do his work any longer—did you ever see him voluntarily leave his pasture, where he has been turned out to graze, and yoke himself to the old machine which has worn out his strength?" When a man has had a thing wrought into his conscience with divine power he does not easily forget those lessons. When what he has learnt has been flogged into him, such instruction abides with him, and he is no more able to get that truth out of his heart which God has lodged there, than he is able to get his heart out of his body. If planted there by a miraculous hand, it will abide there by the same miraculous hand keeping it there; as the Lord says, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. 27:3.)

Wherever, then, there is a true spiritual separation, it is "from all the people that are upon the face of the earth", that is, from all that do not know the power, from all that do not experience or value the teachings of the Spirit; from all that have "a name to live whilst dead"; from all, whoever they be, that have not the power of truth lodged in the conscience. However near they may approach to the truth, however they may assume the form of godliness, if they deny outwardly or inwardly the power thereof, there must be a separation. And God will justify such a separation by manifesting his presence in the minister's heart and in the people's conscience; for his words are: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) But, remember this, my friends—the inward separation must go first. There is no use separating in body unless you are separated in spirit. If any of you are sitting under Arminian teachers, or heady notional Calvinists, there must be a heart and conscience separation first, an inward separation wrought into your soul by the power of God, and that will bring about the outward separation.

Till we have the Lord's testimony in our conscience, there will be little felt in all our movements but bondage and death; but when we have the clear warrant and the plain handwriting of heaven in our hearts, we can separate ourselves as freely and comfortably from the great bulk of the professing church as from the profane world; yes, from all but the living family of God; and to them we shall cleave with affection of heart, saying, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" We shall be willing to suffer reproach and shame; yea, at times, "to endure all things for the elect's sake". We shall be willing to cast our lot among the people of God, and feeling a oneness of spirit with them, and a blessed knitting of the soul to them, we shall say "You are my companions; with you I wish to live, and with you I wish to die; for with you I trust my happy soul will live for ever, to sing the praises of the Three-one God".

## The Doctrine Which Drops as the Rain, and the Speech which distils as the Dew

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day morning, Oct. 18, 1857

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Deuteronomy 32:2

Forty years were the children of Israel sentenced to wander in the wilderness as a justly deserved punishment for their unbelief, rebellion, and disobedience. Provoked by their murmurings when the spies brought back an evil report of the land, the Lord declared that of all which came up out of Egypt, from 20 years old and upward, not one should enter the promised land but Caleb and Joshua (Numb. 14:29, 30). Therefore, to use the striking and emphatic language of the Holy Ghost, "Their carcasses fell in the wilderness." Now, when the rebels and unbelievers had died off, according to the word of the Lord, Moses, at the end of the 40 years, summons the children of Israel who survive into his presence, and recapitulates in their ears the blessings and the curses which he had set before them 40 years before. It is therefore called the Book of Deuteronomy, which signifies literally a second law, or the law recapitulated. But in two sublime and beautiful chapters, just towards the close (32., 33.), he puts, so to speak, a crown upon the whole; for, dropping all mention of the law with its curses, he proclaims in them the glorious gospel of the grace of God, mingling, however, with its promises and blessings, solemn warnings and suitable admonitions.

He opens the chapter before us in a very sublime and solemn manner, by calling upon "the heavens to give ear"—for he was about to speak of things that came from heaven and would lead to heaven—and "the earth to hear the words of his mouth," for they were addressed to those who were still in the flesh. And to show by what Spirit he was speaking, and by whose inspiration he was addressing them, he adds, in the words of our text:—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

In endeavouring, with God's blessing, to open up these words, I shall show—

I.—First, what the "*doctrine*" and the "*speech*" were which Moses under this holy inspiration delivered.

II.—Secondly, how this doctrine and this speech are to "*drop as the rain,*" and "*distil as the dew*"—nay more, to fall "*as the small rain, and as the showers.*"

III.—Thirdly, upon what the rain, the dew, the small rain, and the showers were to fall—"*upon the tender herb,*" and "*upon the grass.*"

IV.—And fourthly, what would be *the fruit and effect* of this dropping as the rain, this distilling as the dew, of the small rain thus falling upon the tender herb, and the showers upon the grass.

I.—Moses speaks in our text of his "*doctrine*" and of his "*speech;*" and says of the first "*it shall drop as the rain,*" and of the second "*it shall distil as the dew.*" What is this doctrine and what is this speech?—for, we consider them to mean one and the same thing.

There is no greater mistake or more fruitful parent of error than to limit to one narrow meaning the full and comprehensive language of the Holy Ghost. I shall therefore endeavour to explain what the word "doctrine" means in our text.

By the word we certainly cannot understand, 1, *the Law*, because *that*, as delivered from Mount Sinai, most certainly did not "drop as the rain," nor "distil as the dew." It is called by Moses himself, in the very next, chapter, "a fiery law;" and was given amidst lightnings and thunders and earthquake. It contained, unalterably attached to it, a tremendous curse for its non-fulfilment; and God in it so declared his holiness and terrible majesty, that all the people trembled, and besought that they might never hear that awe-inspiring voice again.

Nor does, 2, the word "doctrine" here contain any such meaning as we sometimes attach to that word—*truth as it stands in the bare letter of Scripture*, or a cold, hard, dry doctrinal preaching of the

truth, dissociated from a vital experience of its power. But the word "doctrine," both in the Old and New Testament, usually signifies *teaching*. As we read—"The Scripture is profitable for doctrine;" that is, teaching (2 Timothy 3:16). So we read of those who "labour in the word and doctrine"—that is, in preaching and teaching. Paul bids Timothy "give attendance to doctrine;" that is, to teaching, that being the office of a minister. In fact, there is scarcely a passage where the term occurs in which it does not mean "teaching;" and that word may be nearly always substituted for it.

The word "doctrine" here, however, is taken from a Hebrew root, that means *to receive*; so that if we gave the word its literal meaning, it would be—"My reception"—that which I have received of God. And thus it points out something that God himself had communicated by his Spirit to Moses, and which he had received feelingly, believingly, and obediently, that he might communicate it to the people. This doctrine, then, which Moses had received from the Lord and taught to the people—to take a wider and larger view of it—was *the Gospel*; for this is that which God the Spirit specially reveals and the believing heart receives.

But it will help us to understand more clearly what this "doctrine" is if we take a glance at the context, where Moses goes on to unfold what he had to teach. There are four things which he specially mentions as constituent parts of which he had received from God.

1. For instance, he says—"Ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Therefore, to ascribe greatness unto our God is a part of that doctrine which, falling from his lips, dropped as the rain; an integral portion of that speech which, as he uttered it, distilled from his lips as the dew. And in fact that teaching and preaching which ascribes greatness unto God will always be suitable to the child of God. His own conscience, so far as it is enlightened by the Spirit of God, tells him what a great God he has to deal with—how great in power, in glory, in majesty, in justice, in holiness; how great in surrounding him day by day with his heart-searching eye, his supporting presence, and his upholding hand. Nor can any doctrine "drop as the rain," nor any speech "distil as the dew," which does not "ascribe greatness unto our God." For any doctrine that ascribes greatness to man—that speaks of any good

in the creature, and thus robs the Lord of his glory to put that crown upon the head of a fallen sinner, will neither "drop as the rain" nor "distil as the dew" upon any believing heart; for it is not a doctrine that God ever owns, nor a speech that the Holy Ghost ever impregnates with life-giving unction and power. But that doctrine and that speech which ascribe greatness unto our God and represent him in his true character, not only, as infinitely great, glorious, and holy in the Law, but merciful beyond all conception and beyond all utterance of men or angels in the Gospel, will be so owned of himself that it will ever "drop as the rain" and "distil as the dew," as the Holy Ghost is pleased to bless and apply it to the awakened conscience.

But the words "our God" here, if we look a little more closely at the context, will be found chiefly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in covenant relationship, is especially "our God." We find, therefore, that Thomas, when the Lord so graciously removed his unbelief, at once worshipped and adored him with the words—"My Lord and my God." He there owned and acknowledged the deity of Jesus Christ, which he saw shining through the veil of his humanity. We therefore ascribe greatness unto our God when we show the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ as "God over all, blessed for ever," and proclaim that in consequence of his being the great God of heaven and earth, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all that he said and did is invested with all the greatness of God; in a word, that there is a divine greatness in his Person, as Immanuel God with us; a divine greatness in his blood, as being emphatically the blood of the Son of God; a greatness in his righteousness, as being a righteousness wrought out by God, in flesh; a greatness in his mercy as the mercy of God; in his love, as the love of God; and in his faithfulness, as the faithfulness of God. When we thus ascribe faithfulness unto the Lord Jesus Christ as our covenant God, that doctrine will ever "drop as the rain," and that speech will ever "distil as the dew," because the Holy Ghost will honor it, power will attend it, and it will be blessed to the hearts and consciences of those who fear God. Nor has the Holy Spirit ever owned any doctrine which has not clearly set forth the glorious deity and suffering humanity of the Lord Jesus.

2. But Moses also gives another reason *why* his doctrine should

"drop as the rain and his speech distil as the dew," in the striking expression—*"Because I will publish the name of the Lord;"* the word *"because"* clearly showing *what* the doctrine is that will ever so drop and distil. The office of a minister of the gospel is to "publish the name of the Lord;" in other words, to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ. The "name of the Lord" in Scripture means and comprehends all that which in this time state can be known of God. It is, therefore, the manifestation of the character of God in the Scripture, or, to speak more correctly, the revelation of what God is in Christ. As by the name of a man we may understand all that can be known of an individual man, so by the name of the Lord we understand all that can be known of God, and therefore all that can be believed, hoped in, loved, and admired of the great and glorious Jehovah. Whatever, therefore, God is to man; whatever Christ is to his church; whatever the Holy Spirit manifests of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the divine Essence, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whatever the Scripture unfolds of the beauty and blessedness of this three-one Jehovah; all, all that the Scripture reveals; all, all that faith receives, hope anchors in, and love embraces, may be comprehended in the expression—*"the name of the Lord."* Moses published this name; he proclaimed it on high. His delight as well as his privilege was to set forth to the utmost of his power, with the highest of his spiritual faculties, the glory of that great name, that men might believe in it, hope in it, and love it; that it might be enshrined in their hearts' warmest and tenderest affections; and be so endeared to their soul by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that they might publish that name abroad as a name ever worthy to be admired and adored by all the suffering saints on earth and all the glorified spirits in heaven.

Now it is impossible for any one who has ever felt anything of the goodness of God, and of the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep silence. It is with him as the Lord said of his disciples, "If these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out." Whatever strong resolution the child of God may have inwardly formed to keep secret the dealings of God with his soul, fearing either that he might be deceived, or if he opened his mouth that he might speak beyond what a tender conscience might sanction; yet when he is in any measure blessed with a sense of the Lord's goodness, he is obliged to speak; he cannot but tell how good the Lord has been to him, and

what he has felt of his mercy and love. And thus with Moses. He published the name of the Lord, because that name had been revealed to his soul when the Lord put him into a cleft of the rock, "descended in the cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." And what was that name which the Lord himself proclaimed when he passed by before him, but this, "The Lord, the LORD God merciful, and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin?" (Exodus 34:5, 7.) It was the publishing of this name, and of this name only, which made his doctrine "drop as the rain," his speech "distil as the dew." Nor will any other doctrine so drop, or any other speech so distil.

The preaching of the gospel is the Lord's own ordinance. As we read—"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It is, therefore, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and the Lord himself has promised of it that "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither," so "his word shall not return unto him void." It is, therefore, declared to be "not the word of men," which may perish and come to nought, but "the word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe."

3. But Moses also, as the man of God, assigns another reason why his "doctrine should drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew." He says (verse 4) "He is the Rock, his work is perfect." The delight of Moses was to testify of Jesus, for he is "the Son over his own house," in which Moses was but "a servant," though faithful in all things (Heb. 3:5, 6). When, therefore, he says of the LORD that he is "the Rock," we cannot doubt that by it he means Jesus. This is Paul's express testimony. "They drank of that spiritual *Rock* that followed them, and that *Rock* was Christ." So also testifies the prophet Isaiah—"In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," (margin), "the rock of ages." Christ is called "the Rock" because God had laid him "in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation," that on him the Church may safely stand and the gates of hell may not prevail against it. The Lord Jesus, in his Person, his work, his blood, his obedience, his love, his faithfulness, is no changing or changeable foundation—not a quicksand or a mud-pool on which no building can be erected, or



none that can endure the storm. He is a *Rock*, unmoved, immoveable; which made David cry, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." To build upon him is to be like the wise man of whom the Lord speaks—that "he built his house upon a rock;" and therefore though "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." He is the rock of which he himself said; "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Moses, therefore, when he says "He is the rock," would, as it were, invite us to build for eternity upon Jesus. He would say to all who feel lost and perishing in themselves, yet long to be saved—"He is the Rock." Oh, build not upon yourselves! Look not to your own works or worth, goodness or righteousness. Rest not the weight of your immortal souls for eternity upon anything found, or fancied to be found, in the creature. Before your eyes is a rock upon which you may safely build; a foundation which God himself has laid in Zion. Here is rest and peace, if once you get your weary soul upon the Person, the blood, and the obedience of Jesus. That alone will stand upon a dying bed and in the great day; and if you are led to it and build upon it, no storm can shake you off but such a hurricane as shall move the rock itself from its place. And as all the storms of divine wrath, and all the tempests of hell, could not move that rock when upon earth, what can now displace it in heaven? But Moses adds, "*His work is perfect.*" What are our works—our best works? Imperfect; tainted and defiled with original and actual sin. Has ever a good thought, a good word, or a good work, passed from you which sin has not, in the conception or in the execution, more or less defiled? Any man who knows the movements of sin in his own heart will bear me witness that he has never conceived a thought, spoken a word, or done an action, in which sin has not in some degree intermingled itself, and, by intermingling itself, has defiled and polluted that thought, word, or work. Therefore Moses, speaking of Christ as "*the Rock*," says—"His work is perfect." The humanity of Jesus was perfect: it was conceived without sin. No taint, or spot, or speck of sin even infected that holy humanity which the Lord Jesus Christ took into union with his intrinsic and eternal deity. Therefore, "his work,"—that is, the work which he performed in the flesh,—"*is perfect.*" Every thought of his heart, which is a part of his work, was perfect. Every word of his lips, which is a part of his work, was perfect. Every action of his hands, which is a part of his work, was perfect. So that his

work in itself is perfect, because it sprang out of as it was performed by, a perfect nature. Besides which, deity was stamped upon every part of that perfect work. On every thought that issued from the Redeemer's heart, on every word spoken by the Saviour's lips, on every action performed by the Mediator's hands, divinity was stamped. Therefore, not only was there in it the perfection of a pure humanity, but there was also in it the value of intrinsic deity. And not only was his work perfect, but it was a meritorious, and as such a vicarious, work; that is, a work accomplished for the benefit of others. It was the perfection and the merit of his work, which made it acceptable to God; nor can the tongue of men or angels express the infinite delight and complacency with which God the Father ever views it. Search and look into the actions of men; examine and weigh all your own actions, and see whether you can find anything of this character attached to them. Are they perfect? Are they meritorious, even as viewed by yourself? On what foundation, then, will you build for eternity? Upon your own works, which are inherently imperfect, besides being defiled and stained by sin? Or upon a Rock, whose work is perfect? The Lord will teach, as the Lord will enable his dear children to build upon the Rock. In fact, they have no alternative. They are driven off every other foundation. The storms of sin, the curses of a broken law, the fears of death and hell, the accusations of their own guilty conscience, the temptations of Satan, will all conspire to beat them off the quicksand—will all conspire to blow them upon the Rock; and the Spirit of God, whose office it is to take of the things of Spirit and to glorify him, will lift them, so to speak, up out of their own miserable selves and land them upon the Rock of ages, build them upon it and into it, and thus fix them upon a foundation which will stand for ever and for ever.

4. But there was another subject that Moses preached, as we gather from the context, which also made his doctrine "drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew;" but it is a doctrine not very agreeable to the pride of man. It was this:—"*They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation.*" In other words, he preached *the corruption of man*; nay, he told them plainly that "they had corrupted themselves, and that they were a perverse and crooked generation." This doctrine of human corruption—of the total fall of man—of the innate wickedness and perverseness of his

heart, will always be acceptable to the child of God, because he has in his conscience an inward witness to its truth. Nor can he excuse or justify himself by casting his sin upon the shoulders of Adam, for he knows that he has corrupted himself; he feels that not only unclean thoughts lodge within him; but that he has given way to and indulged in them. Thus he is condemned by sin actual, as well as sin original,—by sin in the fruit, as well as sin in the root. Ever since he had light to see, life to feel, and a conscience to bear witness, he knows that in many flagrant instances he has corrupted himself. We speak of seducers and corrupters with just abhorrence; but a man's worst corruptor is his own heart. Can you say that you have never indulged in secret or open sin, and that in so doing you have never sinned against the light of conscience, or, what is worse, against mercy and love? If so, you cannot throw the blame upon Adam, or upon Satan, but must take to yourself all the sin and shame, and say with Hart—

"That mariner's mad part I played,  
Who sees, yet strikes the shelf."

There is no greater source of inward condemnation and guilt, than when a man is obliged to confess he has corrupted himself—made his own heart worse than it really is, by pandering to its lusts and heaping fuel upon its smouldering flame. This has made many a one fear that his "spot is not the spot of God's children," that his sins are too great to be pardoned, and that he has done inwardly or outwardly what no truly regenerated child of God ever could have been guilty of.

We have seen, then, what four main truths formed a part of Moses' preaching, and which, pervading his ministry, made his "doctrine drop as the rain and his speech distil as the dew." These four are 1, Ascribing greatness unto our God; 2, Publishing the name of the Lord; 3, Declaring of Jesus that he was the Rock, and that his work was perfect; and, 4, Not sparing the creature or sacrificing to human pride and self-righteousness, but preaching boldly the corruption of man, and thus laying the axe to the very root of the tree.

II.—But we pass on to our *second* point, which is to open up the spiritual meaning of the words—"My doctrine *shall drop as the rain,*

*my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.*" Four different emblems are here made use of to describe the way in which this doctrine drops and this speech distils. These are ~~the rain, the dew,~~ *the small rain, and the showers.* These several emblems are employed by the Holy Spirit to set forth the light, life, and power which accompany the truth of God when he is pleased to bless it to the soul. Each of them we will, with God's blessing, now endeavour to unfold.

i. First, "*the rain.*" In eastern climates the rain is a most acceptable boon—a most precious gift of heaven. In Palestine, rain usually fell at but two seasons of the year—autumn and spring; and was thence called the former and latter rain. The former rain fell in October, when the seed was committed to the ground, to make it germinate; and the latter fell in April, to fill the ear and carry the crop on to harvest. But viewed as an emblem, rain in Scripture generally signifies the blessing of God; for as the rain falls from heaven to water the earth and make it fruitful, so does the blessing of God fall from heaven upon the soul, and more especially upon the preached gospel, to make it take root and bear fruit in the hearts of the saints of God. There are several points of resemblance between the natural and spiritual rain.

1. The falling rain is *sovereign*. We read in Amos—"I have withholden the rain from you, and I caused it to rain upon one city and caused it not to rain upon another city; one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered." How powerless we are as regards the rain that falls from the sky! Who can go forth when the sun is shining in its brightness and bid the rain to fall? Or when rain is falling, who can go forth and restrain the bottles of heaven? He who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, also turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. Equally sovereign is the blessing that God gives to the preached gospel. He holds the blessing in his own hand; it is his to give, and his to withhold. If he bless, it is because he has promised it; but when, where, and to whom it shall come, is in his own sovereign disposal. Yet what do we naturally desire when the earth is parched up for want of rain? Knowing that there is rain stored up in the clouds above, and that when it does come it will produce beneficial effects, desires, if not

prayers, go up that it may fall. In fact, the earth itself, parched and dried up by heat, the very ground itself, by the fissures and clefts which are made in the soil by a burning sun, silently, mutely, but still imploringly calls upon the rain to fall. Every crack you see in July is a silent mouth asking the rain to come down. The withered herbage, the cattle lowing in the field, the dried up ponds and brooks, are all imploring, though not a word is uttered, that rain may fall. So in grace. The parched, withered, dried up feelings of the soul are all so many mute mouths imploring God's blessing to come down. Nay, the very hardness, barrenness, and sterility felt in our heart when the blessing of God does not rest upon the word, are so many mute appeals to the God of all grace that his blessing would attend the word to our conscience. I say this because you may think sometimes that you are not praying for the blessing of God to rest upon the word, because you may not be using vocal prayer, or are not favoured with a Spirit of grace and supplication. God sees your wants, and to those wants he has a kind regard. The babe need not, and indeed cannot ask in so many words for food. The cry of hunger is enough. Or even if too weak to cry, the mother knows the child is hungry by its restless movements; and she is as pleased to give the nutritious food as the babe is to receive it. So you must not always measure the strength of your prayers by the mere vocal utterance you may give to them. The heart-searching God reads your wants, knows your desolate case, and sees your barren condition. As in the kingdom of his providence he views from his holy throne the parched ground, and sends down showers because he sees its need; so in the kingdom of his grace he looks upon the parched condition of his people, and gives the spiritual rain because he knows they need it.

2. The gospel also resembles the rain in a second point. It is specially *adapted* to the wants of the people of God. Is there not a natural agreement between the parched ground and the rain that falls upon it? Is not the ground as naturally adapted to receive the rain, as the rain is adapted to fall upon it? So in grace. A needy soul, parched and withered by the law, is as much adapted to receive a blessing from the gospel, as the gaping earth is adapted to receive the rain.

3. The rain is only suitable to the earth as *under cultivation*. The rain that falls upon the sea, on the top of a barren mountain, or

on the Arabian desert, does no good. There must be a suitable soil for it. So in grace. It is the blessing of God attending the preached gospel to a heart under its own culture ("Ye are God's husbandry") that makes it fruitful. He will ever own his truth, but it will ever be to the heart which he has previously ploughed up by conviction and trouble.

4. But there is another point of resemblance. What is the effect of rain? *It softens the clods.* So does the blessing of God falling upon the gospel. It softens hard hearts. Nothing but rain will penetrate. You may break the clods to pieces, or roll them small and fine; but that will not soften them, and the seed will lie useless in the furrow. But the rain softens both seed and soil. So it is with the blessing of God upon the gospel. Not only does it soften a hard heart, but it makes the word of truth to take root in the conscience thus made tender in God's fear.

II. *The dew* I have now, with God's blessing, to explain. In eastern climates, where the sun shines with greater heat and power than with us, the dew is proportionately greater. In fact, in those burning climes vegetation would be utterly destroyed were it not for the copious dews that fall by night. The dew that fell on Gideon's fleece when wrung out filled a bowl full of water. "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." There again the dew is spoken of as falling so copiously as in a short time to saturate the locks of the head. But what resemblance is there between the natural and the spiritual dew? 1. First, the dew generally follows *a clear, bright, and shining day.* It does not fall in cloudy weather, not when the wind is blowing with violence. So with the dew of God's grace. The Sun of righteousness shines in a pure, bright, and clear atmosphere—the heaven of the gospel. From this pure, bright, clear atmosphere of gospel grace, does the dew of God's blessing descend. Not from the cloudy Law, not from the blackness and darkness and tempest, does the dew distil. 2. Again: it falls when *a million stars are spangling the sky,* all of which may be considered as so many bright promises studding the firmament of grace. When the promises glitter, the dew falls. 3. Again: it falls *imperceptibly.* No man can see it fall. Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon a preached Gospel. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on; and as the dew opens the pores of the

earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul. Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head. Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects?—silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression; softening the heart when hard, refreshing it when dry, melting it when obdurate, secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is not withered up by the burning sun of temptation, or dies for want of grace! Nothing but the gospel ever produces these effects. The law, with all its terrors, threatenings, and alarms, the fears of death and hell, the pangs and stings of a guilty conscience, the temptations of Satan, may all cause great and deep distress; they may sink a man very low and bring him almost to despair; but no rain will ever fall or dew distil upon any other doctrine or any other speech than the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is this alone which God honors, which the Spirit owns, and the soul enjoys.

iii. But we read in the text of "*the small rain.*" The Holy Spirit, in the words before us, has selected emblems all of the same character and yet of different degrees. Rain falls abundantly; dew imperceptibly; small rain rather more visibly; showers often profusely. We have sometimes what is called "drizzling weather"—no great drops; no heavy rain; no copious showers but a gently falling mist, that is just sufficient to moisten the soil, to refresh vegetation, keep the crop growing, and forward it on to an abundant harvest, but not penetrating the ground to any depth or extent. "Small rain" then, viewed spiritually, seems to describe those gentle operations of the Spirit of God upon the soul that soften, revive, and keep the heart alive, the conscience tender, and the affections lifting themselves upward, without any great manifestations of the Lord's goodness and love.

iv. The last emblem used in our text is that of "*the showers.*" These fall more copiously, especially in eastern climes, where, in the rainy season, the whole watery heavens seem to precipitate themselves upon the earth. They are therefore more visible than dew or small rain, and their effects proportionally greater and

more manifest. They reach to a far greater depth; soak the ground more effectually, and penetrate to the lowest roots of the herbage. Spiritually viewed, therefore, "showers" point to great, powerful, and blessed manifestations of the love of God, of the Person of Christ; of his blood and obedience, agonising sufferings, and dying love. The Lord promises that he will "pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." These "floods" are "the showers" of which David speaks: "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly, thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers." So that we have in our text a regular scale: the dew, the small rain, the rain, and the showers. And this graduated scale of heavenly moisture shows that there are degrees of spiritual blessing. We must not expect all to be blessed to the same extent, nor all to receive the same measure. Yet all are of the same nature. Examine "the dew"—it is water; the "small rain"—it is water; the "rain"—it is water; "the showers"—they are still water. You cannot find any difference between the water of the dew, of the small rain, of the rain, and of the showers: they are all alike pure water, distilled from the alembic of the sky. So it is with the blessing of God upon the soul. It may fall upon one as the dew, upon another as the small rain, upon a third as the rain, on a fourth as the showers: yet all equally and alike, spiritually and divine. It is the same God that gives; through the same Jesus it comes; by the same Spirit it is communicated. All produce more or less the same effect—to soften, to moisten, to fertilise, and to revive; and all descend from the heaven of Christ's Gospel; all fall from the same firmament of grace, mercy, and truth, love, blood, and salvation. The doctrine, therefore, that testifies of Jesus, and the speech that proclaims him to be a Rock and his work to be perfect, and no other teaching, "drops as the rain and distils as the dew." There is a power in truth, when God is pleased to apply it to the heart; and whether it come in large or in small measure, whether it be in dew or shower, it is equally a proof of his mercy and love, and equally a proof that his power attends his own divine truth to our soul.

III.—But I pass on to our third point, which is to show *the spot on which the dew, the rain, the small rain, and the showers fall*. This is said to be "*the tender herb and the grass*." By the "tender herb" we may understand spiritually a conscience made tender in God's fear; by "the grass," the graces generally of the Spirit in the soul. We read of "a band of men whose hearts God had



touched." The touch of his finger it is that makes the heart tender. By nature man has no tenderness of heart or conscience towards God. He is hard, obdurate, unfeeling, equally regardless of heaven and hell. "They made their hearts as an adamant stone," says the prophet. Like Leviathan, their "heart is as hard as a piece of the nether millstone"—the hardest and flintiest of all stones. But if man's heart be such—a heart of stone, of adamant, harder than the nether millstone,—surely, grace alone can produce the change indicated in the words before us, where the heart of the child of God, under the doctrine that drops as the rain and the speech that distils as the dew, becomes as soft and yielding as the tender herb which drinks in the April dew. The feelings, the conscience, the affections of those who fear God are tender just in proportion to the dew and rain which fall from heaven upon them. As hardness and obduracy are specially hateful, so is this spiritual tenderness especially acceptable to the Lord. How tender was Jesus! How "he grew up as a tender plant," abhorred by men, but oh! how pleasing to God! The Lord specially noted this in Josiah—"Because thy heart was tender." He was therefore gathered unto his grave in peace. Anything like hardness or obduracy either to God or man is wholly foreign to the Spirit of God and of the gospel, and to what his operations will ever produce in a living conscience.

But the tender herb would perish without the rain from its very tenderness. The small rain and the gentle dew are specially suitable to the tender herb. A violent thunderstorm, a sweeping shower, a terrific hail and snow storm from the frozen north, would tear up, chill, and freeze the tender herb. But dew, and the small rain that fall so quietly and softly upon it, do not bruise, or chill, or freeze it; but, being suitable to its tenderness, gently nourish it to make it take a deeper root and spring up into a more vigorous growth. Nothing is so suitable to a tender conscience as the dew that falls upon it, through the truth of God. The blessing of God upon his own word heals the wounds that guilt has made, softens the heart that the law has hardened and as it makes the truth strike a deeper root downward, so it causes it to bear a more vigorous stem upward, and eventually to ripen into a more productive harvest.

2. The graces of the Spirit seem signified here by the emblem "*Grass;*" for as the grass clothes the ground with herbage

pleasing to the eye, and ministers food to the sheep that crop it; so it is with the graces of the Spirit. They are pleasing to the sight of God; they are agreeable to the eyes of his discerning saints; nay, they are pleasing to our own eyes when we can recognise them as produced by the operation of the blessed Spirit. And as the Lord is pleased to bring them forth, they feed the soul that can feel in them so many marks of the Lord's mercy and love, and they feed too the sheep of Christ, who derive nourishment and edification to themselves from the grace that they see in others.

IV.—To come to our fourth and last point, thus is produced everything which is for the glory of God and the salvation and sanctification of the soul. By the dew, the rain, the small rain, or the showers, every good thought is produced in a man's heart, every good word is uttered by his lips, and every good action is performed by his hands. As earth without the dew, the rain, and the showers, could never bring forth either fruit or flower, but would be one vast wilderness, a wild desert uninhabitable by man or beast, so with the soul of man: without the dew of God's grace and the showers of his favour, it could never bring forth anything pleasing or acceptable in God's sight. And forget not that it is through the gospel that his Spirit and grace are communicated. Oh may this Gospel ever "drop as the rain and distil as the dew" upon our heart, and make it fruitful in every good word and work! Then shall we have all the comfort and God all the glory.

## Doing the Will of God

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 25, 1847

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Hebrews 10:36

Man's ways and God's ways differ in well nigh every respect. Man's ways are hastily planned, and for the most part imperfectly executed: God's ways are designed with infinite wisdom, and performed with infinite power. Man's aim is the aggrandisement of self in some shape or form; pleasure or profit, of some kind or other, is the main-spring of all his actions: the aim of God is his own eternal glory. Man, when bent upon any particular object, leaps hastily towards it, and cannot brook the slightest obstacle: God slowly brings about his own eternal purposes, in the face of every obstacle, and in spite of all opposition or contradiction from earth or hell. Man's purpose is to bring things to a rapid conclusion; no sooner does he scatter the seed, than he wants to reap the harvest: God's plans are carried out through a series of years; and, as they are planned with infinite wisdom, so they are brought to pass by a succession of apparently opposing and contradictory events.

The reason, then, why the Apostle plainly intimated to his believing brethren that they had "need of patience, that after they had done the will of God, they might receive the promise," was, to remind them that God's ways were not as their ways, nor God's thoughts as their thoughts: but that, in the execution of his own eternal purposes, there would be such obstacles and apparent contradictions, that it needed on their part "patience" to wait the result. It is, therefore, as if he bade them stand still, and see the salvation of God; to put themselves into his hands, and lie with submission at his feet.

By way of bringing out, as the Lord may enable, the mind and

meaning of the Spirit in our text with greater distinctness and clearness, I shall adopt three leading divisions of my subject, and show,

*First, what it is to do "the will of God."*

*Secondly, Why we have "need of patience" after we have done his will. And,*

*Thirdly, In what way we "receive the promise" when patience has had its perfect work.*

I.—But, at the very beginning, it will be necessary to settle certain points. If the beginning of our sermons be wrong, as in religion, the whole will be wrong; and, if we set out with false premises, the conclusion must needs be vitiated. I like, therefore, at the very outset of my discourses, to lay down my points clearly, that, with God's blessing, we may start fair; that there be no obscurity, haziness, mist, or fog upon the mind; but that, by laying down my positions with clearness and distinctness at the beginning, there may be no mistake in my meaning, except a man will mistake wilfully.

i. Let me then, first, settle from the Scriptures of truth what is meant here by "*the will of God.*" "The will of God" may be divided into two branches: there is *the revealed will of God*, and there is *the secret will of God*; and these two are often contradictory. I will explain my meaning by a few instances selected from God's own inspired record.

1. It was *the revealed will* of God that Adam should not touch the forbidden fruit, God specially commanded him not to eat it; therefore *that* was the revealed will of God. But it was *the secret will* of God that Adam should eat of it; because by the bringing in of sin into the world through Adam's transgression, the glorious plan of redemption, which was in the mind of God from all eternity, was brought to light.

2. It was *the revealed will* of God that Abraham should slay his son; and Abraham, acting upon the revealed will of God, took the knife for that purpose, so that but one moment intervened betwixt the blade being drawn and being sheathed in Isaac's heart. But *the secret will* of God was, that Isaac should not be slain, but that the ram should be caught in the thicket, and be offered up in Isaac's stead.

3. It was *the revealed will* of God that Saul should slay Agag, root and branch. But it was *the secret will* of God that he should not; for it was by means of Saul's transgression in this matter that he was put away, and David set upon the throne.

4. It was God's *revealed will* that David should not commit adultery; for God has said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" and that revealed will of God David was bound to look to. But it was *the secret will* of God that David should fall; for it was God's secret purpose to give him Solomon from the wife of Uriah.

5. It was *the revealed will* of God that the Jews should not put the Lord to death; for God has said, "Thou shalt do no murder." But it was *the secret will* of God that Jesus should be crucified; as we read, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23.)

6. It was *the revealed will* of God that Peter should not deny his Master; but it was *the secret will* of God that he should deny him, to teach him experimentally his weakness.

Thus, I have endeavoured to show, in a variety of scriptural instances, how *the revealed will* of God often clashes with *the secret will* of God.

ii. But what is "the will of God" that we are to do—God's *revealed will*, or God's *secret will*? There cannot be a shadow of a doubt which will we are to do. To say we must do the secret will of God is bare-faced antinomianism. To steer our course by the secret

will of God would be as much a delusion, as if the mariner were to steer his course upon the trackless ocean by the newly discovered planet, invisible to the naked eye. Shipwreck would alike terminate his voyage and ours. No; it is *the revealed will* of God we must obey. It is that which God has designed us to walk by: and he will take care if we walk by any other rule than this revealed will that we shall smart for it, in time or in eternity. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children for ever." (Deut. 29:29.)

"The will of God" in our text, then, is *the revealed will* of God—the mind of God, as declared in the inspired writings.

But what is it *to do* "the will of God?" Here we must be equally clear, if the Lord enable. Our trumpet here, too, must give a certain sound. What is it *to do* "the will of God?" Now observe, *to do* "the will of God," is to do it in the way in which God would have it done; and three things are absolutely needful, in order that we should do "the will of God" as God would have that will to be done. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We must do it from right *motives*, from right *ends*, and under right *influences*. But what are right motives, right ends, and right influences? Are they to be found in fallen man? Are they the product of nature? They are not. Right motives are spiritual motives; right ends are spiritual ends; right influences are spiritual influences. And therefore, only so far as our motives are of grace, our ends are of grace, and our influences are of grace, do we "the will of God" as God would have it done.

There is a great deal of talk about doing "the will of God;" and the precept is much insisted upon by those who never felt the power of God's truth in their souls. Men think that "the will of God" can be done by the creature; and so long as "the will of God" is done, it matters not *how* it is done. But a man may do "the will of God" from a mere selfish feeling, to gain heaven thereby. Yes a man may do what he calls "the will of God," and yet self be his end, self his motive, and self his influence.

iii. But having, as the Lord enabled, laid down, I hope, in accordance with divine truth, *what* "the will of God" is, and what it is *to do* "the will of God," let us enter into some particulars wherein "the will of God" consists, and whereby "the will of God" is done. And observe, the Apostle in [is?] writing to gracious characters; not to sinners dead in trespasses and sins, not to professors dead in a graceless profession; but to living souls, to those who have ears to hear, hearts to feel, and consciences to tremble at God's word.

There is, then, a variety of particulars wherein we have *to do* "the will of God;" but it is only so far as God is pleased to work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure," that we do "the will of God" at all. For instance,

1. It is one part of the *revealed will* of God, that his people *should repent of their sins*. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19.) Now, when the Lord is pleased to pierce the heart, to lay conviction upon our conscience, to work sorrow and distress in our mind on account of sin, then we are doing that branch of God's revealed will, by repenting of our sins, and confessing them before God; and not only so, but forsaking, as well as confessing. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Prov. 28:13.) Every poor, sorrowing, child of God, that is grieved and troubled on account of sin, is *doing* "the will of God," by groaning and sighing under sin as a burden upon his conscience.

2. Again. *To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* is the *revealed will* of God. What said the Lord Jesus, when they asked him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29.) "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 3:23.) Thus, when the jailor fearing he should perish, and his soul filled with horror, cried out, in the agony of despair, "What must I do to be

saved?"—what was the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31.) Faith was given him to believe; and thus he did "the will of God." Not that the creature was able to put forth this mighty act of faith; but with the word, power came into his soul, and the Holy Ghost raised up faith in his heart to see Jesus, and to believe in his precious name. To believe, then, in Jesus is *to do* "the will of God"—to do it from the heart; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10.)

3. *To come out of the world*,—to forsake it utterly, and never more to walk in its alluring paths—this is the revealed will of God; as he says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separated, 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." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) To forsake the world, all its vanities, pleasures, and charms; and, like Ruth of old, to cleave to the people of God saying, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:"—thus to feel, and thus to act, is *to do* the *revealed will* of God, under the Spirit's secret influence in the soul.

4. *To come out, and be separated from professing churches*, which have a name to live while dead—is *to do "the will of God;"* for we read, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:5.) Therefore, to come boldly out of all letter churches, be they ever so high or over so low in doctrine, if the Holy Ghost is not in their midst, if the power of godliness is denied, or the things of God are not vitally felt by them,—to come and turn away from them, is *to do "the will of God."*

5. *To forsake the ministry of letter preachers*; heady, notional Calvinists, with the doctrines in the head, and enmity against the power of vital godliness and the living experience of God's children in the heart—to flee from such a ministry is *to do "the will of God;"* for the Lord commends the church in Ephesus, for



"trying those who said they were apostles, and were not, and found them liars." (Rev. 2:2.) And if any of you who fear God, are sitting under letter ministers, sound in the head, but devoid of experience in the heart, you are to do what God praises the Ephesian church for doing—to try them by the word of God and your own experience and if you find them liars, lying against the truth of God in any of its blessed branches, you are to come out from among them, and forsake the tents of those wicked men. This is *to do "the will of God."*—to turn your back on the false apostles, and cast your lot among his poor, despised, and persecuted family.

6. *To seek the Lord's face;* to pour out your heart before him; to wrestle with him for spiritual blessings, as Jacob wrestled with the angel; to give him no rest until he manifest himself in your soul, and shed abroad his pardoning love in your heart—this is *doing "the will of God;"* for the Lord says, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." (Psa. 62:8.) "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near." (Isa. 55:6.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) The Lord has given these invitations as a part of his revealed will; and when we are enabled to seek his face, to cry, sigh, long, pant, and pour out our hearts before him, it is *doing a part of God's revealed will.*

7. *To wait at his feet;* to take no denial; to persevere; to press through the throng of doubts and fears, like the woman with the issue of blood, and not to rest till we touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and find virtue flowing out of the blessed Immanuel into our souls—is *to do "the will of God."* What said God himself from heaven? (and I remember once how sweet those words were to my soul!) "This is my beloved Son! hear ye him." As though God said, 'Turn away your eyes from every one else; listen not to the breath of the creature—"*This is my beloved Son! hear ye him.*" He has the words of eternal life.' His words are not the words of man that shall die, of a creature that shall come to nought; but the words that he speaks, "they are spirit,

and they are life." To wait, then, upon the Lord till he be gracious; to beg of him to manifest himself to our souls, and keep pleading with him, as Job said, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments," (Job 23:4,)—to do this continually and unceasingly, as he enables, is *to do God's revealed will*.

8. *To endure afflictions; to wade up to the very neck, at times, through a sea of trouble, is to do God's will*. He has left a "poor and an afflicted people," and they are "to trust in the name of the Lord." It is "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom." Afflictions are our appointed portion, if our names are in the book of life. We have to be conformed to the image of a suffering Saviour below, if we are to be conformed to his glorified image above. And therefore to endure a great fight of afflictions; to be buffeted by Satan, hated by the world, and troubled, daily troubled by a body of sin and death, is *to do God's revealed will*.

9. *To bear whatever God may lay upon us; when one cheek is smitten, to turn the other also; not to render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; to submit to every stroke that God may lay upon us in providence or in grace; to see the rod, and him who hath appointed it; and to know that every rod is the mouth of God to us,—thus to endure "the will of God," (for "the will of God" is done by suffering as well as by acting), is to do "the will of God."*

10. *To resist even unto blood, striving against sin; not to give way to it, but to fight against it with every power of our soul; to cry and sigh, to grieve and groan, to wrestle and plead with the Lord that sin may not drag us down into open shame—thus to sigh and cry is to do "the will of God."* And there is a special promise to those who resist unto blood, resist Satan, take up the cross, deny self, put off the old man, and crucify the flesh with the lusts thereof. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to

bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13.)

11. *"To endure to the end; not to give up, not to yield the fight; but though all weakness, all helplessness, and exercised within and without, as Hart says,*

"Still to maintain the battle,  
With soldier-like behaviour,  
To keep the field,  
And never yield,  
But firmly eye the Saviour."

—this patient continuance in well-doing is *to do "the will of God."*

II.—But why have we *"need of patience"* after we have done "the will of God?" which is the second part of my subject. Because we may *do "the will of God"* (though we can only do it under divine influence) and yet the promise be delayed. We may sow in tears, and yet be very long before we reap in joy. We may have years of painful exercise before the Lord comes into our soul in the rich manifestations of his glory and love. And therefore, we need patience; as James says, "Let patience have her perfect work" (1:4); and he quotes to us (5:7), the instance of the husbandman, who "has long patience," and does not expect a harvest to be reaped in the same week that the seed was committed to the furrow. Is it not so in nature? Winds and storms, nipping frosts, blight, mildew—all these things pass over the corn; and yet, when harvest comes, it is ripened and reaped in spite of, and through every contrary influence. And so with the grace of God in the soul. God has no mushroom Christians in his family; no Jonah's gourds, that spring up in a night, and wither in a night; soon ripe, and soon rotten. The oak is the growth of a century; the mushroom the growth of a single night: and so, if we are to be oaks, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," we shall not grow very fast. Parents, you know, do not like to see their children run up too quickly. 'O,' they say, 'I am afraid by my child's shooting up so tall, he is growing beyond his strength.' And parents never like to

see the heads of their children grow very large, in disproportion to their bodies. 'Ah,' says the anxious parent, 'I fear lest there be disease in the head, lest there be water upon the brain.' And is it not so with professors? I never like to see people's heads grow faster than their hearts; it is sure to be at the expense of their bodies. Their spindle shanks show that the vital fluids of the body are being exhausted by this morbid growth. Many professors you may find in this day, with large heads, but small hearts; active tongues, but their limbs trembling, and their hands and feet so weak, that they can scarcely move a step in God's way. God keep you and me from resembling them.

Thus, we have "need of patience." But what does "*patience*" imply?

1. It implies, first, *endurance*. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a throne, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Contrast the disciples that endured with those that fell away. When the Lord told them, they must "eat his flesh, and drink his blood," 'Oh,' said they, "this is a hard saying: who can hear it?" (John 6:60.) And when he told them, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," their pride rose to resent it, and they said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." And what was the end? "Then took they up stones to cast at him." Oh, it is a mercy to endure! When we look around, and see those who started with us in the Christian race—where are they? It is almost with us like those who came to Job: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Some have gone into the world; others, fallen into sin; others, drunk down deadly draughts of heresy and error; so that like a shipwrecked sailor, we almost seem to have escaped with our lives in our hands. But if we endure for a single year, or a single day, it is only by the grace of God. It is now ten years since I first preached in this metropolis; and what has kept me in the truth to this day? The grace of God, I hope. But it has been through exercises and trials, temptations and afflictions; and therefore I must preach them, because I feel them; and

though my coward flesh shrinks from them, I can see what need there is for this heavy ballast, that the vessel may sail safely. It is to bring us low, and keep us low. By the pressure of sin, temptation, sorrows, and exercises, we are kept fast by the truth of God; for when we are brought into these painful places, we are made to feel that nothing short of the truth of God can save or bless our souls. We lean upon error, and it cannot hold us up; we lean upon self, and it is a lying refuge; we lean upon the truth, and find the truth to be that which supports our hearts. And thus, having bought the truth in the furnace of affliction, we love the truth, and we cleave to the truth, because the truth, through affliction and exercise, is the only thing which can comfort and support us in the trying hour.

But we have "need of patience" when the Lord does not appear, does not bless our souls, does not come into our hearts, does not visit us with his gracious presence, withholds his smiling countenance, and leaves us to grope for the wall like the blind, and to grope as if we had no eyes. But what makes us *endure!* A sense of the consequences of not enduring. Can I go into the *world?* I cannot; my heart will often go there, but I get stung with guilt if my heart goes after the world, and my body follows it. Can I go into *sin?* If I do, it makes my conscience bleed. Can I go into *error?* I cannot; it is hateful to my soul. Can I drink down deadly draughts of *heresy?* I cannot; there is poison in it; no sweetness, no power, no savour, no life, no unction. Shall I go into dry doctrines; and a graceless profession? That will leave my heart like the blasted heath; no heavenly dew, no rain, no fertilizing showers, no divine down-comings or inshinings. No; I must cleave to the truth, let men say what they will; by it I must abide, for I know, well know, there is none other. Nay, I would sooner give up all my religion, go into the world, and be as I was some twenty-five years ago—a carnal, proud, self-conceited man altogether, than have a name to live, entrench myself in crude notions, or lose myself in a labyrinth of dry doctrines. No; if I have not the grace of God in my soul, and the power of his truth in my heart, I would sooner make no profession at all. And if I preach, I must (God enable me ever to do it!) "contend earnestly

for the faith once delivered to the saints," and for the power of vital godliness; for I know nothing but the power of it can do for me, or save my soul from the bottomless pit. And yet we "need patience." When sin presses and Satan harasses, when clouds lower, when all is darkness within and gloom without, when God hides his face, when we have to wade through a sea of trials, we "need patience." But he who has begun the work in the souls of his people will carry it on for his great Name's sake, and will make them endure, that he may crown his grace with eternal glory.

2. But "patience," also, implies *submission*. And what makes us submit? Seeing "it is the will of God;" *that* is our resting-place. For instance. Do I see it is "the will of God" that I should endure afflictions? I can submit. Do I see it is "the will of God" to lead me through sufferings to inherit his glorious kingdom? I can submit. Do I see that to call upon his name, seek his face, pour out my heart before him, is to do "the will of God?" I can submit. When I can see *what* "the will of God" is, and when I can see that I am doing, or desiring to do, "the will of God," then I can submit; not otherwise. Rebellion; enmity, hardness, all work, when we cannot see that we are doing "the will of God." But when, with a measure of singleness of eye to God's glory, we can see that we are doing "the will of God," then submission is wrought with divine power in our soul.

Thus these two things, *endurance* and *submission*, make up divine "patience." It is not a man being very quiet, very meek, very contented, and very amiable; a man may be all these, and not have divine patience. We read of "the patience of Job:" but if we examine the book of Job, we shall not find much patience in the usual sense of the word; as though Job were all meekness, amiability, quietness, and resignation. No; but we find *endurance*; Job did not "curse God and die," as his wife would have persuaded him. And we find too, *submission*; for we find that Job loathed and abhorred himself in dust and ashes. And so you and I may find much murmuring, much repining, much hardness of heart, much darkness of mind, and much working up

of the sea of rebellion; yet we may have "patience"—patience in the new man of grace, and yet rebellion in the old man of sin and death—patience as the work of the Spirit, enabling us to endure and submit to "the will of God," and yet many secret murmurs from that old nature which is ever enmity against God and godliness.

III.—But we pass on to consider what is intended by the expression, "*receive the promise.*" Here is a deep vein of experimental truth; God enable you and me to feel that we know it. Now, it does not say "Ye have need of patience, that *before* ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;" but "Ye have need of patience, that *after* ye have done the will of God, ye might *receive the promise.*"

1. But let us see what is meant by "the promise?" The grand promise is, *Jesus Christ*; "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20.) He is the promised seed. He is the sum and substance of every Scripture promise. Now, there is "a receiving of the promise;" and what is that but receiving Christ into the heart, in all his fulness, preciousness, blood, obedience, and divine suitability; feeling him precious to the soul, enjoying his presence, tasting his love, and having a sense of acceptance in him? But do you not see, we have, first, *to do* "the will of God;" and not only so, but to have "patience" *before* we receive this promise? How men mistake this! 'Believe in Christ; all you have to do is to believe in Christ!'—how this sounds from a thousand pulpits! How, too, these worse than Egyptian taskmasters, will lay on their scourge on God's poor tried and tempted family, and try to whip them out of their doubts and fears! 'Why do you not believe in Christ? Away with doubts and fears!' This is worse than Egyptian oppression! These are worse tyrants than the taskmasters; for they could only scourge the body, while these scourge the soul; they could only wound the back, but these wound the conscience: and inasmuch as the soul is more valuable than the body, and the conscience than the back, so are these worse taskmasters and tyrants than the Egyptians of old.

Believing in Christ is no such easy matter. A letter faith is easy enough: to say, 'I believe in Christ,' is no hard matter,—except for an honest conscience—hard work then. But for a seared conscience, and a dead professor, nothing is so easy as to say, 'My Lord and my God!' or 'my dear Jesus!' He can sing at the top of his voice, 'My Jesus and my God,' when God has never dropt one taste of his love into his heart. But it is no such easy matter to believe in Jesus; no such easy matter to receive the promise; no such easy matter to know our sins are pardoned through atoning blood; no such easy matter to bring the kingdom of God, with divine power, savour, and blessedness, into the soul. This the Lord's people well know, and they alone. They are doing "the will of God" in their mourning, seeking, crying, praying, and waiting. But they have "need of patience;" for the Lord long delays; the promise does not come; the smiles are withheld; the sweet manifestations do not drop into their hearts. But yet, in due time, they will, "receive the promise." They have done "the will of God," in seeking his face, calling upon his name, and groaning after the whispers of his love. They have endured many storms of inward temptation, and many gusts of outward persecution; many a hard blow from letter ministers, and many a thrust with side and shoulder from the rams and he-goats of the flock. Yet they have endured, have not given it up, though Satan has often suggested, 'Your religion is vain, your faith a delusion, your hope a lie; I shall have you at last; you will die in despair, and lie under the wrath of God to all eternity.' Still they are doing "the will of God," and cannot give it up; still they cry, sigh, groan, pray, and endure patiently and submissively till morning break in upon the soul, and dispel the long night of darkness.

2. But there are many promises connected with the grand promise. There is *the pardon of sin* revealed to the soul. Many of the Lord's dear family are doing "the will of God," in seeking his face, crying for the manifestations of his pardoning love, and enduring a great fight of afflictions in their conscience, because forgiveness is not sealed home upon their hearts. Well, you shall "receive the promise" in due time. "Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and



forgiveness of sins;" (Acts 5:31); and he will give you them both. If he has given you repentance, he will also give you remission: it is a twofold blessing in the hand of Immanuel; and if he has given you the one, he will not withhold the other.

3. *The love of God shed abroad in the heart.* Is there not a "promise" that the Lord will make known his love to the soul? "I have loved thee," he says, with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) Has God drawn thee? Has your heart been softened by a sense of his mercy? Has your heart been melted and broken down in an approach to the footstool of grace, and a sweet hope sprung up in your soul that the Lord would soon appear for you? Have you come out of the world under the light of divine teaching, and come needy and naked to a Saviour's feet? What are these but the drawings of God in the soul? "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) Every desire, every cry, and every longing petition that Christ would come into your soul in his blood and love, is a drawing of the Father; and if he has drawn you to his footstool, it is because he has loved you with an everlasting love, and means to shed abroad that love in your soul; and then you will "receive the promise."

4. *That all things work together for the good of God's family*—for you and me, if we are of the royal seed—is also a part of "the promise." What, *all things*? Yes, *all things*. It is a large word, the largest that could be used, and yet not too large. 'Well,' say you, 'but how will *this* temptation or *this* trial, or *this* affliction, or *this* exercise, work together for my good?' God has said "*all things*" shall work together for your good. Do not make God a liar—do not add to his word, nor diminish it either, "lest he reprove thee, and thou be found unto him a liar." (Prov. 30:6.) The temptation shall work for thy good; the affliction shall work for thy good; the trial shall work for thy good; whatever be laid upon thee, in providence or in grace, it shall work together for thy good. You cannot see the secret springs; but they are all working, one within another, like some curious machine, and your good is to be

the divine result. But you must, first, *do* "the will of God" in endurance and submission, in putting your mouth in the dust, and in seeking his face; and then will you "receive the promise," "that all things work together for good to those who love God."

5. Then, at the last, *a crown of glory*, immortal bliss, unfading joys,—is not this part of "the promise" that God has given to them that love him? "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." (John 14:2.) "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (17:14.) But we must do "the will of God" first. Did not Jesus do "the will of God" perfectly, we imperfectly? Did not he endure a great "fight of affliction," and "the contradiction of sinners against Himself?" How he suffered! how he was persecuted! how he was tempted, hated, scorned, abhorred! Yet in all things he did "the will of God;" and now he sits at the right hand of God in glory, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." But whilst here, we must do "the will of God;" and to do "the will of God," is to patiently suffer all things that may come upon us, from without and from within—to exercise ourselves unto godliness—to endure the hidings of God's face, darkness of mind, temptations from Satan, the evils of our hearts, the scorn of man, and everything God may lay upon us—sickness, poverty, disease, and death. We have to do "the will of God" in all these things, he—never be it forgotten—working in us those things which are well-pleasing in his sight, and making us what he would have us to be; we the clay, he the Potter, and all we spiritually are and have the work of his hands.

None but God's people can do "the will of God." Others may do it legally, outwardly, in the letter, in the performance of the precept as it stands. But they are not doing "the will of God," because they are not doing it from the heart. Their eye is not single to the glory of God, nor their whole body full of light. They do not act from spiritual motives, for spiritual ends, and under spiritual

influences. They are "children in whom is no faith;" and "without faith it is impossible to please God;" (Heb. 11:6); therefore, they cannot do "the will of God." But his obedient family, his trembling children, his little ones, whom he is leading into the footsteps of the flock—these are doing "the will of God." 'Oh, but,' say you, 'this is my great trial, that I am not doing "the will of God;" so rebellious, so worldly, so proud, so inconsistent, so stumbling, halting, slipping, failing, falling am I. I cannot see I do "the will of God" in any one thing: I cannot see, when I take a review of my spiritual life, that I have done "the will of God" in any one point.' No, you cannot see it; because your eye is single to the glory of God, and your body full of light; the light in your body shows the sins of your path. Therefore, while proud, painted hypocrites are congratulating themselves in doing "the will of God," and are making a mighty noise and bluster about doing "the will of God," as though none but they did "the will of God" at all; (though with all their loud profession it is all in the letter, from legal motives, and in a self-righteous spirit)—the poor, needy, tried, tempted, exercised, cast down, and distressed children of the Most High are doing "the will of God," because they are lying where God would have them lie, at his feet, as passive as the moist clay in which the potter works, doing "the will of God" inwardly, from their hearts, because they are of the "true circumcision."

Now, these have "need of patience." Others, who are not thus exercised, have no want of it. But the people of God, who have right views of God and of themselves, who know what "the will of God" is, and desire to do that will, are always coming short. Yet their very mourning because they do come short, is doing "the will of God;" their very lamenting over their infirmities is doing "the will of God;" their very hating and abhorring themselves in dust and ashes, is doing "the will of God;" their very putting their mouth in the dust, feeling themselves to be the vilest of the vile, is doing "the will of God," for God would have them humble, and he makes them what he would have them to be. God would bring down proud looks; and he does bring them down by these exercises. God would have them filled with shame and confusion of face; and he does thus fill them with shame and confusion of

face. Thus these are all the time doing "the will of God," by his secret power and influence upon their souls; when others, who think how much they are doing "the will of God" are not doing "the will of God" at all. Look at the two brothers—the prodigal and the elder brother. Which did "the will of God?"—the mourning, broken-hearted, confessing penitent, or the stubborn-hearted, self-righteous brother? Why, every heart that knows God and truth will reply, 'Surely, surely, the returning prodigal.' He was doing "the will of God;" and God blessed him by putting shoes upon his feet, a robe upon his back, and the ring of eternal love upon his hand. But, my friends, if you and I are doing "the will of God," we have great "need of patience." Heaven is not so easily gained: the battlements of Zion are not to be taken by storm: the harvest is not reaped in a day. Many trials, many exercises, many castings down; many afflictions we shall have to endure. But *after* we have endured them, *after* we have done "the will of God," we shall "receive the promise." And every affliction through which the promise comes, and every patient endurance of suffering and sorrow, makes the promise more sweet when it does come. Christ in the heart, the love of God in the soul, the manifestations of his favour, "all things working together for our good," and heaven and glory at the last—who would not wade through a sea of trouble to reach that happy shore? Who would not be all his days up to his neck in afflictions, if glory and honour and immortality is to fire his ravished soul with bliss at last? Yes, if we are to "receive the promise"—Christ here and Christ hereafter; the love of God in our soul now, and the love of God to all eternity—we must do "the will of God;" and in doing "the will of God," we must endure to the end, submit to God's will, fight the good fight of faith, and, with God's help, resist even unto blood, striving against sin, till in due time we "receive the promise" to our comfort and God's eternal glory!

## **The Dropping Down of the Heavens, and the Opening of the Earth**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 21, 1844

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it." Isaiah 45:8

In revealing the Scriptures God has seen fit to make great use of figures; so that we can scarcely open any part of the Bible without finding them, more or less, employed. The Lord himself declares in the Old Testament, (Hosea 12:10,) "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets;" and in the New, we can scarcely open a page of the gospels without finding some parable from the Lord's lips, which is but another form of figure or divine similitude. Among these figures there is scarcely one more prominent than that of *dew* or *rain*. And the Lord the Spirit seems especially to have fixed upon this figure of dew and rain as an emblem of his own power and unction in the heart and conscience of God's people. Thus Moses said of what he spake by divine inspiration, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." (Deut. 32:2.) So the Lord says of his own divine operations, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." (Isa. 44:3.) It was a custom among the Jews, on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles, to pour out water in the courts of the temple as figurative of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. And to this the Lord Jesus evidently refers in those words, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37, 38.) We have the same

figure of rain also employed very sweetly, Psalm 65:9-12: "*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof; thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness.*" And if we look at our text, we shall find the same figure employed to set forth the same divine operations: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it."

Without laying down any formal divisions, I think we may observe three distinct and remarkable things in our text.

I.—*The dropping down of the heavens from above.*

II.—*The opening of the earth from beneath.*

III.—*The bringing forth of salvation, and the springing up of righteousness,* as the fruit and effect of the dropping down from above, and the opening of the earth beneath. And in this way, if the Lord give me power and ability to bring forth what I see and feel to be its spiritual meaning, I shall endeavour to handle the passage before us this morning.

The Lord himself speaks in the text, and addresses himself to the heavens—"*Drop down, ye heavens, from above.*"

The heavens naturally are the source of all the fertility of the earth; nor could there be any fruit or grain from the earth, nor could man or beast exist a single day upon it, unless the heavens above communicated to it fruitfulness. The atmosphere whereby the earth is surrounded, and the dews and rain that fall from that atmosphere, are the sources of all the fertility that we witness in the earth; and could these mysterious operations of nature cease, or be suspended for a single day, the earth would languish away,

and all its inhabitants perish. Now, as naturally, so much more spiritually, all the fruits found in the hearts and consciences of God's people, every thing good, every thing spiritual, every thing holy, every thing gracious in them, comes down from above; as James so emphatically declares, "Every good gift and every perfect gift *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) From the heavens, then, drop down all the gracious communications of light, life, and power that are ever found in the heart of God's people, and make them fruitful in every good word and work.

But there is a peculiar reason why the heavens spiritually should be the source and fountain of every thing good and gracious in us. Who is in the heavens but the risen Mediator? Is he not at the right hand of the Father as the covenant Head of his church and people? And out of his fulness ("for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell,") does not every thing good and gracious come down into the consciences of those whom he loves? And this, we may observe, in a perpetually recurring circle. We read, "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." (Eccl. 1:7.) So spiritually, no man will ever be in heaven, whose name was not eternally registered in heaven; and no man will go to heaven who has not his Representative already there at the right hand of the Father, and is not one of the mystical body whose risen Head is in glory, but whose members are in suffering circumstances upon earth. If, then, any of us are going to heaven, if heaven is to be our home and our eternal abode, it is because we had a dwelling-place spiritually and mystically in heaven before we had any existence on earth. So that, in going to heaven, we are but going to the place whence we came, because we were there in Christ as our covenant head, before time had an existence, or this round world was created. In that sense the heavens are the source of all present fruitfulness.

But much more since Jesus is ascended on high, as we read, "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave

gifts unto men;" and he "ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4:8, 10.) Much more now do the heavens become the source of all fertility produced in the hearts of God's children, for we are and have nothing spiritually good except what we receive out of the covenant fulness of a covenant Head. So that, when the Lord says in the text, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above;" and calls upon them to let dew fall; it is as though he spake thus, "Out of Jesus' fulness, who sits enthroned in majesty and glory, as the covenant Head of his Church, full of grace and power, let the dew and rain of his grace drop into the hearts of his people." So that, the spiritual dew and rain are sure to come in the appointed season; seeing there is a covenant fulness in Jesus, out of which they drop into the hearts of his people, because God has already "blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:3, 4.) So when, in the text, the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above," he calls upon them to let fall their dew as figurative of the coming down of the Spirit into their hearts.

But why should the Lord have selected the figure of "*dew*" to set forth the coming down of the Spirit into the soul? There must be something in natural dew analogous to the spiritual dew, or the Lord would not have employed such a figure. Let us, then, observe two or three circumstances in which the analogy is evident.

1. *Dew falls down independently of the power and will of the creature.* Who can command the dew to drop down? Who can go forth at night, and say, "Dew fall?" It falls just as, and when God sends it; on some nights it falls, on others it falls not; each wholly depending on the sovereign will and power of the Creator. So spiritually. Who can command the dew and rain to fall into the hearts of God's people? Who can go, and say, "Dew of the Spirit, fall?" Who can command the grace of God to visit this or that individual? The dew, spiritually, falls just as the God of grace would have it; as the dew naturally falls, just as the God of



creation would have it.

2. But in the falling of the natural dew *there is something soft, still, and gentle*. We therefore read, "We will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground." (2 Sam. 17:12), that is, stealthily and unseen. It does not rush down like the pelting hail, but falls stilly, and often imperceptibly: so that we scarcely know it has fallen, till we go out in the morning, and see every blade of grass tipped with the sparkling dew-drops; by these bright gems we know that dew has fallen during the still hours of the night. So spiritually, the kingdom of God is not in noise, rant, or wild excitement. The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11, 12.) And thus there may be a great deal of religious fire, but no presence of God felt: fleshly passions worked up into a storm, but no "still small voice" speaking to the conscience: a very earthquake of natural convictions, but no inward "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." But when the spiritual dew falls, it drops gently, softly, and stilly into the heart, and it is only known by the sweet and blessed effects it produces.

3. But again. Dew, naturally, has a *softening effect*, especially in warm climates, where it falls very copiously. We therefore read "Thou makest it soft with showers." (Ps. 65:10.) It does not tear up the ground as with thunderbolts, but by moistening and softening penetrates into the soil. And thus the dew of God's grace moistens and softens the heart, humbles, dissolves, and fertilizes it; not by tearing it up with the thunderbolts of wrath and condemnation, but by dropping gently and stilly into it, so as to melt it into contrition, meekness, and godly sorrow before the throne of mercy and grace.

But when the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above," they drop down not only dew, but sometimes *showers* also; as we find the Prophet speaking, "For as *the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven*, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." (Isa. 55:10.) The rain which

the heavens drop down at the word of the Lord has the same effect as the *dew*, and only differs in being more copious. Rain is therefore needed more after a dry season. How, after this long season of drought, for instance, under which nature has pined, have a few showers refreshed the soil! How before our eyes has the dry, burnt-up ground, since the late fertilizing showers, resumed its livery of green, and the brown hills reclothed themselves in their wonted garb of verdure, and again look fresh and beautiful! And do not the souls of God's people become withered and dry, when neither dew nor rain fall, until they resemble the barren wilderness and the parched heath? But the heavens drop down rain and dew, and the soul becomes once more revived out of its barrenness and dearth.

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." Two expressions are here made use of, which seem to have a special allusion to dew and rain. The one is applicable to the dew, which "*drops*;" and the other, to rain, which "*pours down*." But whether in drops or showers, each lets fall the same blessing—*righteousness*.

What *righteousness*, then, is this which the heavens sometimes drop, and sometimes pour down? If we have any righteousness, where is it? It is in the heavens: we have none here. What read we? "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and *righteousness*." (1 Cor. 1:30.) "*In the Lord* have I *righteousness* and strength;" "*In the Lord* shall all the seed of Israel be *justified*, and shall glory." (Isa. 45:24, 25.) This imputed righteousness is called in the Scriptures, "the righteousness of God," because it is the righteousness of him who is God; the righteousness of Emmanuel, who is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and bestows it from heaven upon his needy, naked, shivering, destitute people. The Lord therefore says in the text, "Let the skies pour down righteousness;" that it may come down as in a shower. Thus, when God does manifest it to the soul, it is always through the revelation of the Holy Ghost. We can have no experimental acquaintance with Christ's righteousness, nor any spiritual enjoyment of it, except as brought down into the heart

through the power of God the Spirit. When the skies pour down righteousness, so that a sense of Christ's righteousness is brought with divine power into the conscience, then, and then only, is it rightly received. But we look to the earth to bring forth fruit after the dew and showers. Look at those portions of the earth where they have no rain nor showers to fertilize the soil. What can they produce? They are a wild waste. The earth cannot produce fruit until the showers and dew come upon it; nor can a man's heart produce anything spiritually good until "God works in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

II.—And this leads us to the second point—"*Let the earth open*" from beneath. What is meant by the term "*earth*?" By "earth" we are to understand the heart of man. We read, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." (Jer. 22:29.) "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." (Deut. 32:1.) Has the literal earth ears to hear? Does God speak to the natural soil? That is a lump of inanimate matter, a huge clod of stone and clay; that has no ears to hear the word of God. When the Lord, then, speaks to the earth, it is not to the soil, but to *the dwellers upon the soil*. And thus the earth spiritually represents the heart of man. And why so? Because until fertilized by the showers of God's grace, man's heart is but a lump of inanimate matter;

"A lifeless lump of loathsome clay."

As unable to bring forth fruit to God's glory as the earth is unable of itself to start forth into fertility and productiveness.

Now, the Lord says in the text, "*Let the earth open.*" This points to the opening of the heart by the power of divine grace. The Lord, we read, "opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of by Paul," (Acts 16:14); and we read also, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Ps. 119:130.) But if the word enters, there must be an opening for it: nay, its very entrance makes the opening. Thus, when the Lord says, "Let the earth open," he bids the heart, before closed up

and impenetrable, open itself to receive the dews and showers of his invincible grace.

Whenever the Lord speaks, he speaks *powerfully*; "Where the word of a king is, there is power." (Eccl. 8:4.) No sooner, then, does the Lord thus speak than the effect follows. When the Lord said, "Let there be light," instantly there was light. When he said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind," immediately the earth was covered with fruits and flowers. When he commanded, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven," the sun and moon immediately sprang into existence. He had but to speak, and the effect immediately followed. So, when the Lord says, "Let the earth open," the heart immediately opens, the conscience is made tender, and the soul hears and receives what God speaks.

And what follows this opening? The heart receives the dews and showers of God's grace that fall into it; and these dews and showers of God's grace communicate to it softness, fertility, and productiveness. O how we have to learn this by painful experience! Is not our heart as hard sometimes as the nether millstone; and, to our feelings, utterly destitute of light, life, and power, without one grain of brokenness, contrition, godly sorrow, spiritual desire, or fervent breathing after the Lord? And are we not often as dead, and apparently as conscience-seared, as though we had never been melted down into godly sorrow, as though the tear of contrition had never dropped from our eyes, or the sigh of godly emotion had never heaved from our bosom? This painful experience the Lord's people have to pass through perpetually, that they may know, that "in them that is in their flesh dwelleth no good thing," and that "power belongeth unto God." Could I make my own heart soft, should I want the Lord to do it for me? Could I communicate fertility to my own soul, should I ever pant after the dews and showers of the Holy Ghost? Could I bring pardon and peace into my own conscience, should I need the Lord himself to speak with power? Could I believe, hope, rejoice, and have at my own command every gracious and blessed feeling that I desire to experience, there would be no

pleading the Lord's own promises, no wrestling in importunate prayer, no taking the kingdom of God by violence, no longing and panting for the Lord to appear in our souls. The Lord therefore sees fit that we should walk in these paths, that we may know, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. 9:16.)

But when the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness," he says also, at the same moment, "Let the earth open;" and the earth opens to receive as instantaneously as the heavens to give. No sooner do the dews and showers of God's grace fall, than there is an opening of the heart to receive the truth in the love and power of it. These dews and showers penetrate into and reach the very depths of a man's conscience. Sometimes it is with us, as during this long season of drought, a few drops only have fallen, a hasty shower, which has soon dried up. The farmer said, "The rain did not go deep enough." The gardener complained that it did not sink below the surface of the soil; something more abundant, something heavier and more lasting was wanted, a good soaking rain that would penetrate down to the very roots of the plants. So spiritually, we have a little feeling sometimes, but not very deep; a drop or two for a few moments; but it is gone immediately. This is indeed better than a continued drought; but we want a good hearty shower that shall go to the very root, something that shall penetrate to the very depths of the heart, and sink deep into the soul; as the Lord said to his disciples, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." (Luke 9:44.) Many people say, "How well they have heard to-day." But what is their hearing well? A few drops dried up immediately in the dust of carnality, or soon burned up by the sun of temptation. They say, "How well they have heard," but they have not moved a hundred yards from where they have heard so well, but their hearts are as dead, as dry, as hard as the ground after a long drought. A man whose heart is really made tender in God's fear is not content with a few transient feelings, which leave him as hard as they found him; he wants a shower to penetrate into the very roots of his soul, to soften and melt the heart before the Lord. When the earth opens,

how it receives, embraces, and drinks in the showers that fall into it. And the wider it opens its ample bosom to receive, the deeper does the rain penetrate, and the greater fertility is produced. And thus, the more that the heart opens all its capacious longings and pantings to receive the grace of God in its manifestations, the more is spiritual fruitfulness and fertility produced.

I.—But what is the fruit and effect of the dropping down of the heavens, the pouring out of the skies from above, and the opening of the earth from beneath to receive? *"Let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together."*

1. The first fruit and effect is, *"the bringing forth of salvation."* The expression, "Let them bring forth," is a Hebrew idiom, for "Let it be brought forth." We find this Hebraism in the New Testament, Luke 16:9. "Make to yourselves friends of the manner of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." It has puzzled many persons to know what is intended by the expression, "they may receive you:" but it is merely a Hebrew idiom for *that ye may be received*. So here, "Let them bring forth salvation," means, *Let salvation be brought forth*. And is not this experimentally true? Is not salvation brought forth into the heart and conscience, when the dew drops down grace, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to receive the gift of heaven?

The skies pour down Christ's righteousness—his glorious imputed righteousness. There is no salvation by any other righteousness; for "there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39.) And salvation can only be brought forth experimentally in the heart and conscience by the heavens dropping down the dew of grace, and the skies pouring down a shower of this imputed righteousness, and the heart opening to receive it in faith, hope, and affection.

How many people are looking to *self* to bring forth salvation, to

their good works, their consistency of life, their attempts at reformation, their doings for the past, or their intentions for the future. And what fruit do they reap by all their pains? Vanity and vexation here, and everlasting condemnation hereafter. Man, fallen creature man, can never do anything spiritually good, or bring forth one thing out of his heart that God can be pleased with. To know, to feel, and to be deeply concerned about this, lies at the root of all vital godliness; and till a man learns this by the teachings of the Spirit, he knows nothing of what spiritual religion is. As the Lord, then, leads our souls into a knowledge of their darkness, barrenness, emptiness, and nothingness; and as we become more deeply and daily acquainted with our thorough helplessness and impotency, we become convinced that God is the only Giver of every good and perfect gift; and this conviction being wrought into our conscience makes us feel the need of, and long after revelations and manifestations of grace, mercy, and salvation to our soul. The more we are out of conceit with ourselves, the more do we fall in love with Jesus; the more loosed from ourselves, the more closely do we cleave to him. Thus, until we are thoroughly convinced, and well humbled too under the spiritual conviction of it, that we have no righteousness, salvation, hope, or help in self, we shall not be looking up to the heavens that from thence the dew and rain may come down into our consciences. But when, after a long season of drought, the heavens begin to drop down the dew, and the skies to pour down righteousness, and the heart opens to embrace the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ, salvation is brought forth into the conscience. Is not the earth entirely dependent on the dews and showers to bring forth fruit? So the bringing forth of salvation is entirely dependent on the dews and showers of righteousness dropping into the soul. How am I to receive and become personally interested in salvation? It must come down from heaven to my heart; it must be revealed by the Spirit to my conscience. I can have no feeling enjoyment of salvation till Christ's righteousness is poured into my soul, and my heart is opened by the Spirit to receive it. It is only thus I receive Christ as my righteousness, and embrace his finished work as all my salvation and all my desire. Ruth said to Boaz, "Spread thy skirt

over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman." (Ruth 3:9.) This spreading of the skirt was a pledge of marriage and protection. Love and helplessness struggled together in Ruth's bosom, and brought out that cry. She lay humbly at his feet till he took her to his side, and the gleaner widow became an honourable wife.

Now how different is this way of salvation from all the ways that man devises for himself! How low it lays the creature, that "salvation is of the Lord!" Jonah had to get into the belly of hell to learn this. (Jonah 2:9.) O what would not man do, if he could get to heaven by doings? What weight would he not attempt to raise, if by turning the winch, he could crane up his soul into heaven? But there is no clambering up to heaven; that was tried at Babel; they raised their tower of eight stages, but God came down and confounded their speech. And since the days of Babel, all attempts to clamber to heaven by the towers of our own righteousness, will end in confusion and destruction.

2. "*And let righteousness spring up together.*" Two things here are spoken of as the fruit and effect of the dew and showers from above, and the opening of the earth to receive them—the bringing forth of salvation—and the springing up of righteousness. This "springing up of righteousness" may be understood, in one sense, as the internal knowledge of righteousness, a sense of justification made known by God's Spirit. But I think there is another and deeper meaning connected with it, for we have had that already intimated in the words, "Let them bring forth salvation." I think, therefore, it rather means, an inward righteousness produced in heart and conscience by the Spirit.

There are three kinds of righteousness, or at least three kinds of righteousness which bear that name. There is *inherent* righteousness, of which we have none. There is *imputed* righteousness, which is all our justification. And there is *imparted* righteousness, when God the Spirit makes us new creatures, and raises up in the heart that "new man, which after God" (that is,



"after the image of God") is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) When the Lord, therefore, said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20.) He did not mean only an *external* righteousness wrought out by his obedience to the law *for* them, but an *internal* righteousness wrought out by the Holy Spirit *in* them. Thus, we read of the inward as well as the outward apparel of the church. "The King's daughter is all glorious *within*; *her clothing* is of wrought gold." (Psa. 14:13.) Two kinds of righteousness belong to the Queen; her imputed righteousness is her *outward* robe, "the *clothing* of wrought gold;" but imparted righteousness is her *inward* adorning, which makes her "all glorious *within*." This inward glory is the new man in the heart, with all his gifts and graces, what Peter calls "the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:1.) "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

Thus, when the heavens drop down their dew, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to embrace it, not only is *salvation* brought forth in the heart, but "*righteousness*" also "springs up together," a righteousness produced by the inward work of the Spirit on the conscience, its main fruit being that "love, which is the fulfilling of the law." Many persons are trying to please God by their righteousness, their consistency, their holiness, their attempts to do something for his glory. But why is it that so many fail in their attempts, and fall so utterly short? Why is it, when the people of God look at their deeds, all appear defiled and polluted? The reason is this, for the most part, because they put things in the place where God has not put them. The Lord puts "salvation" before "righteousness," and the work of the Spirit upon the heart before the fruit that springs out of that work. The gardener need not be surprised that he has no crop, after he had well dug the soil, and hoed and raked the garden, if he had never sown any seed, nor set any plants in the beds. He need not wonder, that with all his digging, hoeing, raking, and watering, his garden produced neither fruit nor flower. Why, the main thing was wanting. So spiritually, men dig, hoe, and rake their hearts; and then they wonder that no crop is

produced. The Spirit of God has never sown the seed of the word in their consciences, nor planted his graces in their soul. The Church is compared to a garden, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." (Sol. Song 4:12.) She therefore says, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." (Verse 16.) Eat what? *My* pleasant fruits? No. *His* pleasant fruits, for it is *his* garden. "From me is thy fruit found." Thus the great Husbandman has to sow and plant his graces in the soul, as the gardener sows his seeds and plants his flowers in the beds and borders. Then his hoeing, raking, and watering will bring a crop. So we must have first the heavens dropping down dew, the skies pouring down righteousness, and the heart opening to receive it; and when salvation is inwardly planted and brought forth, righteousness will spring up together with it; and then there will be a crop of inward righteousness. Separation from the world, deadness to its spirit, mortification of sin, crucifixion of the flesh, a putting off of the old man and a putting on of the new; simplicity, godly sincerity, uprightness, integrity, faith, hope, and love in blessed exercise; a conscience made and kept alive in God's fear; yea, every good word and every good work will be brought forth by the power of the Spirit in the heart, when the heavens drop down dew, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to receive them, and salvation is brought forth in the heart. This inward righteousness will always spring up in the soul together with salvation, because it is experimentally and essentially connected with it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.) But what can make me holy? Not my own exertions, not my vows, resolutions, and promises; not my fastings, alms-deeds and bodily mortifications. This is but Pharisaism and Popery. God must give and work in me true holiness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psa. 51:10.) It is only by a knowledge of righteousness, and through a sense of salvation, that the Holy Ghost brings forth in the heart "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. 6:22.) So that would we be holy, we cannot be so in our own strength: we can only be so as God the Spirit lets the dew of his grace fall into our consciences, as the showers of righteousness fall into the soul,

and as God opens the heart to receive his mercy and his truth.

And then the Lord winds up the whole with that short and expressive sentence, "*I the Lord have created it.*" What a jealous God he is! "He will not give his glory to another." But the rebel man, a wretch that God with one frown could wave out of existence, and could trample upon in a moment as we trample upon a worm in our path—that a rebel like man should talk of what he has done, or means to do for the Lord, should boast of his mighty feats and proud exploits—why, how sunk in the depths of ignorance must he be that such a thought should even come into his heart! What a plague-spot must there be upon him, that a crawling, grovelling wretch like man, that only exists by tolerance, should talk of his doings and exertions! As well might we expect a bankrupt lawyer, imprisoned in Newgate for forgery, to boast of what he will do when he sits as Lord Chancellor on the woolsack; as well might we expect an aged pauper, living upon half-a-crown a week, to talk of what he means to do when he sits in the senate, or mounts the throne; as for a bankrupt wretch like man, who, if grace prevent not, only lives to be damned, talk of what he intends to do for God. The Lord therefore puts an extinguisher on all the doings of man, when he says, "*I the Lord have created it.*" It is all my work, all the effect of my sovereign power, all my divine creation; I, the Lord have done it. And who, after this challenge, dares sit upon his throne, and take the sceptre from his hand? Shall a grovelling worm dare creep upon the Lord's throne of power? Shall a maggot crawl up and sit by the side of Jehovah? The Lord has extinguished this rebel pride of man, when he says, "I have created it," and takes all the glory to himself. Sure I am, if you and I know anything of God and of ourselves, we shall fall down in the depths of creature abasement, and say, 'Let God be glorified; let God be all in all, and let me fall into the lowest spot of nothingness.' "*I, the Lord have created it.*" What? I create the dew of grace to fall, the showers of righteousness to descend, and the opening of the heart to embrace. I have created salvation to be brought forth in the conscience; I have created righteousness to spring up with it. "I the Lord," alone, wholly and solely, by the might of my hand,

and my sovereign power; and none but "*I, the Lord, have created it.*" Now, this is a humbling doctrine to the proud wretch, who, like the frog in the fable, would fain swell himself up to the size of an ox, with his own doings; it is humbling to the self-righteous Pharisee, who is pleased with what he has already done for the Lord, and is still more pleased with the noble avenue, the long vista of good works which he intends to do for him. How pleased is a nobleman, sometimes, with projecting plantations, and has already in his mind's eye a noble avenue of oaks and limes that shall one day rise up in his park; but the self-righteous Pharisee looks with greater delight at the grand avenue of good works that he is about to raise up, when, poor wretch, all his exertions could not raise up a shrub.

But to those who know their own ruin, and helplessness, and complete imbecility, it is sweet to find that the Lord takes the whole matter into his own hand; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end; and that he works in our hearts that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And when they come to that safe and blessed spot—to have nothing, and yet possess all things; to be ignorant, and yet to have wisdom in Christ; defiled, yet to be sanctified in Christ; captives, yet redeemed by Christ; to have nothing in ourselves, and yet to have all in him—this will suit beggars and bankrupts, comes down to the necessities of the poor and needy, and is adapted to all the wants of the pauper. And thus, when God the Spirit brings light, life, and salvation into the conscience, the soul comes to that blessed spot, where it takes all the shame, and ascribes to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost Israel's Three-One Jehovah, all the praise and all the glory.