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**SERMONS BY**

**JOSEPH C. PHILPOT**

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**Volume 3**

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## THE EAGLE AND HER YOUNG

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, On Tuesday Evening, August 5, 1851

"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deuteronomy 32:10-12

In the solemn councils of eternity God the Father gave to his Son a Bride. "A certain king," we read, "made a marriage for his Son." This Bride Jesus accepted at his Father's hands: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "All mine are thine; and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." But, in accepting this Bride, he accepted her for better for worse, for weal or woe. He took her foreseeing the depth of misery and sin into which she would fall; but determined to have her at any rate and at any price.

Of this Church and Bride, Israel, the literal Israel, was a type and figure. This makes the Old Testament so pregnant with instruction, that in the literal Israel we see the symbolic representation of the spiritual Israel; and in God's outward dealings with her as a nation, we view in type and figure the delineation of his inward dealings with his living family. When this is seen by the eye of faith, a ray of divine light is cast upon the pages of the Old Testament, and it is no longer read as a dry, dead, historical record of times long gone by, but becomes a living book, a sacred memorial of the love, grace, and glory of Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." It is of this literal Israel that our text speaks, which we may view as an abstract or epitome of God's dealings with his people in the wilderness.

But if I were, in dwelling on this passage, to confine myself to the literal Israel, and view the words merely as descriptive of their journey to Canaan, I should sadly miss the mark; I should then hover only over the surface of the letter, and not dive into the rich experience of the family of God locked up in its bosom.

With God's blessing, therefore, and as far as he may enable. I shall this evening look upon the words before us wholly in a spiritual sense, and view them as applicable to the redeemed and regenerated family.

Two leading features we may observe. I think, in the words before us.

**I.—The state and position in which God is said to find his Israel, "A desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness."**

**II.—The dealings of God with his Israel, when he has thus found him. "He led him about," &c.**

Viewed in this light, the text takes in the whole experience of a Christian; it comprehends the whole of what he is by nature, and of what he is by grace; and thus embraces in one ample scope the entire condition of a child of God, both as he is in the Adam fall, and as he is in the recovery by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I.—There is something singularly discriminating in the whole chapter. How striking are the words, "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance!" But who and what was Jacob more than others? To beat down all idea of meritoriousness, to lay the axe effectually to the root of that huge pharisaic tree, the Lord pronounces decisively what was Israel's spot, what was Jacob's state, when he found him by his grace. "He found him in a desert land, and in **the waste howling wilderness.**" What a description of the state of man by nature! Let us examine it, and see, if we can, what is implied by this

striking figure, for it is evidently characteristic of our fallen condition.

I.—Man by nature, then, is here compared to "a desert," that is, an eastern desert—a wide tract of barren, uncultivable land, where everything is parched up by the arid rays of the sun; where not only grows neither plant nor flower, but in which neither can be made to grow.

But was man always this withered spot? When God created Adam in his own image, after his own likeness, was the heart of man then an arid desert? The garden of Eden, in which God planted him, was but an image of what man was, as made in the likeness of God. Smiling Eden, in all its glorious beauty, was a fit emblem of, as well as a fit habitation for man as he came fresh from the creating hand of God, all resplendent and radiant with the rays of divine beauty and glory.

Man, then, was not always a "desert." It was sin that ruined, desolated, and laid him waste: and, as we read of Abimelech (Jud. 9:45), "sowed with salt," the fair Eden of his heart.

Now this is a matter of individual, personal, and I may add, for the most part, of painful experience. For there is in the heart of a child of God a desire to be fruitful; he looks with no pleasure upon his own desert, but would fain see the waving ears of a rich and bounteous harvest. But alas, alas! he finds that this desert is absolutely uncultivable; that whatever the hand of nature plants soon withers under the sun of temptation, or is blasted by the hot breath of the pestilential wind.

II.—But the Lord finds his Israel also "in the **waste** howling wilderness." Is not this a figure too of the desolate state of man? "A **waste**." The word seems to imply injury inflicted by an enemy.

Conquerors of old exulted in laying fertile regions waste. Thus the proud king of Babylon is said to have "made the world as a

wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof." A mighty conqueror has laid waste the heart of man, marred in it every feature of the image of God, overspread it with every wild and noxious weed, cut down its vines, filled its wells, pulled down its fences, and left it to be trampled down by the hoof of every wild beast. This conqueror is **Satan**, and his triumphant army is **Sin**. By sin he has desolated the human heart; by sin he has laid it waste and bare; by sin he has trampled it down, and thrown it open to every beast of prey.

II.—But Israel is also said to have been found in "**a howling wilderness**." There is something exceedingly expressive in the term; which, I think, may signify two things:

1. There may be some reference to its treeless, shrubless state, which allows the wind to sweep over it unchecked. The eastern deserts are especially exposed to the full force of the Sirocco, or Simoom, as the hot pestilential wind is termed. No buildings or trees arrest its headlong course, and it therefore sweeps over them with its melancholy howl. Thus is the wilderness of the human heart howled over by the pestilential Simoom: as though it would rejoice over the desolation it makes. As God is said to "walk upon the wings of the wind," and to "quiet the earth by the south wind," so Satan may be said to ride upon the wings of the pestilential Sirocco, and to disturb the earth by its howling blast. When God created man in his own image, he pronounced it "very good." He delighted in the contemplation of his own likeness. As God, then, delights in good, so his infernal adversary delights in evil: and, as God rested in his works of creation, acquiescing therein with pure and holy satisfaction, as the product of infinite wisdom and power; so Satan, that restless, wandering spirit, roams with foul, infernal glee over the ruins he has made, howling, like the melancholy wind, over the wilderness, and withering and blighting all that his pestilential breath touches.

2.—But the word "howling" may refer not only to the wilderness itself, but to its **tenants**, the **wild beasts**, who fill it with their midnight howling. Travellers speak much of the howling of the

jackal, and other wild beasts of prey that inhabit the desert. So is our heart howled over by wild beasts that tenant its waste. What malignant passions dwell in the human breast! Pride, jealousy, envy, wrath, hatred, murder! Let a man be crossed and opposed, found fault with even upon good ground, what enmity and wrath work in his mind even against his best friend! The jackal, the tiger, the hyaena, the wolf, the bear, and the fox have all their dens in the human heart. "When the sun riseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens;" but when it is night, "they creep forth, and roar after their prey" (Ps. 104:20-22).

What a description of the heart of man, that it is not only a desert, utterly bare of herb, tree, fruit, or flower, but is a "waste howling wilderness," over which the pestilential wind sweeps with melancholy moan, and where beasts of prey continually prowl. Look into, and examine well your own heart; you will see it all there. Has not the pestilential wind of sin nipped many a rising blade? Do not the midnight beasts of prey ever roam after some filthy carrion?

Here, then, God finds his Israel. Israel would never have found God: it is God that finds him in this wretched spot, this desolate, utterly desolate condition. Nothing here is said about man's free-will, of the natural movements of the heart Godward, of good inclinations, good resolutions, and how, by and by, through careful cultivation nature gets changed, and by some mysterious alchemy becomes transmuted into grace. Israel does not fence and dig and plant and water till the desert becomes a garden, and **this** allures the Lord to visit it. The record, the unalterable record, runs. "He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness."

II.—But we pass on to consider the **dealings of God with him when he has found him.**

I.—The first thing said of these dealings of God with his Israel is, that "**He led him about.**" The words, I think, are applicable to

the two special branches of divine leading—those in **providence**, and those in **grace**. Those in the experience of God's people are often wonderfully connected.

1. Generally speaking, I believe, most who know anything of the dealings of God with their soul, can trace certain marked providential circumstances whereby providence, so to speak, was linked on to grace. One end of the chain may be indeed of iron, and the other of gold: but there is a point where link meets link, and that usually is where the work of grace begins in the soul. Usually some striking providence immediately precedes the commencement of the work of grace. Some remarkable circumstance, some family affliction, some domestic trial, some bodily sickness, or some unusual turn of events led on to that memorable spot and place where the Lord by his Spirit was first pleased to touch the conscience. Some have reason to bless God for an illness; others for a change of habitation, others for a new situation, others for a peculiar circumstance that led them to read a certain book, or hear a certain minister.

Others again can see the wonder-working hand of God in heavy losses, or painful reverses in business, whereby they were brought down in circumstances, stripped perhaps of worldly goods, or even reduced to actual poverty and distress. And all these no common providences, or every-day occurrences: but so connected with the work of God upon the soul, though not themselves grace, that they led on to it as much as Ruth's coming into the land of Canaan led on to her marriage with Boaz, or Matthew's sitting at the receipt of custom led on to his being called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

2. But the words are not only applicable to the Lord's striking leadings in providence: they may be well referred in a higher and greater sense to his leadings in **grace**. "He led them about." Though the way to heaven is a way "cast up," in which really and truly there is neither crook nor turn, yet so far as our feelings and experience are connected, it is a very roundabout way. "He led them **about**." This was true literally. What a circuitous, tangled,

backward and forward route was that of the children of Israel in the wilderness! Yet every step was under God's direction: they never moved till the cloudy pillar led the way.

But how does the Lord lead about in **grace**? By leading his Israel into a path of which they do not see the end. One turn of the road hides the next. I have read that you may make a road with a curve at every quarter of a mile, and yet in a hundred miles the distance will not be so much as a mile more than a perfectly straight line. So in grace. The length of the road swallows up the turnings. But these turnings make the road seem more round about than it really is. All before us is hidden. For instance, when the Lord begins a work of grace, he brings convictions of sin, opens up the spirituality of the law, makes the soul feel guilty, guilty, guilty in every thought, word, and deed. But does a man in that condition know what the Lord is about? Can he clearly trace out the work of God upon his soul? Is he able to say, 'This, this is the work of God upon my heart?'

For the most part, he knows not what is the matter with him: why he is so distressed: why he can take no rest; why the things of eternity keep rolling in upon his soul; why he stands in continual dread of the wrath to come; why his mind is so exercised with thoughts upon God; why he feels condemnation, bondage, and misery. Nor even when the Lord is pleased to raise him up to some hope, to apply some sweet promise to his soul, to encourage him in various ways under the ministry of the word, can he often take the full comfort of it. He may for a time, but it is soon gone. and he can scarcely believe it to be real. Unbelief suggests that it did not come exactly in the right way, or did not last long enough, or did not go deep enough, or was not just such as he has heard others speak of: and so he is filled with doubts, fears, and anxieties whether it was really from the Lord. But when God leads him on a step further: opens up the gospel, reveals Christ, drops into his heart some sweet testimony, gives him some blessed discovery of his interest in the Lord Jesus, and seals it with a divine witness in his heart, this banishes all his doubts and fears, and fills his soul with joy and peace. Yet even

after this, when the sweet feeling is gone, he may sink again very low, and may question the reality of the revelation he has enjoyed. All this is "leading about:" for one turn of the road hides the other.

But now for another turn; for the Lord is still "leading him about." He leads him, then, down into a knowledge of his own corruptions, and suffers Satan to buffet him with strong temptations. This is indeed "leading him about." For nothing is straight now. He is like the countrymen in the streets of London just now. **The time of Exhibition** He has lost his way altogether, and stands staring and looking about him, looking up at the corners of the streets, and reading name after name: but is unable to tell which is north, south, east, or west. And if he has the map in his hand, it is of little or no service: till he gets so bewildered and confused, that at last he stands stock still, and cries, 'Where am I? I feel quite lost; I cannot tell what way I came, nor whither I am going; all I can do is to stand still, and wait for a guide. In this state, he will enquire of this person, and enquire of that person. One says, 'go to the right;' and another, 'go to the left.' One says, 'turn down this street;' and another, 'turn down that;' till, at last, he gets more confused than before. Thus the soul is "led about," until at last it seems as though it never knew anything or felt anything right, and all its religion seems, like poor Job's, tumbled together into one huge mass of confusion. Yet it is the Lord leading him all the time: and though he leads him about in such strange ways, by such circuitous paths, and into such strange spots: yet, it will be found, at the journey's end, that in his mercy he has "led forth the people he has redeemed, and has guided them in his strength unto his holy habitation."

II.—But it adds. **"He instructed him."** All the while that the Lord is leading Israel about, he is instructing him. "Everywhere and in all things." says the apostle, "I am instructed." So God instructs his Israel by everything that he does for him and in him. A person learning religion is something like a person learning a trade or business. He often learns most by making mistakes. If you have

an apprentice to some mechanical art or business, and you set him to work, how many mistakes he makes at first. He takes the chisel into his hand, and holds it wrong: then he takes the mallet, and strikes it too hard or in a wrong direction. And O how much work he spoils! yet by all this he is learning manual dexterity. If he held the chisel in a wrong direction this time, he will hold it right the next: and if he has struck the mallet too hard, or hit his own fingers, he will learn to use it with more skill the next time. So we learn much by mistakes. Many a man in business has learnt more by his losses than he ever learnt by his gains. And many a general has fought his way to victory through defeat. So the Lord's people learn much by their very mistakes; they learn wisdom and caution for the future. You cannot take a young apprentice, and say, 'Do this just as I do;' he must learn it for himself: and he learns it for the most part little by little, "line upon line, line upon line:" just as the children of God learn their religion. So a minister cannot say to the people, 'This is my experience; copy it, and learn it from my lips.' Each must learn his experience for himself.

It is the Lord who instructs his Israel. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" and he instructs us in such a way that we have often to see our folly, and yet admire his wisdom: to take to ourselves all the shame, and ascribe to him all the glory. He instructs us into a knowledge of himself in his greatness, majesty, holiness, and purity: of his righteous law as condemning sin and the sinner; and, as only in his light do we see light, we thence learn something of the wickedness, barrenness, hypocrisy, unbelief, deceitfulness, and pride of our heart. By these divine lectures, he instructs us into true humility, self-abhorrence, and self-loathing before him: and when he has instructed the soul into the mystery of its base original, and stripped it of self-righteousness, he instructs it into a knowledge of his own surprising and most suitable grace as revealed in the Person of his own dear Son, "Immanuel, God with us."

He instructs the soul into a knowledge of electing love, of atoning blood, of justifying righteousness, of unfailing faithfulness, of

infinite compassion and everlasting mercy. And all these lessons are "to profit:" they "sink down," as the Lord speaks. "into the ears:" they drop into the heart, and become "spirit and life" to the soul. We must learn religion by experience. It is not by reading books, nor even the scriptures themselves; it is not by hearing ministers, nor by conversing with God's people that we can obtain any right experience of the teachings of God. Hundreds have had all these advantages **and most profitable advantages they are when owned and blessed of God** who have no teaching from above.

Religion can no more be learnt by theory than swimming. A man may stand on the brink, and see a person swim, and move his hands in imitation. Put him into the water, and he will soon sink to the bottom. So in religion. Put a man into the waves and billows of temptation, and he will soon sink, if he, who teaches the hands to war and the fingers to fight, has not taught his arms to swim. We must have our personal trials and personal mercies; our own temptations, and our own deliverances; our own afflictions, and our own consolations: and learn each and every branch of the divine life for ourselves. God so teaches his people as though each was the only scholar in his school, and takes as much pains with each pupil as though there were no other in the world for him to take pains with.

III.—And not only so, but **"He kept him as the apple of his eye."** This expression is used in more than one place of scripture to signify the special tenderness of God in keeping his people. The apple of the eye is the tenderest spot of the whole body so far as it is accessible to external violence. As a man, therefore, would above all things guard that important and sensitive organ, so God is said to guard and keep his people as the apple of his own eye.

But some may say, Are the Lord's people always kept? Do they never slip? Are they never guilty of backsliding? Do they never err in any one point? Are they always kept from sin and folly? Are they always preserved from the least taint of evil?' Who can say

this, when scripture stares him in the face with such declarations as, "In many things we offend all;" "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves:" "The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do?" Who can say this in spite of, in defiance of all the slips and falls of the saints recorded in the word of God, such as Abraham, Lot, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Peter: against all of whose names a mark stands? And yet withal, the Lord keeps them as the apple of his eye. There are certain rocks and shoals from which the heavenly Pilot ever keeps the ship of the soul. For instance, he keeps them from "concerning faith making shipwreck:" from drinking down poisonous draughts of error: from the sin unto death: from presumption and apostacy; from sitting in the scorner's chair: from despair, prayerlessness, and impenitency; from enmity to his truth, cause, and people: from making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell; from despising experience: and from murdering the reputation of the approved saints and servants of God.

From these and similar soul-destroying evils he preserves them, by keeping alive his fear in their heart, the spirit of prayer in their bosom, and the life that he himself gave them out of Christ's fulness. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." He does not keep them in every instance from all evil, but he so keeps them as the apple of his eye, that nothing can really and finally harm them. Sin indeed will ever grieve and distress them; Satan will ever tempt or harass them; and a body of sin and death will ever burden them; but they will eventually come off more than conquerors through him that loved them. But to say, that the Lord so keeps his saints that they never any of them in any degree slip, that they never in any way backslide—is to speak in defiance of what is recorded of the saints in the scriptures of truth, and in diametrical contradiction of what the best and wisest of God's people have in all ages confessed of themselves.

iv.—But by way of further illustration of the dealings of God, Moses, speaking by divine inspiration, brings forward a sweet and

blessed figure, that of an **eagle and her young**. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."

The various movements of the eagle here are vividly and beautifully described, and demand, each of them, a special notice.

1. She is said, **first, to "stir up her nest."** Her "nest," doubtless, signifies her young ones, which, like human babes, doze away much of their time in sleep. But feeding time comes: and they need to be aroused. The bill and claw of the mother bird quickly break their slumber. Though of eagle birth, and vivified by eagle blood; though cradled upon "the crag of a rock," and alone of all birds born to gaze upon the sun, yet often the eaglet's eyes and wings droop. So the Lord's people often nod and slumber. Now, as the eagle stirs up her nest, so does the Lord stir up his people. They fall asleep, get into a drowsy state of soul; their affections dreamily wander from the Lord; and though still upon the Rock, their eyes look not upon the Sun of righteousness, but droop and sink into slumber.

But does the Lord leave them so? No: he stirs them up. And two ways does he chiefly employ to do this.

I. Sometimes he uses **afflictions**. They are perhaps as nodding and drowsy in their souls as some of my hearers may now be in their bodies. But the Lord sends some rousing affliction. His hand falls heavily upon their bodies, or upon their families, or upon their circumstances, or upon their consciences; for usually in one of these four ways does the Lord stir up his drowsy people when he lays on the afflicting rod. The affliction has now a voice, and this is its cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest." "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God." The cry reaches their heart, and shakes off slumber from their eyes and limbs.

II. The other chief instrument in the Lord's hands to stir up the slumbering nest is the bill and claw of a heart-searching, experimental ministry—not to tear, but arouse; to pass between the feathers, but not to rend the flesh. How the Lord's people want stirring up! How they need a minister to search them to the very core! How they require not the baby's lullaby, but the trumpet of alarm in the holy mountain; and for Zion's watchmen to sound aloud, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem," to rouse them out of that torpidity into which they so often sink. One main use of a gospel ministry is to stir up the people of God. Peter thought it meet, as long as he was in the tabernacle of the body, to "stir up" the brethren, and says, that "in both his epistles he stirred up their pure minds by way of remembrance."

A fire soon goes out unless stirred: and so the fire of God in the soul would die away unless continually stirred up. All through the week haply you are occupied with business: you live perhaps in a whirl of customers where money, money, money, chink, chink, chink, swallows up the whole time of employer and employed: or, if not so, the cares and anxieties of a family, and the carnality of your own nature, combine together to bury you as it were alive. These things should not be so: but so, it is to be feared, they much are. Now, on a Lord's Day, to be able to hear the gospel, to attend an experimental ministry, is often a blessed means of stirring up the soul, and reviving it out of this six days' slumber. It is a bad mark to despise or neglect a gospel ministry. It is God's own ordinance, and therefore cannot be despised or neglected with impunity.

Nearly four years ago I was laid aside from preaching, through illness, for eight months, and in that affliction I learnt one important lesson, if no other—the benefit of a gospel ministry. Being a minister myself, and much feeling my own deficiencies in the ministry, I did not, I confess attach sufficient value to that ordinance. I was much kept from doing so by this feeling, that to attach importance to the ministry was to attach importance to myself. But though too unwell from weakness of the chest to preach myself, I was able to attend chapel during a good portion

of that time as a hearer of such gracious men as stand in this pulpit.

It is a singular circumstance, that during that period my gift for the ministry **if I have any** was as completely taken away as if I had never preached in my life. This stopped all criticism, for I felt, in hearing, that were I in the pulpit, I should not have a word to say. This singular feeling, combined with much depression of mind and body, made me a hearer, I think, less disposed to criticise than any one in the whole place. Being, I hope, in this childlike frame, and so prepared to hear, I found there was a benefit in the preached gospel, such as I did not before apprehend; that it stirred me up: brought feeling to my heart, kindled prayer, and seemed to do my soul real positive good. Since then, being restored to the pulpit, and the door of utterance once more opened. I have attached more value, not indeed to my own, but to the ministry of the gospel generally as an ordinance of God. Under, then, a sound, experimental ministry, if there be any life and fear of God in the heart, it draws it forth: if there be any experience, it is brought to light: new life is kindled in the soul: faith, hope, and love are revived: and the work of God upon the heart is made clear and plain.

Thus, as the eagle stirs up her nest, so does the Lord stir up the work of grace upon the heart of his people. And, if I may judge from my feelings in this pulpit, I must think that you in London much want stirring up; I sadly fear that your souls are in a very sleepy, dead, torpid, state, and that you want some rousing afflictions, and pointed dealings of God, to stir you up, and make you alive and lively in the things of eternity.

2. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, **fluttereth over her young.**" The word "fluttereth" is the same word as is translated "moved" (Gen. 1:2). "The Spirit of God **moved** upon the face of the waters." There is something exceedingly expressive in the word. The Spirit of God hovered with a fluttering motion over the waters, and impregnated chaos with life. So the eagle when she returns from pursuing her prey, first "stirs up" her sleeping

eaglets, and then, gently fluttering over her nest, broods with tremulous motion of bosom and wing over her young, infusing warmth and life into their torpid frames, chilled through her long absence.

What a beautiful figure is this to set forth the return of the Lord to the soul that has fallen asleep, and become chilled with cold when he has been away! Christ, we read, "cherisheth," or, as the word means, "warmeth with his body," "the church" (Eph. 5:29). Fluttering by the blessed Spirit with gentle movements over the soul, he communicates to it animation and warmth. To stir up and to cherish the life of God in the soul are the two chief uses of a gospel ministry. See whether you can trace these two effects of the preached gospel in your soul. Are you not sometimes stirred up? And sometimes does not your heart beat responsively to the joyful sound, and palpitate and flutter under the sweet words of gospel grace as they drop with divine unction into your breast? Do not the eaglets flutter too? Does the bridegroom flutter, and not the bride when their hands are tied together never more to part? So the believer's soul flutters and palpitates in responsive movement to the blessed Spirit. Seek these two things under a preached gospel. How different is life and feeling under the preached word from sitting like so many blocks of ice!

3. "**Spreadeth abroad her wings.**" That she may take in the whole brood. Some of the eaglets are in the centre of the nest, and others at the end; but the eagle neglects none. There are those that lie nearer to her breast, as there are those of God's family who are indulged with closer communion with him. These, like holy John, lean upon his bosom. But the eagle spreads her wings over the whole of her nest, so as to encircle the extremity as well as the centre, thus communicating warmth to every eaglet. Christ does this by the ministry of the gospel: for that reaches, or **should** reach all; it should come down to every case, and enter into every experience. Or, if here the ministry of man be defective, so is not the word of truth. The gospel of the grace of God spreads its benign wings over all the election of grace. From centre to extremity, from the bosom of God to the ends of

the earth, the wings of eternal love embrace all, from Paul in the third heaven to Jonah in the whale's belly. If you have not the whole warmth of the bosom, you have, as an eaglet, the protection of the wing.

4. **"Taketh them, beareth them on her wings."** The eagle is said here to "take" her young, that is, we may gather, to the edge of the nest. The eaglets that now lie in the nest, will one day spread their pinions, and fly abroad in the sky; but at present, when they peep over their couch, and look down the steep precipice on which the eyry is built, their hearts recoil with terror. But the eagle teaches them to look down the precipice, that they may learn to measure its depth, and fear it not. So the Lord leads his people sometimes to look down the precipice of eternity. They are as yet safe in the nest beneath his wings; but sometimes in solemn moments, as in sickness, they shrink from death and eternity. They recoil from the unfathomed precipice, and shrink back into the nest. But the eagle holds them firm to the sight till they are encouraged by her presence and fluttering warmth to look down without fear. She then makes them essay their strength, and, to uphold them in their flight, **"bears them upon her wings."** carries them on her back, where they are safe under the arch of her outspread pinions. So the Lord in his gracious dealings with his Israel, when he has caused them to look into eternity, and they shrink from the sight, takes them upon his pinions, gives them some sweet and heart-cheering views of their interest in his blood, removes the fear of death, till he teaches them to shoot away, and fly aloft to heaven's battlements.

V.—And then to shew how this is wholly of the Lord, he adds, **"So the Lord alone did lead him."** He would not share the honour with any. **"And there was no strange god with him."** He would not suffer any dunghill god to interfere; for he is a jealous god. **"The Lord alone" he would have no intruder: Jesus bears no rival, "did lead him."** Israel did not lead himself, nor was he led by man; but the Lord alone, in his providence and grace, led him about, instructed him, kept him as the apple of his

eye, and was to him all that the eagle is to her young. Free-will had no hand in this matter; human strength did not interfere; creature righteousness was never suffered to interpose. They were all still as a stone, when Israel passed over. God did all the work, that God might have all the glory. He began, he carried on, he completed; for "the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."

O how blessedly does the Lord take the whole matter in hand! And how safely does he lead his people! How secure they are! If he keep them as the apple of his eye, can anything really hurt them? If he lead them, can they go wrong? If he instruct them, can they remain in ignorance? If he stir them up, can they lie torpid? If he flutter over them, will they not feel the soft movement of his breast? If he take them, must not they be carried? If he support them, must not they be upheld by his pinions? 'Yes,' say you, all true; I believe it every word: but O, this is what I want—to feel in my soul that I am one of the characters toward whom the Lord shews such mercy! But cannot you trace out in your experience something corresponding to the experience described in the text: "**The desert,**" "**the waste howling wilderness,**" "**led about?**" Can you not see how, in the providence of God you have been led. and how, in the grace of God, you have been brought on from step to step? Can you not see also how you have been instructed?

Though you may know but little, yet have you not been taught this and that lesson, in a gradual and sometimes painful way? Do you not find how the Lord has kept you as the apple of his eye, and preserved you even to this day? has sometimes **stirred** you up under the ministry of the gospel, and sometimes by painful affliction: how he bears you up, and lifts your affections upward, and sometimes gives you a sweet sip of his love, a foretaste of eternal joy? Now, if you find something of this going on in your heart, is not this the very way to read your name graven on this monument of eternal love? But this feeling perhaps creates doubts and fears in your soul, that you are not all, or indeed in many points, what you believe a Christian should be. There are

things in you that grieve and distress you; you cannot think as you would, nor speak as you would, nor act as you would. There is always something or other wrong which seems to wound and disturb your mind. It will be so to the end. The heart is at best a Sahara, a desert, a waste howling wilderness. Will any good thing grow there? If anything could by nature grow there, it would cease to be a desert. If the pestilential wind never howled over it, if the jackal never cried out after its prey, it would cease to be a waste howling wilderness. Nature undergoes no change. But what a mercy it is, even to find in this desert, this waste howling wilderness, some leading, some keeping, some instructing, some stirring, some fluttering, some taking, some bearing up on eagle's wings. Do not look at the desert; you will always see in that nothing but desolation; but see if there be not some of God's gracious dealings and teachings with your soul in the desert; and if you find your character in the text, your name is in the book of life.

## **THE EARNEST CONTENTION FOR LIVING FAITH**

Preached at the Opening of Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester. on the Morning of December 25, 1840

"That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 1:3

We often read in books the praises of primitive Christianity, and there seems to be a general persuasion in the minds of men that primitive Christianity was, with scarcely any exception, of a superlatively excellent nature; and many speak and write as if the churches mentioned in the New Testament consisted entirely of such eminent saints as have never since appeared, and will never appear again. Now whence are we to derive our evidence of the nature of primitive Christianity? Our only certain and infallible authority must be the word of God; by which I mean, in this instance, the Epistles of the New Testament. But what do we gather from these epistles but the startling fact that though persecution in its most dreadful forms stared them in the face, there were some of the vilest characters possible in the churches formed immediately by the apostles! The saints among them were saints indeed; "great grace was upon them;" and their "work of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love" abounded exceedingly. This fact admits of no denial; but this acknowledged truth seems to have thrown another no less certain fact into the back ground, namely, that there were very rank tares among this wheat, "ungodly men who were before of old ordained to this condemnation;" and that these vile characters, described at large in the second Epistle of Peter, and in this Epistle of Jude, were members of these primitive churches. And thus the New Testament churches seem to have closely resembled Jeremiah's baskets of figs: "One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." (Jer. 24:2)

Now it appears that the discerning eye of Jude saw these evils in the churches; and that they were not confined to one or two churches, but were spread through them all. Under heavenly inspiration, therefore, he wrote this "General Epistle," so called because not addressed to a particular church, as at Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, or Thessalonica; but directed and sent abroad to the whole body of Christians, all the visible churches then existing. His mind seems to have been impressed with two prominent feelings. First, "to write to them of the common salvation;" that is, to set before them the glorious truths of salvation, common to the whole body of the elect; and secondly, to "exhort them that they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." But why was he so pressed in spirit to exhort them thus earnestly to contend? Because his discerning eye saw a dark cloud coming over the churches. The faith once delivered unto the saints was in danger; not in any eternal danger as to the faith of the elect failing, or of God's ceasing to have a church on the earth; but in temporary danger; and that not from without, but from within; not from open persecutors, but from false brethren.

Time will not allow me to enter fully into this Epistle, nor trace out these blots in the primitive Church, these "spots in their feasts of charity." And yet it may be as well to endeavour to throw a little light on these characters, as briefly as possible, since the same awful characters infest, more or less, most, if not all, of the Calvinistic churches now; and some light may also be thus shed upon the text itself.

It is necessary, then, to observe that these characters were not casual hearers, outer court worshippers, merely members of the congregation, but that they were **members of the church**. They were clearly in church fellowship, for they sat down to the ordinance. "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear." These feasts of charity! **or love** were not indeed the same thing as the Lord's supper, but they always followed the ordinance, and none sat down at the one, who did not sit down at the other. They were

therefore in church communion with the rest. They are said also to have "crept in unawares;" that is, into the church, but in an under-hand, crafty, and deceitful manner. But, as Jude has drawn their characters, we will, with God's blessing, enter a little into the description that he has given.

They are said, then, "to speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." (Jude 1:10) There were things then which they knew not, and there were things which they knew. They spoke against the one, and they corrupted themselves in the other. What were the things which they knew not? The work of the Holy Ghost on the heart, the manifestations of God's presence, the shedding abroad of his love in the soul, the application of the blood of sprinkling, as well as the trials, difficulties, temptations, exercises, doubts, fears, and bufferings, that are the lot of the people of God. These were the things that "they knew not;" they had no personal, inward, divine, experimental acquaintance with them; they therefore "spoke evil of them," and called them madness, nervousness, enthusiasm, excitement, delusion, gloom, melancholy, or any plausible or evil name which they could devise, whereby they could cast a slur upon the teachings of God in the soul. But what were the things which "they knew naturally?" The doctrinal truths which they had received in their judgment, the glorious truths of salvation which they had learnt naturally, and therefore only knew naturally. For we must bear in mind that Arminianism had not then been introduced into the churches, but the pure truth was still preached by the apostles. But "in these things they corrupted themselves," that is, they held truth in unrighteousness, sinned that grace might abound, and "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness," that is, abused the doctrine of grace as encouraging licentiousness. And why? because they never knew the doctrines of grace in soul feeling and personal experience; but held them in a hard heart, a reprobate mind, and a seared conscience.

But they carried about with them certain marks, which Jude's discerning eye saw, and his clear hand traced out.

1. They had "**gone in the way of Cain.**" What was Cain's sin, here called Cain's "way?" Enmity against his brother. And why? Because the Lord had accepted Abel's offering, and rejected his. Thus in the heart of dead professors there is a deep-rooted enmity, inward murder, against the real people of God; and the root of this enmity is, because God accepts the one, and rejects the other.

2. They had "run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." What was Balaam's error? Light without life, gifts without grace, slavish fear without spiritual fear, a willingness to curse, and a compulsion to bless; a seeing but not now, a beholding but not nigh, a desiring the death of the righteous, and a being slaughtered with the Midianites.

3. "And perished in the gain-saying of Core;" that is, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. **Nu 16** And what was this gainsaying? "an envying of Moses in the camp, and of Aaron the saint of the Lord." (Ps. 106:16). Thus these characters whom Jude condemns thrust themselves forward to partake of the privileges and blessings peculiar to the people of God, aspired to the ministry, formed a party in the church, and allowed no separation of the precious and the vile; but, declared that "all the congregation was holy, every one of them, and that the Lord was among them;" and that therefore to be a member of the church was necessarily to be a child of God.

But they were towering professors, with all this enmity and ungodliness in their heart; and Jude has used several figures, which point to great appearances, but all destitute of reality.

4. "Clouds they are without water, carried about with winds." What is a cloud? A harbinger of rain, a receptacle of fertilizing moisture, suspended in the air, ready to drop down fatness upon the earth. Sometimes we see the earth parched up and dry,

chapped and brown. We look into the sky, like Elijah's servant, if we can see clouds arising to dissolve in fertilizing showers. O! there we see one in the horizon, pregnant with rain. It comes over our heads. But alas! it is "a cloud without water," an appearance without a reality, covering the sun, but wanting the only thing that makes the cloud desirable or valuable. No dew, no rain, no moisture. Such are these dry towering professors. Lofty in their pretensions, but all their conversation devoid of dew or savour, soaring in the air, hiding the sun, darkening the sky, but dropping no rain, producing no fertility. But instead of quietly dropping down blessings, carried about with winds of error, gusts of passion, and the storms of their own lusts.

5. "Trees whose fruit withereth." The elect are trees, as the Spirit says, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." These too are trees, but "trees without fruit," internal or external, "having not the Spirit," (Jude 1:19) and therefore devoid of his gracious fruits. But fruit they have such as it is, "whose fruit withereth;" that is, even their natural fruit of zeal, consistency, liberality, and simplicity withered up, the juice gone, and the dried skin only remaining. "Twice dead," dead in sins, and dead in a profession; "plucked up by the roots," so that a discerning child of God sees that the root of their religion is in the flesh, and they themselves stand plucked up, and cast over the vineyard, in God's own time, before his eyes.

6. "Raging waves of the sea." The sea bears on its ample bosom the produce of all countries, and its waves bring the loaded ships into harbour. But these only rage and foam against God's tried people, and threaten to bury them, rather than bear them, though in swelling high against the teachings of the Spirit in the hearts of the elect, they only foam out to discerning eyes their own shame.

7. "Wandering stars." Not fixed stars to guide the mariner, not the polar star for him to direct his course by, but stars that wander over the sky, and therefore only deceive instead of

instruct, betray him upon the shoals, instead of leading him into the desired haven.

8. But these persons have no doubt of their state, for "their mouth speaketh great swelling words" in self-commendation. They are not plagued as other men. Therefore "they feast and feed themselves without fear." They feed on the letter of truth, on the doctrines of grace in their brain, on the deepest mysteries of vital godliness held in a seared conscience. Therefore they "feed without fear." No godly fear, no trembling awe, no solemn reverence, no holy anxiety, no desire to be right, no dread to be wrong, no doubt if it be presumption to draw nigh, no groanings under inward hypocrisy and presumption, no midnight cries to a heart-searching God to see the ground of their heart, no fervent wrestlings to be upright and sincere before him, no guilt nor self-condemnation nor self-loathing at coming unworthily. O fatal mark! O black stamp, to be devoid of that which is "the beginning of wisdom," and which "God puts into the hearts of his people, that they should not depart from him!"

Now we have no reason to believe that these characters were living in what is termed open sin and profaneness. Had it been so, they would have been turned out of the church; but it is evident that when Jude wrote, they were still in church membership. Their sins therefore were carried on in secret. But Jude's discerning eye, enlightened by the blessed Spirit, saw through all their hypocrisy, and penetrated into their real character, through all their "changeable suits of apparel, veils, wimples, and mantles." He saw then that the faith was in jeopardy, and observing this dark cloud lowering over the churches, wrote this epistle to exhort those that were "sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus, and called," to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." And are times less perilous now? Do not the churches amongst whom the bulk of God's people are swarm with the very same characters that Jude here points out? The saints of God, then, are similarly called upon now to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

Thus much for introduction, long indeed but perhaps not unnecessary, considering the light it may throw on the text.

And now we come to our text; and the first word which seems to demand our notice, is the expression, "faith;" for on that word as on a pivot the whole text seems to turn.

I think we may understand two things by the expression, "the faith once delivered to the saints," **first**, the doctrines preached by the apostles, and **secondly**, that inward faith whereby these doctrines are believed in by the heart unto righteousness, and confession made of them by the mouth unto salvation. The doctrines of grace were delivered to the saints by the Lord and his apostles: they were entrusted to the saints as to a living repository, and by them they were to be handed down to those who followed them in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. This seems to be the prominent and primary meaning of the text. But on that I shall not this morning dwell, but shall confine myself to what I consider its secondary and no less important meaning—the faith that dwells in the heart of the manifested people of God.

Now in examining the faith thus spoken of, it may be as well to see **what it is not**, before we look at **what it is**. The faith, then, which is delivered into the heart of the saints from the mouth of the Lord is not, in the least respect or degree, the fruit or production of the creature. "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:5) It is a faith not to be learnt of man, nor to be procured by the exertions and strivings of the flesh. It cannot be got from the scriptures by hard study; nay, all the exertion of the creature cannot bring into the heart one grain or atom of it. Natural faith, believing traditionally in the scriptures, receiving them as a divine revelation upon the authority of others, and a bare intellectual knowledge of texts and passages, doctrines and mysteries, all fall infinitely short of the saving faith which God communicates to his elect.

The faith delivered unto the saints stands wholly and solely in the power of God. He is the author and finisher of it in the soul; nor have we one jot more, nor one jot less than he is pleased to communicate. This heavenly grace is breathed into the soul by God the Holy Ghost out of the fulness of the Son of God. "We are the clay, and He is the potter;" and so far as we are vessels of mercy, "we are the work of his hand." This faith, then, can only be known by an inward experimental possession of it, and all description of it must fall short of what it really is in soul feeling. Now this faith is breathed into the soul when the Holy Ghost first quickens it into spiritual and eternal life; and the work and province of this faith is to lay hold of, embrace, and realize those truths which the Holy Spirit lodges in the conscience. For it is "the substance of things hoped for." That Almighty teacher casts a divine light upon certain revealed truths, and brings them out of the word into the heart, where they are fastened and riveted by an almighty power. And faith's business and employment is to act upon, and solemnly deal with these truths, which the Holy Spirit thus brings in and makes known. Faith, therefore, does not sail forth upon the letter of God's word, that vast and fathomless ocean of truth. Faith stays at home, and does as Mary did, "ponder these things in her heart." All that comes with light, life, and power, all that is commended to the conscience, all that is experimentally brought into the heart, faith deals with. Whatever truth comes with power from God into the soul is faith's food, and true faith can feed on nothing else. But here many of God's children are often staggered. They read in the word what faith is, and what faith does: as for instance, that it removes mountains, works by love, overcomes the world, purifies the heart, and is accompanied with love, joy, and peace. Such a faith as this many of God's people cannot find in their heart. Again, they see glorious truths set forth in the letter of the word. They see Jesus there spoken of as a great and glorious Saviour. The security of the church in her covenant Head, the solemn truths of election and predestination, the certainty of salvation to the elect, the blessed teachings of the Spirit in the hearts of God's people, these and other divine truths, many of the quickened family of God see clearly written in the scriptures. But they cannot get at

them, so as to realize them as certainly and eternally theirs. They believe that they are true; but they cannot believe them for themselves, so as to rejoice in them as sealed with power in their own hearts. Now here they are baffled; and feeling that their faith does not relieve them from burdens, remove guilt, pacify conscience, and conquer death, they conclude because they have not **this** faith, that they have no faith.

But is this the necessary, or scriptural conclusion? If faith can only realize, and feed upon the truths which the Holy Ghost brings in, faith in its beginning will deal with what is brought in at the beginning. Now what is a sound beginning? "The fear of the Lord," for that is declared to be "the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. 111:10) But the fear of God cannot exist without the knowledge of God, for we cannot fear him whom we do not know. Therefore the Lord Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Faith then, in its early infantile state, acts upon, and is engaged with this inward knowledge of God, which springs from what the Holy Ghost has revealed of him to the conscience. But this knowledge of God embraces the knowledge of what God is, of his holiness, purity, power, justice, hatred of sin, and eternal wrath and displeasure towards transgressors. And as we see light only in God's light, when He sets our secret sins in the light of His countenance, faith begins to act upon, and deal with these eternal realities. Thus the soul is convinced of sin, made acquainted with the spirituality of God's law, and arraigned at his bar as a transgressor. Under this discovery, sin and corruption work, temptations beset the soul, doubts and fears arise, and guilt and condemnation are powerfully felt. Well, but where is faith all this time? Out of sight indeed, but not out of the heart; nay, busy at work, and dealing with these solemn realities, as the Holy Spirit keeps bringing them in. But how is faith evidenced? By feeling. Were there no faith, there would be no feeling. But the presence of feeling shows the presence of faith. Thus the very guilt that the soul feels, the earnest anxiety which it manifests in fleeing from the wrath to come, its groans and sighs for mercy, its struggling forward into light and liberty, as the babe from the

prison of the womb, the very doubts and fears that retard its progress, and all the numerous and varied exercises that attend the quickened soul, all, all manifest the presence of faith. Eternal realities are believed in, and from this belief all these inward exercises spring.

Now after a time, there shall be a change. The Holy Spirit holds up Jesus in the word as a suitable and precious Saviour, and brings into the heart some savour of his Person, work, and precious blood. Faith, as before, sees, realises, and feeds upon this heavenly food. What the Spirit reveals, faith embraces, deals with, and acts upon. Perfect love indeed has not yet come to cast out all "fear which hath torment." But a measure of peace is felt in believing, and faith has at times something more of a comforting nature to feed upon.

It is usually at this season that we are exposed to, and are often entangled by Satan, false professors, and the deceit of our own heart. On one side of the path of life is despair, and on the other side is presumption, two deep ditches, into one or the other of which we are very liable to fall. The soul, then, being somewhat lifted up with views of Christ, often runs eagerly forward, and thus is thrust beyond its real experience. Confident professors always on the rock, preachers crying out against doubts and fears, and the heart's own deceitfulness, all push the unwary child of God forward into head knowledge beyond heart knowledge. One does not like to be snuffed at and snubbed by professors, looked down upon with suspicion, and treated as a babe, a weakling, a beginner, and all one's religion perhaps called in question by those who have no doubt of their own. The flesh is pained thereby, galled, fretted, and mortified. So having some little ground to go upon, the inexperienced and perhaps unballasted vessel of mercy, unless well held in, starts forth into the letter of God's word, to sail on that wide and boundless ocean, without either chart, compass, or rudder. But let a man once go beyond God's teaching, and where will he not get to, unless the Lord bring him back? Well, on the stripling goes, pretty boldly and pretty firmly. Light and life received, with rays of hope

and consolation, give him some entrance into the doctrines of grace, into which therefore he boldly steps. Doubts and fears begin to remove, trials and temptations lose their sharp edge, and a temporary ease and consolation are felt. This emboldens him yet more to go farther and farther still with confidence and assurance, as he now finds some comfort and security more and more drawn from the letter of truth. Now, if the Holy Ghost did not keep him, he would rush forward into all the hardened confidence of a dead professor. But the Lord never has left, and never will leave him; nor was he really easy with all his false confidence. Some heavy trial, some powerful temptation, a bed of sickness, such as I believe was made useful in this way to me ten years ago, death near, and hell in sight, begin to pull down this vain confidence. The soul loses all its fancied treasures and supposed acquirements, and sinks into poverty and beggary. False hopes begin to vanish, rotten props to be knocked away, and refuges of lies to be discovered. Towering confidence flies away, and the soul falls down into darkness, and well nigh into despair. But why all this? What is the Lord doing now? Why, teaching the soul what faith is, by teaching him what faith is not. He had been making bricks, and collecting slime to build up a Babel with, to escape the wrath to come; touching the ark with Uzzah, looking into it presumptuously with the men of Bethshemesh. Now faith comes back to her true old work, to stay at home, and ponder the things inwardly felt. Our religion is now weighed up, and much, perhaps all, to our feelings, found false. The greater part of it stood in the flesh in more or less of presumption. Now then the soul is driven to close dealings with God, forced up into a corner, whence there is no escape. Before, whilst the soul was in an easy, smooth, lukewarm path, there were few or no close dealings with God. There were indeed seasons of prayer, moments of compunction and contrition, but no close, solemn, personal dealings with a heart-searching Jehovah. Hezekiah was a good man, and had offered an acceptable passover, as well as received answers to prayer and a striking deliverance before ever "he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." But he never had close dealings with God, until he had sentence of death in his soul. This

pulled down all his religion, stripped away his fleshly hopes, and drove him up into a corner. But where is faith now? Why, busy with the perfections of God, his majesty, heart-searching eye, and unalterable purposes, and suing, sighing, and groaning after manifestations of mercy. It is not falling on one's knees, nor uttering prayers merely, that is close dealing with God; nor do I believe there are any of these close quarters until the soul is stripped and laid low. Now it comes as a sinner ready to perish, as a poor outcast, who must have mercy inwardly revealed. Like the poor woman diseased with the issue of blood, it longs to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. In this conflict the soul learns what faith is. Hezekiah was brought to feel that "by these things men live, and in all these things was the life of his spirit."

Under these sharp exercises we learn what faith is, and what faith is not; what faith does, and what faith does not. The dross and tin are purged away in this furnace, and in it faith learns its real measure and stature, its true work and business. The soul is taught in the fires to seek and sue after personal manifestations of mercy, is brought off the bare letter of the word, and breathes after the teachings of the blessed Spirit as applying the scriptures with power. What it now therefore receives, it receives as a free gift, for which it must sigh, beg, and groan. Its faith can only stand now in the power of God, and is utterly helpless without him. And when the Lord in mercy sends help and strength, power and feeling, and draws up the affections to himself, the soul knows what faith is, by its presence as well as by its absence; by what it can do, as well as by what it cannot do. Thus according to the measure given, the heart is purified, the love of the world cast out, fleshly religion dethroned, and Christ made all in all. There is now a solid acquaintance with the truth, and the poor, needy, naked, and helpless soul rests and hangs upon Christ alone. This faith, according to its different measure in each, was once delivered unto the saints, delivered, not merely in the preaching of Christ and his apostles, but delivered into their hearts. For this faith then we are earnestly to contend, as an abiding reality, a separating path between presumption and despair. A faith which stands wholly and solely in the teachings,

guidings, and leadings of the Holy Comforter, and received only in such measure, and at such seasons as He delivers it into the heart. But why earnestly contend for it? Why not have peace in churches, smuggle matters up, put goats and sheep into one pen, and so preach and talk as to have a good name among professors? Why not call all that profess, "brethren," and keep things quiet and comfortable? Because having more or less proved the nature of this faith in our own souls, and seen the deceits and dangers of all counterfeits, we must earnestly contend for it. And what then? Why, we must have divisions, troubles, and difficulties. Contend we must therefore for this faith, not bitterly nor angrily, but earnestly and affectionately; contend for it as a thing of infinite importance, as the only thing really worth contending for; contend for it through smiles and frowns, whether men will hear or forbear.

Jude does not say, Contend for church order, though a good thing in its place; nor for doctrines, though true and valuable; nor for your own reputation, though personally dear; but, "for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Because it has made us, each according to our measure, new creatures, wrought an effect on our souls, and upon the possession of it hang our hopes of eternity; because it is the grand turning point between sinner and saint, between life and death. All the people of God quickened into spiritual life have faith, the weakest as well as the strongest; the babe of yesterday as well as the saint of a fifty years' profession. Their faith differs in measure, not in kind. To contend therefore for divine faith, is to embrace all the living family, and reject all dead professors. If therefore we contend for it, we must give place to its opposers, no, not for an hour. We must make no hollow truces, no false treaties, no rotten alliances and give no quarter to any faith that stands not in the power of God the Holy Ghost. We must allow none to have a grain of real religion, who possess it not. My conscience would condemn me if I did not contend for it earnestly, but my conscience would equally condemn me if I were to contend for it bitterly. I trust in this spirit I have come to Leicester. I feel that I have not come here to oppose any man, or disparage any man, to minister to any man's pride, to set any man up, or pull any man down. So far as

I know my own motives, **and our hearts are so deceitful that it is hard always to know them** I have come here with a desire after God's glory. Films will come over the eye, when we think and wish it to be most single; but I have felt, that there being a door opened in this town for experimental truth, a chapel built, and a pulpit set up, I could comfortably and conscientiously enter it to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." God will own and bless no other cause and no other preaching but that which contends for the faith that He himself once delivered. I desire to contend for it earnestly, simply, fully and affectionately; and may we ever contend for it at home and abroad, in our words and actions, as well as in our life, conduct, and conversation.

In this mixed multitude there must be persons assembled from various motives. Some to hear a new preacher, some to pick up something from the pulpit which they may carry away to make me an offender for a word, some to see the new chapel, and some, I trust, to hear what the Lord may speak to their soul. To the last I would by way of conclusion address myself.

If you have any measure of this spiritual faith, you will have plenty of trials with it. The Lord says—Rev. 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold;" but what gold? "tried in the fire," no other. Wherever, therefore, the Lord gives faith, he gives trials to prove it. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Pet. 1:7) Thus we are tried with unbelief, infidelity, doubts, questionings, and fears tried in providence; tried by bodily afflictions; tried by the enmity of the world, the opposition of carnal professors, the deceit of false friends, but most of all by our own dreadfully vile and wicked hearts. And yet, with all these trials some more and some less, all who have any measure of this heavenly faith will and must earnestly contend for it, as the only thing that supports the soul under trials, and as feeling that this faith only "will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." You therefore, into whose heart God has breathed this faith, will have a cross to carry. You that have it not, and contend

only for doctrines, a name to live, rites, forms, and ceremonies of man's invention, and an outside religion, will be loved by the word, and meet with neither outward nor inward opposition. But may we who desire to fear God, be willing to endure these things, "receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls."

## **ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER**

Preached on December 20th, 1846. The place where this sermon was preached is not recorded.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an 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" Hebrews 4:14-16

It appears from several passages scattered up and down this epistle, that the Hebrews (that is, the believing Jews) to whom it was written, were undergoing many severe trials and persecutions. In fact, the brunt of persecution seemed especially to fall upon them, and this chiefly from their unbelieving brethren. A profession, therefore, in those days could not, as in ours, be taken up at very little cost, and carried on with very little personal sacrifice. It began in difficulty; it was carried on in difficulty; and it often ended in the death of the person who made it. The apostle in our text seems to have an eye to this, and to encourage those to whom he is writing to maintain their profession firmly and unwaveringly. But on what ground does he put the encouragement? Does he put it upon this ground, "Summon up all your strength; call up every motive power you possess; put your shoulder to the wheel?" He does not thus appeal to any power that they possessed in themselves; he puts it entirely upon other ground. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." And in order to encourage them still more to hold fast their profession, he points out some marks and characteristics of this great High Priest, that he is not unfeeling and insensible of what takes place in regard to his people upon earth. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" he knows what it is

to be touched with a feeling of our helplessness, weaknesses, and infirmities, and this not from a theoretical knowledge, "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." But it might be said, "This is very blessed and true, but how are we to derive any comfort from it? "There is," he says, "a throne of grace set up, a throne of mercy erected and appointed; and to it you must come with your wants, trials, temptations, and difficulties." "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Thus we may see, if God enable us, the connection betwixt these three verses before us, and how applicable they are to every tried and tempted child of God.

The apostle then gives us:

I. An *exhortation*: "Let us hold fast our profession."

II. The *ground* why we should do so. That we have (1) "a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;" and (2) One who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." III. An *Invitation* that we should "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

I. Though we have not in our day open persecution, nor fire and sword to encounter, such as made a profession so difficult in primitive times, yet we have trials, temptations, and difficulties as perplexing in their measure as ever the first Christians had. It is true that the outward face of things is changed; but the inward face of things is not. Besides, we have reason to believe that the Lord in those days bestowed more abundant consolations, clearer manifestations, brighter testimonies, more immediate answers to prayer, more discoveries of his goodness and love, than he favours the church of God with, for the most part, now. Had they more outward suffering? They had more inward consolation. Did they risk their lives with their profession? The Lord supported them under all their sufferings and tribulations. Did they maintain their profession at the risk of everything dear to the flesh? The

Lord enabled them cheerfully to part with all, through the sweet manifestations of his love towards them.

But a true, genuine profession of religion will be always accompanied with difficulties. None but God himself, I am well convinced, can ever keep us alive unto his glory, and enable us to hold fast that profession with a good conscience. For instance, look, 1st. At our *backsliding* hearts. Our nature is bent upon backsliding; it is ever prone to evil; it goes as naturally after idols as a stone falls to the ground, or as a flame ascends into the air. Where then this backsliding heart is perpetually drawing a man aside, how hard it is to maintain an upright, sincere, honest, and gracious profession of vital godliness! 2nd. Again, *Satan* is continually thrusting at God's people. Sometimes he works upon their unbelief, sometimes he stirs up the infidelity of their fallen nature, sometimes hurls fiery darts into their minds, sometimes he spreads snares to entangle their feet, sometimes he works upon the passions and lusts of their fallen nature, sometimes he attempts to deceive them as an angel of light, and sometimes he so confuses their minds and perplexes their thoughts that they hardly know where they are, or what they are. They cannot "see their signs," nor read their evidences clearly. 3rd. Sometimes a man's *very desire to be honest and sincere* before God will almost make him say, "I can make a profession no more, for I have so few evidences and so few marks of God's grace; there are so few fruits of the Spirit in me that it seems mocking God to go on in a profession any longer." So that what with the inward evils of our hearts, the temptations of Satan, and the numerous perplexities the mind gets entangled in, the deadness, darkness, coldness, and unbelief we are continually assailed with, it seems now almost as hard as it was in primitive days to keep up a consistent profession of vital godliness, or even to drag one spiritual limb after another.

II. But how does the apostle meet this difficulty? What ground does he give for holding fast our profession? This! (1) "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

As though he should say, "There is an ample supply for you laid up in the fulness of the Son of God. It is true that it is very difficult to maintain your profession. It is true that there are times and seasons when it appears as though you must abandon it and give all up. But," he says, "look at the secret supply, at the hidden source of all your strength." "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." But why should this be the ground for holding fast our profession? Because, if it is a true profession, Jesus is the Author and Jesus is the Finisher of it. What read we? "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession" (or profession, the word is the same) "is made unto salvation" (Rom.10:10). What is the root, then, of all sound profession? Is it not faith? What was the root of the profession that the eunuch made when he was solemnly baptised in the name of the Lord? What did Philip say to him? "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Faith in Christ as the Son of God was the ground of his profession; and it must be the ground of ours, if it be genuine. Now, Jesus is declared in the Scripture to be "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb.12:2). It is from him our faith comes, if we have a grain; and that faith he will finish, because "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil.1:6).

Here, then, is encouragement. Did Jesus look upon you when you were in your blood? When you were a rebel, did he cast an eye of pity and compassion upon you? Did he separate you from the world? Did he constrain you to call upon his name? Did he bring you to his footstool, and afterwards reveal himself? Did he endear himself to your heart? He is then the Author of living faith in your soul, and he will be the Finisher. And what is the pledge? The priesthood of Christ. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens."

The priesthood of Christ is one of the grand fundamental doctrines of the gospel. You will find it is blessedly set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But what were the offices of the High

Priest? I will just mention two. One was to offer sacrifice, another to offer prayer and supplication. When Jesus was upon earth he offered a sacrifice; his own spotless body and soul. That was the propitiation which he made as great High Priest, when he offered himself as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. But he has passed into heaven; he is risen from the dead; he is ascended up where he was before. He sits now at God's right hand as the Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate of God's church and people. There he performs the second part of the priestly office, that of prayer; for the court of heaven is filled with the incense of his blood and obedience, and thus by his intercession there is the perpetual rising up of the incense of his sacrifice before the throne of God.

But how is this connected with the holding fast of our profession? It is connected with it thus. God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ. It is the propitiation for sin whereby God hath reconciled his church and people to himself, and by virtue of that sacrifice he sends down his blessed Spirit into their hearts to make Jesus known. Nay more; Jesus himself lives and intercedes within the veil, and says, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). So that the holding fast of our profession is put not upon what we are, have been, or ever can be, but upon this, that we have a great High Priest, the Son of God, in our own nature, at the right hand of the Father, perpetually interceding for us. In other words, we have a friend at court; and because we have a friend there, we shall have the ear of the King. Jesus is this Friend, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov.18:24). He has the ear of the Father, for it is said the Father continually hears him, and grants him all the desires of his soul. "The God of Israel grant thee thy petition" (1 Sam.1:17). This suits well one who from day to day is tempted to cast aside his profession, and to say, "It is of no use going on any longer. I am such a sinner, live so little to God's glory, and am so little inwardly what I seem to be outwardly." How suitable then is this truth: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," on this ground, "let us hold fast our profession." His blood still cleanseth from all sin; his righteousness is still from

everlasting to everlasting; his love is still unceasing, and he himself "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb.13:8). You fluctuate; you change; the weather is not more unstable than you are; but he changes not. In him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas.1:17). Then what an encouragement is here for a poor, tempted, tried child of God still to hold fast his profession that he has a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, there to be his Surety and Advocate at the right hand of the Majesty on high!

(2). But the apostle adds a sweet encouragement as a still further motive to hold fast our profession: "For we have not an 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." What is the main thing that makes you at times afraid about your profession? Is it not because you feel so much sin working in you; because you are not what you wish to be; because so many evils are perpetually discovering themselves; because you seem to live so little to God's glory? Now the apostle thus meets this feeling: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This great High Priest is not for men who are righteous, holy, and pure in themselves. Such are not the subjects of his kingdom. He makes his subjects indeed perfect by clothing them in his perfections, and sanctifies them by making them partakers of his holiness. But as to their own feelings, as to the confessions of their hearts, it is far otherwise with them. If then we are to wait until we are perfect, until we are holy, for Jesus to have pity upon us, we shall never have him to look upon us with compassion at all. The apostle therefore tells us, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" as though he would say, "He is a sympathising High Priest; he carries a tender heart in his bosom; he is not one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, he knows what we are; he reads our hearts, and sees their every movement, for all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." O he looks on our infirmities as touched with the feeling of them, tender, sympathising, and compassionate!

How often we mistake the character of the Lord Jesus Christ! We know that he is holy, a Lamb without blemish and without spot, and therefore this feeling works in our minds, "He cannot look upon me, for I am unholy." We measure him by a human standard. "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou" (Isa.65:5). But the Lord Jesus Christ, though he is perfect, spotless, and holy, yet when he looks down from the throne of his mercy upon all the infirmities of his people, is touched with sympathising feelings; for his heart is full of compassion and loving-kindness. Let us carry this out from an illustration of what he was in the days of his flesh. He had not a spot of disease in his body. Bear that in mind, he was not like us. Some people talk about the mortal body of the Lord Jesus Christ. His body was not mortal. It is true it was capable of dying; but there was no mortality in it, nor disease. We never read in the Word of God that the Lord had anything like human sickness. Human sickness is the result of sin; and the Lord being perfectly free from every taint of sin, his body was therefore free from every taint of sickness or disease. Yet he could pity and cure human disease. When he saw Peter's wife's mother lying in a fever, he could come and rebuke that fever. When he saw a leper, he could cleanse him. Whatever disease a man was afflicted with, with a look, with a word, he could chase that disease away. So in a higher sense, though the Lord Jesus Christ has no sin in him, not a speck, not a spot, not a stain, not a blemish; yet he can look upon those who are all sin, a mass of iniquity from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, diseased and defiled throughout, and pity and cure them. Now is not this an encouragement for a poor sinner to look to this blessed Lord? We have not a stoical High Priest, one wrapped up in a monkish holiness, that says, "Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou" (Isa.65:5). No; we have not a High Priest who is so wrapped up in his sanctity that he has no eye to look off himself.

Such is a Hindu god, wrapped up in the contemplation of his own holiness. But the Lord Jesus Christ, though so glorious in majesty

and holiness, yet has bowels of compassion, love, and infinite mercy towards those who are full of sin and infirmity. What would become of us if it were otherwise? Damnation would be our lot if this great High Priest were not "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Your coldness, deadness, barrenness, hardness, darkness, unbelief, infidelity, and all the workings of a corrupt nature often cause piteous lamentations and complaints to go up out of your bosom. O you have a great High Priest, one that is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. As a tender mother, who when her child cries in the cradle feels it because she is touched with pity and compassion for her offspring, so our great High Priest is touched and his heart melts with a sense of sympathising pity for the infirmities of his poor, needy ones. But some might say, "Yes, we believe all that, but Jesus cannot have had the experience of these things as we have them." O, but the apostle adds, "But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He has not a mere theoretical acquaintance with temptations; but he himself has passed through the like sufferings. That is plain from the text: "In all points tempted like as we are." And in all temptations he was "without sin." Now I consider this a very deep and mysterious subject, which we can scarcely speak upon, lest we darken counsel by words without knowledge. This is the mystery, how he could be "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." How could this be? I will tell you as far as I can understand it. When you and I are tempted of Satan, we have a carnal principle in our hearts that falls in with his temptation; and it is this falling in with temptation that constitutes sin. I will show you this in the Word of God. What says James? "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (ch.1:14,15). You see, in order that sin may be brought forth, there must be a conception. Temptation from Satan alone is not our sin. But when his temptation and our lust meet together, sin is their miserable progeny. Now the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted. We find this wonderfully set forth in Matthew 4:10. But temptation dropped off him as an arrow from a shield of steel; there is no dent made by it. The arrow may be very

sharp, and may be drawn by a powerful hand: it touches the shield of steel, and drops down powerless. Some then may say, "If this be the case, how could the Lord sympathise with us?" What is it in you that feels temptation? It is not your carnal mind; that loves sin. Is it not then your spiritual mind? Is not that grieved? Does not that groan under, and is it not distressed by sin? But look at the Lord Jesus Christ. How his holy nature, how his pure and spotless soul must have been beyond measure grieved and distressed; yes, inexpressibly distressed by the temptations which the artillery of hell shot against him! So, though the Lord Jesus Christ never sinned in thought, word, or deed, yet he was tempted in all points like as we are. So that whatever be our temptations and trials, the Lord Jesus Christ has passed through the like; and therefore, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, can help, and save, and bless us to the uttermost. What an encouragement this is to the Lord's poor, tempted, and tried people!

III. And this brings the apostle to hold forth the encouraging invitation: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." There is then a throne of grace. But what is the throne of grace? It is said, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary" (Jer.17:12). It is the Person of Christ, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; where grace superabounds over the aboundings of sin; where grace sways its triumphant sceptre over sin, death, and hell. He is the throne of grace to which the Lord's people are invited to come: the mercy-seat from which the Lord communes with them. He invites, nay, bids them to come, and spread all their wants before his footstool. And the text says, "Let us therefore come boldly." Why boldly? Because we have this great High Priest over the house of God, not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. "Therefore let us come boldly." Observe the "Therefore." Not because I am holy and righteous, have lived to God's honour, walked very consistently, subdued all my evil passions, and overcome all my besetting sins. O what a miserable

ground would that be! It might do for Pharisees, and for them only, to stand on. The apostle does not put that as the ground for coming boldly. But because we have a High Priest who has opened up a way to the throne of grace, that we may come boldly. But what does coming boldly mean? It means coming with sweet liberty; not to stay away, kept back by Satan; not driven off by doubts and fears, full of apprehensions lest the Lord should not hear our prayer. It is to come with sweet liberty in our consciences, and open our mouths before the throne undaunted by sin and Satan, unterrified by the accusations of a fiery law, and not driven back by the many doubts and fears that press upon a tender conscience. "Let us therefore," he says, "come boldly unto the throne of grace." But some may say, "I have sinned; I have backslidden; I am full off exercises, and am sadly tried and tempted." "O," he says, "let not these things keep you back." They often, you know, do keep us back. We dare not go, because we have sinned against God; confusion covers our faces; guilt is contracted; we dare not pray. But says the apostle, "Let us .... come boldly unto the throne of grace;" for we have a great High Priest who has been tempted in all points like as we are.

But what shall we get when we come there? Mercy. "That we may obtain mercy," the sweet manifestations of God's mercy, the discovery of his pardoning love, the shedding abroad of his infinite and eternal favour; that we may have all our sins blotted out, our backslidings healed, and our transgressions cast behind God's back. Nay more, that we may find there all our support, strength, wisdom, consolation, everything our souls may desire: "And find grace to help in time of need," when Satan harasses, when sin distresses, when guilt burdens. O he says, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy" from the hand of a kind and loving God, and find grace to help, and strength to support and comfort us in every time of need. But what is the "time of need?" The time of temptation, the time of affliction, and chiefly the time of death, when we have to lay our heads upon a dying pillow. "O," he says, "there is a throne of grace; shall we not go there to obtain mercy, which alone can sweetly comfort our souls in every time of

need?" Here is encouragement. What a door the Lord here lays open before us, to encourage us to come to his throne of mercy! And does he lay one atom of weight upon any goodness in the creature, to encourage us to come boldly? Not an atom. May I not then appeal to your consciences whether the testimony of the Spirit here, that we have such a great High Priest, is not an encouragement to a poor soul to come boldly to the throne of grace, who finds nothing in himself but sin, confusion, and misery? We shall never suffer loss by coming there. O may we come often! O may we come boldly, may we come believingly! The Lord will never send any empty away who hang upon him, depending wholly and solely upon his mercy and grace; for in his faithfulness he has promised it. He will not, he cannot deny himself. Though heaven and earth pass away, his Word shall never pass away.

## **An Encouraging Precept and a Gracious Promise**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,  
March 31, 1859

(A Posthumous Sermon)

"Be careful for nothing; by 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." Philippians 4:6, 7

I think this is the third or fourth Thursday evening that I have been trying to preach from this text. I have come to chapel with this text in my mind, and yet something has occurred when I stood up in the pulpit to take the text away, so that I have been obliged to take another. I cannot account for this. I cannot tell why it should be so, or whether there is anything of the purposes of God in it or no. This evening I have thus far succeeded in giving out the text; but what I may say I must leave to the Lord. It is of him to grant and of him to deny. It is of him to shut and of him to open. If he grant me a speaking tongue, he may grant you a hearing ear. If he deny me the tongue of the learned, he may deny you the ear of the wise. But whatever he do, we know it is right, and as far as regards the vessels of mercy, not only right but good and well.

With this short preface I come to our subject, in which I see, or seem to see, three leading things.

I.—*First*, The *exhortation*, "Be careful for nothing."

II.—*Secondly*, The *godly counsel*, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

III.—*Thirdly*, The *promise*, "And the peace of God which passeth

all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

In opening up the first clause of our text I must drop a few remarks upon the expression, "*Be careful for nothing.*" Now the words do not mean that we are not to have any concern or any forethought about the things of time and sense. The meaning of the original is, "Let not your mind be distracted." The word means "tearing the mind," "dividing it asunder." So that the Lord does not mean to exclude by these words that necessary forethought, without which there would be no harvest to be reaped, and without which not a single plan could be begun or executed. But what the Lord the Spirit by the pen of Paul means here is to warn us against over-anxiety and distracting care, against being so overcome and overburdened by the things of time and sense that the mind is torn and distracted thereby. The Lord uses the same word in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, where he says, "Which of you by *taking thought* can add one cubit to his stature? And why *take ye thought* for raiment." "Therefore, take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'" The Lord did not here mean we were to take no thought at all; in fact we could not live without taking thought. We are maintained day by day by that which has been the object of thought. That provision, but for which the body would die, has been the object of thought. But what the Lord meant is to exclude that distracting care, that over-anxiety, that burdened mind, that dejected spirit, that carking care for the things of time and sense, as if there was no God in heaven to satisfy the wants of the body as well as take care of the soul. In this sense, therefore, we must consider the words, "*Be careful for nothing.*" That is, let not anything of whatsoever nature it may be, and especially of temporal matters, so distract your mind, so burden your spirit, and exercise that influence over your thoughts as to take possession of your soul and shut God out.

Now, is not this an evil that the saints of God are much subject to, and there was one of whom we read that was cumbered about

much serving. When the Lord came to take his meal in her hospitable house she thought she could not do enough for him. She must bustle about here and there, and neglect her soul that she might please the Lord with much serving him. But what said the Lord to her? "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." So in the words before us, "Be careful for nothing." It may be that your prospects are not very bright as regards this world. It may be you have many fears as to the future, what the future may bring; and we know how Satan can work upon our minds and fill us with a thousand fears; of troubles which will never come to pass; he may set before our eyes gloomy prospects, none of which may happen, and which, if they do, the Lord can effectually thwart by a single glance of the eye. But Satan has such access to the saints of God to distract them in this way. How everything can be magnified by his prospective glass! how he will magnify this little molehill into a mountain, this passing trouble into a weighty concern, and so set things before their minds and fill their hearts with so many unbelieving objections that they think the end will be the workhouse. How many a saint of God has died comfortably with respect to his body, surrounded by all those comforts which heart could wish, such as affectionate friends and relations and everything to mitigate the sufferings of that awful hour; when he, years before, had been painting himself dying on a workhouse pallet and given up to the cold mercies of an unfeeling nurse; yet the end has been different.

Now the Lord by his Apostle Paul would say to us "Be careful for nothing," do not let your mind be so deeply distressed, so overburdened and full of anxiety as to the future—the coming morning. He, who has provided, can still provide. He, who has thus far surrounded you and watched over you, from infancy up to the present time, will go on to provide and take care of you. Have not your fears over and over again proved groundless? and has not the Lord supplied all your wants? "Then," he would say, "how can you give way to these unbelieving fears which are so devilish, and which lead you to believe that God has shut up his

mercies from you, that his arm is shortened, that it cannot save, and that his heart is weary of you, and will show you favour no more." The secret of all this is—unbelief. This is the secret of this expression—of being so careful and anxious; it is unbelief—infidelity—denying God—and looking to self, instead of out of self, and hanging upon the faithful and covenant-keeping Jehovah. There are persons who go fretting along all their days and being anxious and careful all about nothing. Every little trouble that they have they aggravate by a desponding mind, and every little anxiety is magnified by their unbelieving fears and by their natural dejection of spirit into a mountain that might crush them beneath its weight. And what do they get by their anxieties and cares and dismal forebodings? They rather provoke God, as the children of Israel did—whenever they came to a difficulty; they immediately began to murmur, rebel and fret against God, and thus they provoked him because they forgot the manna that came down from heaven, the rock that was smitten, and the clothes wherewith they were clothed for forty years, and though they forgot these mercies they had quails in abundance when they wanted flesh. Yet the moment they got to a little difficulty they began to murmur, rebel, despond, doubt and fear, and wanted to go back to Egypt.

This is what many of God's children are doing now. They eat out their religion by these anxieties, these cares, these desponding suggestions, and by being overcome by the things of the body. All these things eat up the life of God, put a damp upon faith, almost strangle hope, and mightily impede love. And they grieve the Lord greatly, because they are so dishonouring to what he is as a kind, bountiful God in providence, and to all that he has done in grace. Therefore, it is no light sin, no light evil they commit in fretting, fuming, mourning, and wondering how this trial is to be met, how this difficulty is to be got over, and crying, where shall I get the money to pay this rent, or what shall I do to find food for the children, or to give them a good education and push them on in the world, or shall I have anyone to take care of me when I am without strength to take care of myself, or will people be tired of contributing to my wants. Why, you may never

live to want anyone to take care of you, or God may raise up friends who will take better care of your children than you could yourself. There was a dear friend of mine some years ago who had ten children. At one time he was in very good circumstances, but his means became greatly reduced, and the Lord saw fit to lay him on a bed of sickness which proved to be the bed of death. During this sickness he was very much troubled as to who would take care of his children; but the Lord blessed him, not with a manifestation of his love, but he gave him a sweet promise he would take care of his children and wife after his death. That promise has been fulfilled, and his children are now much better off than during his life time. The Lord has found situations for them in London. They spoke to me the last time I was at Gower-street Chapel in the vestry; they were all happy and well, and a comfort to each other, and one of them is, I hope, a partaker of grace. So, you see what the Lord can do and is able and willing to do for you and your children, if you are enabled to trust in his holy name. Then "Be careful for nothing." Not that we should be without prudent foresight, and spend our money anyhow. We must be careful in that sense of the word. But it is that carking care, that miserable anxiety, that desponding fear, that unbelieving doubt which the Lord here rebukes when he says, "Be careful for nothing."

II.—But I pass on to show the sweet counsel which the Lord gives by the pen of Paul. He says, *"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."*

Now when men's minds are so buried in these carking cares, when they are surrounded by endless miserable doubts and fears as to the future, there is no prayer in their breast, for these things eat up the life of prayer. A man cannot pray if he has not faith. When your mind is tossed up and down with these unbelieving cares you cannot pray, because you have not faith; and the reason you are tossed up and down is because you are full of unbelief, and whilst you are full of unbelief there is no prayer in your soul; for if faith is not in your soul there is no

prayer, for where faith is not prayer is not. Therefore, we find the Spirit here putting these two things in contrast. While you are so hardened with worldly anxieties you are not praying to the Lord, but you are silently praying to yourself and resting upon an arm of flesh. But if enabled to get out of this wretched frame of mind so as to be favoured with a little faith in sweet exercise, hope to anchor within the vail, and a love towards his name, then you can lift up your head out of these troubles and sorrows, difficulties and darkness, which for the time being at least are dispersed by the beams of the Sun of righteousness. And then prayer begins to steal over the soul, and the spirit of prayer and supplication being given, there is a pouring out of the heart. We see this in the immortal Bunyan. When the pilgrims got into Doubting Castle, there was no prayer then till about the middle of the night, when they found a key—the key of promise—and then they began to pray; but when first cast into the prison they were full of fearful thoughts about the morrow, and what would be the case when the giant came to despatch them with his cudgel. But when faith began to work then they began to pray, and then they soon found the key of promise, by means of which they escaped from the dismal dungeon. There are few things more opposed to the life of God than despondency and self-pity. You may be pitying yourself and weeping and heaving many a bitter sigh, and thinking all the while that this is religion. There is no religion in it. I knew a woman when I was in the Establishment who took up her tears with a teaspoon. I never saw anybody weep so in my life; but she had no more religion than this slab—indeed, she was an enemy to it; yet such a weeper and mourner I never knew. It was worldly things that made her weep. She had lost a mill and had been brought down in providence, and it was that that made her tears flow down so abundantly. It is not dejected spirits and sighing over worldly things that manifest religion, but a *want* of it. There is nothing more opposed to a life of faith than that desponding spirit. Where the Lord is pleased to communicate a life to the soul then he enables the soul to act out his wise counsel. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." What a word it is! Everything! You are privileged, saint of God, to go to

the throne of God with everything. What? with every little occurrence? Yes. What? with things that people called trifles? Yes. With your daily concerns? Yes. If you feel that there is a God who can hear you, it is your privilege to go to him in *everything*. All things are comprehended; nothing is excluded. In everything, and that by prayer and supplication. Sometimes we pray, sometimes we supplicate. Prayer is something more gentle than supplication, less earnest, less fervent, less powerful; yet not less effectual. I have sometimes compared prayer and supplication to two things in nature. The one to a river—a stream, such as we see in our low country that flows with gentle course to the sea; the other to the torrents found in mountainous countries, that leap from precipice to precipice. The one is the calm prayer of the soul, the other the fervent cry, the earnest supplication, the breathed agony of the spirit rushing along into the bosom of God with many a broken sigh and many an earnest groan. Here the two seem contrasted. There is prayer—calm and gentle, the simple pouring out of the soul into the bosom of God; and then there is supplication, which is earnest, and calls upon the Lord as though the soul must be heard. We see it in the blessed Lord himself. We read on one occasion that he went into a mountain the whole night to pray. Now we have no reason to believe he prayed on that occasion in the same way that he prayed in the garden and upon the cross. In the one case he had sweet union and communion with his Father; in the other he cried with groans and tears and was heard. The one was prayer; the other supplication. When your soul is calmed by the presence of God, and you feel the breath of prayer to enter your bosom, then you can pray to the Lord with sweetness and with spirit. But there are times and seasons when the soul, under the attacks of Satan and a terrible sense of guilt and shame, is obliged to cry as one that must be heard, and that is supplication. But there is another thing which is to be mingled with it, and a thing much omitted, and that is thanksgiving. There are the three constituents of a spiritual service, Prayer, Supplication, and Thanksgiving.

Have you no mercies to thank God for? Have you no favours for which to bless his holy name? Has he done nothing for you? Has

he done nothing for you in grace? Have you no tribute of thanksgiving to offer to his great majesty? The Lord takes this unkind at your hands. If you give a person anything, do you not expect an acknowledgment? If he was to receive your favour and turn away as if he had received something that was his due, should you not think him unkind? Well, is it not so in divine things? If the Lord give anything, does he not expect a thankful heart? If you receive matters as matters of course, as matters of right, you need not thank God then. If you receive your wages on the Saturday night you need not thank your master for them, they are yours, you have earned them; but you may thank your master, and it is well you should be grateful to him. You need not thank him; but you may do so. So if you have health and strength as matters of course, then you need not thank God for them. But if you receive them as mercies given to an undeserving rebel, as favours communicated to a wretch that merits nothing but hell, then there is a tribute of thankfulness due. The sweetest part of prayer is thanksgiving. It is that that sweetens the whole sacrifice.

I am not going to tell you how to pray; but you will find it good to thank God more for mercies received. If you began your prayer with praise you might end with praise. If you begin by thanking him for what he has done in providence, you may end by thanking him for what he has done in grace. What have you to thank God for? Have you not much to thank him for? There is God's grace, an open Bible, and what a blessing is an open Bible! And there is now a hope in your soul that you have an interest in Christ's precious blood. Anything he has done for you by his Spirit and grace is an object and matter for praise. But if you cannot go so high as that, you can begin with providential mercies. A dear friend of mine was shut up for several years, not by backsliding, for he did not give up going to hear the preached word, but attended the means of grace as regularly as any one, and heard me over and over again when I was in London. When in that state he felt he should go to hell, having scarcely a hope of heaven. But there was a temporal circumstance that happened about this time and the clouds got very dark. "Well," he said to himself, "I

surely can ask the Lord to put this temporal matter straight. He may listen to me; he may hear me in this matter." And as the thought revolved in his mind he fell upon his knees, and the Lord broke in upon his soul with the sweet promise, "Ask, and it shall be given unto thee, seek and thou shalt find, knock and it shall be opened unto thee." And then he was led to beg for spiritual mercies, because the Lord looked in upon his soul, and in answer God further broke his bondage, and sweetly blessed him with a sense of restoring mercy and pardoning love. He began by thanking a God of providence, and ended by praising a God of grace: he began by spreading a temporal trouble before the Lord, and ended by the Lord imparting life to his soul. So you may try it. If you doubt and fear, you have your temporal troubles and circumstances. You have these requests that you can present before his gracious Majesty. If you can thank him for what he has done for you in temporal things it may open your heart and make a blessed way for God to come into your soul and fill you with joy and peace.

But this leads us to our third and last point—*"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."* Let your requests be made known unto God, spread the case before him like Hezekiah in the temple, and what will be the consequence? Why, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"—so important, so blessed, so sweet, so overflowing, that it passeth all understanding: none can enter into it. It is so deep and so high, so sweet and so blessed, that none can rise up into the apprehension of it. This is the peace of God—worth a thousand worlds, and that the world cannot take away. It shall keep your heart and mind. It shall keep your heart, where the seat of the graces especially are, in tenderness, in godly fear, in simplicity and sincerity, in pure affections and spiritual-mindedness—keep your heart from loving the world and being overcome of the wicked one; and it shall keep your mind, your spirit—that mind in which God especially works—your mind as well as your thoughts, your feelings and affections. He shall keep your heart and mind and all through Christ Jesus, from whom every good gift comes, and through

whom every spiritual blessing is communicated. What wise counsel! What blessed advice! Oh! that the Lord would enable us to act up to it, to feel the sweetness of the truth laid before us, and to give us special grace to act upon it! But is he not a promise-keeping as well as a promise-giving God? Has he not spoken and will he not execute? If so we have a blessed truth laid before us. May the Lord cause us to receive and believe in it, so that we may experience the blessedness of it in our own hearts and consciences.

## The End of the Commandment

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,  
December 9, 1858

(A Posthumous Sermon)

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 1 Tim. 1:5

I have thought sometimes it was a great pity that our excellent translators, who were not only very learned, but, we have every reason to believe, very godly men, and who have given us a translation which has scarcely its paramount, should have retained the word *charity* instead of *love*. And they seem to have been very consistent with themselves; for we have again and again the word *love* in the gospels, but in the epistles, instead of using the word *love*, which is exactly the same word in the *original* as it is in the gospels, they have preserved the word *charity*, and the effect has been to mislead many poor ignorant minds. Numbers of ignorant people think that what we call *charity* means *giving*. When the Apostle spoke so strongly about *charity*, he did not mean a man putting his hand into his pocket and giving half-a-crown to some benevolent institution. The Holy Ghost never meant to convey such an idea, nor to make *giving* to stand upon the same footing with that blessed grace, the *love* of which we read, "Now abideth faith, hope and charity, or *love*, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." You will perceive then that *charity*, as we understand the word, is not meant here, but love; that love of which we read so much in the first chapter of John's gospel, and which shines through the whole of the New Testament as one of the greatest and most blessed gifts of God.

The Apostle tells us here it is the end of the commandment. He says the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of a faith unfeigned. In opening up these words I shall, therefore, with God's blessing—

I.—*First, show you, What the commandment is, and how love is the end of it.*

II.—*Secondly, What this love must consist in, what are its elements and its constituent principles, and that this love to be the end of the commandment must have these three things—It must come out of a pure heart, out of a good conscience, and out of a faith unfeigned, and what these three things are I shall attempt to lay before you, with God's blessing, this evening.*

By the commandment we may understand two things, which I shall severally enter into.

1. First, the Law.
2. Secondly, the Gospel,

For love is the end of both. The Apostle tells us very plainly, that he who hath loved his brother hath fulfilled the law, which is tantamount to the expression "the end of the commandment is love." What are the two great commandments of the law? They are these. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." He who does not love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself, does not fulfil the law, and if he do not fulfil the law he is brought under its curse; for the sentence is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And amongst them is love to God, perfect love, and love to man. Now there is not, nor ever was a single individual upon the face of this globe, from the days of Adam to the present hour, who could perform that law. No man yet ever loved the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself. It is not possible. Human nature has ever been, since the fall, too deeply sunk and alienated from the love of God; and being utterly destitute of any principle of love, it is impossible for any man, with all his religion, piety, and righteousness, to raise up in his soul any such love to

God or his fellow-creatures as the law speaks of or the commandment enjoins. What is the consequence? Why, every man is condemned by the holy law. As the Apostle says most plainly, "that every mouth may be stopped and all the world might become guilty before God." Has that law reached your conscience? Has it ever brought you in guilty? Have you ever tried to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Have you ever tried to love your neighbour as yourself, and found you could not? If you have, the sentence that you have not fulfilled the law must come upon you, and therefore you are brought under condemnation. Well, does not it say "the end of the *commandment* is love?" and did not you say five minutes ago it was the law? Yes; but when the Lord by his Spirit communicates grace to a sinner's heart, and especially when he sheds abroad his love in his soul, then he enables him to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He cannot but love God then; for God sheds abroad his love in his heart, and shows him that he is altogether lovely; and then he cannot help loving the Lord his God with all his mind, soul, heart, and strength, when the Lord gives him power to do so by communicating his grace to his soul, and giving him a sweet interest in the blood of the Lamb; so that though no man ever did fulfil the law in *self*-strength or *self*-wisdom, yet when the Lord manifests to the soul an interest in his blood, he fulfils the law, by the Lord giving him love which is the end of it.

This is very beautifully and sweetly opened up in the 8th chapter of Romans, where we find the Apostle speaking in this language:—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh." It could not enable a man to do what it required; to love God and his neighbour, because it was weak. And when it was weak, so that it could not do what God commanded, God took good care it should be done; for he sent his own Son and condemned sin in the flesh, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled *in us*;" not *for*

us, but in us, as it was in Christ's obedience, in our heart and conscience, lips and lives. There is an internal fulfilment of the righteousness of the law as well as external, by the obedience of the Son of God; therefore the Apostle says, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now if you are enabled to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, and you are enabled to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, you will love the dear saints of God, who are your neighbours, as yourselves. Then you have fulfilled the law; and thus righteousness is fulfilled in you by the power of God. Then the end of the commandment is love. Men are trying to keep the law, and they are bringing, as they think, what the law demands in full tale, but like the children of Israel in Egypt they are making bricks without straw; and many live and die depending for salvation upon a righteousness of their own. Oh, poor deluded creatures! None of their works will deliver their souls! It must be the precious blood of the Lord the Lamb that must save any sinner from the consequences of the fall, and every saint will through the covenant goodness of God, fulfil the law, because he has that love in his heart which is the end of the commandment, and whereby he loves both God and his neighbour. So that whilst the self-righteous Pharisee only brings himself under the curse of the law more and more by thinking he can fulfil it by his own strength, the poor child of grace, in whose heart the mercy and grace of God are found, is fulfilling the law, because he loves the Lord and his people; and having that love, he has the end of the commandment.

2. But I hinted that the commandment also signified the gospel, as the Lord said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34.) Now this is the grand test of the sanctuary, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35.) We live in a day of great profession. Men run to and fro; the knowledge of the Bible is spread about; religious books and tracts are sown broadcast across the land, and thus there is a vast amount of Scripture information in the country; but how different this is from the

teaching of God in the soul, and with all man's knowledge, how deficient men are in that new commandment! We have wisdom, we have intellect, we have understanding, but where is love? Where is that holy dove? Fled into its nest again to dwell once more under the wing of Jesus. Where is love to the people of God in our day, which is the end of the commandment? If there is no love to Jesus there will be no love to the saints of God, and if not, you know neither law nor gospel. But if the Lord has given you any of his grace and blessedness, and constrained you to love him, you will love his people. If you love not the Lord, and if you love not the people of God, you may talk about the gospel, but you know and have felt neither law nor gospel. But I pass on to show, which is a more important point,

II.—*What this love is, what are its elements and constituent principles, and that this love to be the end of the commandment must have three things.* The Apostle advances them in a very blessed manner, and leaves us at a point as to what is its nature and constituent elements. *It must be out of a pure heart, out of a good conscience, and out of a faith unfeigned.* There must be these three things in order that there may be that love, which is the end of the commandment. The first is *a pure heart.* "O," say you, "where is that to be found? Surely not in me; for my heart is impure. I find nothing but filth and folly there." But, stay a moment. Let us see whether we cannot clear up this point. With what a sweet and blessed testimony did the Redeemer open up his ministry. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* And by implication none shall see God, but those who are pure in heart. There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness. The soul must be cleansed from its filth and guilt in the blood and love of the Lamb, and in it there must be pure thoughts, pure principles, pure affections, pure desires, pure faith, hope and love; pure because implanted by him who is perfect purity, and where there is grace in the heart, there is as the Apostle says in the Epistle to Titus, "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." There is the washing of the heart, because the heart is defiled with sin and guilt, and these need to be removed. You

know the leper of old was not only cleansed by the application of blood to his foot, finger, and ear, but by being washed in the bath. So the priests also, when they offered sacrifice in the temple, not only were sprinkled with the blood but washed in water, a beautiful type and figure to show that the saint of God is not merely sprinkled with the atoning blood of the Lamb to purify his conscience from filth, but washed also in the lather of the Holy Ghost, that he may be clean every whit. What a sight was that which the disciple John saw, when the heart of his dear Lord was pierced with the Roman spear, and blood and water came out. Blood to atone for sin, water to sanctify. Out of the same heart came the blood to purify and take away the guilt of sin, and the water to wash by regeneration. So when the Lord is pleased to lay the burden of guilt upon a sinner's conscience, he teaches nothing but the washing and application of the atoning blood, and then purges it by the renewings of the Holy Ghost; and thus when sanctified by the influences and operations of the Holy Spirit upon his heart he is not only sprinkled but washed, and love flows out of a pure heart, the heart being purified by the love of God coming into it. This love is the end of the commandment. But you may have a pretended love. There is a love like the love of one of whom we read, "Art thou come in love, my brother?" but he perceived not that there was a sword in his right hand. There may be a great profession of love, but is there a sword in the right hand? Is it love out of a pure heart, or out of a heart full of hypocrisy, selfishness, and deception? A pure heart is one in which the grace of God dwells, which the blood of Christ has sprinkled, and is kept pure by the Holy Spirit, by the washing away of self-righteousness and conceit. The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, as God hath said, "I will dwell in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

A good conscience.—This is an important matter. Men make sad work of conscience. There is a natural conscience, as we read in the 2nd chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle speaks of those which know 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; and we

find a striking instance as to the working of the natural conscience in those who brought the woman taken in adultery, when the Lord said, "He that is without sin among you let him cast the first stone," and they all went out, from the least unto the greatest, being convicted by their own conscience. There was natural conscience doing its work. Then, there is a natural conscience, but that is not what is spoken of here. There is also a *seared conscience*, as the Apostle speaks, "Having their *conscience seared* with a hot iron." Men may go on in sin till their conscience ceases to give them warning. The idea is taken from the ancients, who were not acquainted with our mode or art of tying up veins, so they used to burn them, and that produced a scar, which was always hard and unfeeling. So he speaks of the conscience as having been *seared with a hot iron* so that nothing could touch it; and thus it is with some men—their *consciences are seared*. It is a dangerous thing to sit under the sound of the gospel and not to receive the truth in a believing heart, for such men have consciences which are not like others. They are gospel hardened, dead to the promises, threats, and warnings of the gospel. They have become as hard and as unfeeling as the stones in the street. Well, that is not a good conscience, is it? That is a bad conscience—a conscience that is indecisive, that sometimes excuses and sometimes condemns. That conscience is never to be depended upon. Supposing a judge never gave the same decision upon the same point, you would say that he was anything but a good judge; you would say he was a bad judge, there not being a single person who could depend upon his decision. Natural conscience is a bad conscience, because sometimes it excuses and sometimes condemns. It is like a superstitious person, who would tell you he would feel guilty if he ate meat on Good Friday, and the next moment is guilty of a most horrible thing, perhaps even of murder. But this is an extreme case, and I have mentioned it merely to show you how far the natural conscience is bad, and how imperfect such a conscience is, because it excuses one moment what it condemns the next. This is a bad conscience, because it does not act with the will and heart of God, nor by the regulation of the Holy Ghost. Then there is an *evil conscience*, as the Apostle speaks of being

"torn from an *evil conscience*." That is a guilty conscience—a conscience full of doubt, bondage, wrath and fear; that is an evil conscience. When you have committed sin, and foolishly brought guilt upon your soul, then you have an evil conscience, and you have to be purged by atoning blood. Then there is a *good conscience*, sprinkled by atoning blood, washed in the regenerating lather, whereby you fear God, and whereby you see, speak, move, act and walk in the holy fear of God, and in reverence of his great and glorious name. This is a good conscience, made tender by the fear of God and washed in the regenerating lather of the Holy Ghost's secret influences, and love to be the end of the commandment must proceed out of this *good conscience*. What is your conscience? Is it a seared conscience? is it an evil conscience? is it a bad conscience? or is it a good conscience? It must be one or the other. Have you any hope that it is a good conscience? Have you any hope that there is the fear of God in your heart? Is your conscience made alive and tender? Is it purged by the blood sprinkled upon it, softened by the love of God, kept clean by a daily recurrence to the fountain, and thus its decisions are in strict harmony with the revealed will of God Almighty?

And then there is faith unfeigned. What a blessed gift the grace of faith is! There is a great deal of false and pretended faith. But the love spoken of in our text which is the end of the commandment is out of a faith *unfeigned*. O, my friends! What a dreadful thing it is to be a hypocrite! to live and die in a false profession! to be nothing less than a mass of insincerity before God and man! and this every man will be, except so far as grace preserves him. Only the light, power, and fear of God in your soul can keep you from that terrible deception of having a feigned faith, and the most dreadful thing is that those persons who possess it are the last persons to see it. If a man is known to be a covetous man, and the whole town is crying out against his covetousness, he himself cannot see it, but his pride and worldliness keep him from paying the few shillings he owes, and the man is the last man to see it. So it is with the deceptiveness of the human heart. There may be professors here who think they have faith, yet God who knows

everything, knows that they have not a grain of the faith *unfeigned*. Can you appear before God? Do you ever think, what a mass of hypocrisy you are? Have you ever come to that spot where you could say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Do you beg and pray of the Lord to make and keep your heart sincere, and give an *unfeigned* faith, a faith that will save your soul; for we are saved by faith. And it must be God's gift of his grace. All who are trusting in natural faith are trusting in feigned faith; but those who are in possession of living faith, these have a faith *unfeigned*, because the God of truth is the author and finisher of it. Now the end of the commandment is love, and this love is of such a blessed nature that it springs out of a pure heart made so by grace, and then attending this pure heart, side by side with it, dwelling with it in the same bosom, is a good conscience; because if there be a bad conscience, a seared conscience, a natural conscience love cannot dwell with it; for love must have a good conscience to live in. The love of God or man cannot dwell with a bad conscience, it would be frightened away. There must be also faith, a faith in God's word, which works by love, overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil, and separates from evil, of which is salvation. What a mercy to have the love of God shed abroad in the heart, to have love to God and love to the people of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, and to have the love which is attended by and springs out of these three different realities, that none can possess but the saint of God, out of a *pure heart*, of a *good conscience*, and by *faith unfeigned*. These things I assure you, my friends, are very momentous. You cannot hope to be saved without them. There is no hope whatever of your reaching the land of eternal delight unless you are partakers of these things. If you live without love to Jesus can you hope to be saved? What are the words of the Apostle? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha:" that is, may the curse of God rest upon him. So that if you live and die without the love of Jesus in your heart the solemn curse lies upon you. If you love not the saints of God you have neither part nor lot in the matter, for the first evidence of having passed from

death unto life is love towards the brethren; and if you go out of life without a *pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned*, will heaven receive you at last? Will angels attend your dying bed? Will the Lord of life and glory come down to your soul, and will the portals of heaven be unbarred for you? Shall you be sweetly led in with the trumpet and the welcome of the redeemed saints of God? No; but your soul will sink into utter perdition. Devils will bear you away to those regions where eternal misery will be your portion. What a difference between dying a saint in the love of God and faith of Christ, and dying without the truth of God by divine teaching—dying in a faith unfeigned, and dying in a faith feigned, which is destruction from the presence of God. These are momentous matters. The Lord enable us to lay them to our hearts, and may we find the benefit of them as wrought by the power of God.

## The End of the Earth, and the Rock of Ages

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 4, 1847

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:2

Is there such a thing as Christian experience? Every God-taught soul will in a moment answer, 'Yes, there is; and I hope I have felt it.' But is this experience of great importance? 'Yes,' the same heaven-taught soul will reply, 'Of infinite importance; for on the possession or nonpossession of it depends heaven or hell.'

But, if this be the case, whence comes it to pass that some deny, and others ridicule it? It springs chiefly from two causes: *ignorance*, on the one hand; and the *enmity* of the human heart, on the other. Men will naturally deny that of which they know nothing. And the human heart is so full of desperate, implacable enmity against God, that it will always fight against every thing that bears his image. We need not therefore wonder, that experience—the work of God upon the soul—in all its various branches, is denied by some, and ridiculed and despised by others.

But what a mercy it is, not only to feel at times a measure of true Christian experience in our own hearts; but also to find it so clearly and blessedly traced out in the word of God! These are two witnesses: the witness within, and the witness without; the witness in the bosom, and the witness in the word of truth. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every truth be established."

It is then a mercy, an unspeakable mercy to the church of God, that every feeling which is produced by the blessed Spirit in the heart of the living family is to be found in God's book. And it is a

mercy in two points of view. It is a mercy, *first*, because we can sometimes, when we are opposed upon these truths, point to the word of God, and say, 'It is *here*—can you deny what God himself has declared?' And it is a mercy, *secondly*, when we are tried and exercised about the reality and genuineness of our own experience to find it tally with the word of God: and thus have an evidence that it is wrought in our heart by the same Spirit of God who has revealed it in the word of truth.

Our text consists of two clauses. With God's blessing, I shall endeavour this morning to take them up in the order they lie before me; and in so doing, I shall purposely lose sight of David's special case (the word of God being "of no private," or individual "interpretation,") and apply it generally to the experience of an exercised child of God.

I.—The *first* clause is somewhat in the language of *complaint*; the *second* breathes the language of *prayer*.

*"From the end of the earth, will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed."* The words breathe the language of *complaint*, combined with a divine resolution in the breast of the Psalmist. Where was he in his feelings when he breathed forth this cry? At "the end of the earth;" for it was thence that he was crying unto God.

i. But what are we to understand in a spiritual and experimental sense by "the end of the earth?" Jerusalem is considered in the word of God as the centre of all divine worship. It was there God was pleased to record his name; it was there he chose to manifest himself as "dwelling between the cherubim;" it was there he commanded the tribes to come up three times a year to present themselves before the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, became the centre of divine worship; and being the centre of divine worship, it became considered by the Israelites the centre of the earth. "The end of the earth," therefore, spoken of in our text, signifies, in a spiritual and experimental sense, the farthest, remotest distance of a soul from God. It has nothing to do with

natural locality. It does not mean that David was literally and actually in some remote region: it is simply expressive of the feelings of his soul. And thus, when he wished to describe in the most striking way the distance, the felt distance of his soul from God, he uses the expression, "the end of the earth," as though he would significantly point out the remotest spot from happy Zion, where God was known, loved, and worshipped.

But what *brings* a soul there? Man is there, I know, naturally. All men, as fallen creatures, are at a distance from God. But they know it not, they feel it not; there is no language of complaint in their souls because they are there. Here we have the distinction between one dead in sin, and one alive to God. Both, in a certain sense, are there; but the one knows it, the other knows it not; the one feels it, the other feels it not: to the one, it is a source of pain and misery; to the other, no source of grief or misery at all: the one gasps and pants in it as in a foreign element; the other swims joyously in it as the very element of his natural being.

*A feeling sense of guilt lying upon the conscience* is that, then, which sets a soul at "the end of the earth;" as the Lord speaks, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isa. 60:1, 2.) It is sin that separates from God. Guilt charged home upon the conscience drives the soul sensibly away to the very "end of the earth." And thus, wherever there is a sense of guilt upon the conscience produced by the Holy Ghost charging sin home, there must be, there will be, a feeling sense of a distance from God: for he is every thing that is holy and blessed; every thing that is bright and pure; he dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto; and with him is no darkness at all. Thus when the blessed Spirit is pleased to open up the depths of the fall, and lay sin as a burden upon our conscience, its effect upon us is to drive us to the "end of the earth," as it raises up a feeling of our infinite distance from God. Guilt, then, *drives* us there; but what *keeps* us there? There are several things that keep us there.

1. *Unbelief* keeps us there. For could we but believe; could we but act faith upon God's promises; could we but see and feel the goodness, mercy, and love of God revealed in the heart, we could, as it were, take one leap from "the end of the earth" into God's bosom. But unbelief, the power of unbelief working in the carnal mind, keeps the soul at "the end of the earth." For a living soul knows well he can only draw near in the actings and exercises of living faith; as the apostle says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is." (Heb. 11:6.) A soul taught of God well knows that there is no approaching unto the living God except in the actings of living faith.

2. *Darkness of mind* is another cause that keeps a poor soul at "the end of the earth." He cannot behold the face of the Lord shining upon him "merciful and gracious;" he cannot see his interest in the love and blood of the Lamb; he cannot trace that the blessed Spirit is working in his soul under the painful feelings wherewith he is exercised; he cannot feel the love, goodness, and mercy of God in his heart; he, therefore, walks in darkness, and has no light. And, being thus beclouded, and at times almost filled with darkness, he cannot draw near to a living God, all light and love, because he is in his feelings at "the end of the earth,"—at the farthest possible distance from the divine Majesty.

3. *Creature helplessness, thorough inability to raise up one gracious feeling in his soul*, is another cause that keeps him where guilt put him,—at "the end of the earth." Thus he learns creature helplessness, not as a doctrine revealed in God's word, but as a solemn truth revealed in his own soul. And this wretched feeling of creature helplessness keeps him where guilt places him; for without divine drawings he is unable, utterly unable to draw near to a living God with some sense of acceptance in the Son of his love.

4. *The accusations of his own conscience* is another cause that keeps him where guilt put him, at "the end of the earth;" for

conscience within bears testimony to the word of God without, so that he feels himself to be what that word declares him to be—a vile, guilty, miserable, and polluted wretch.

5. *The workings of Satan*—confusing the mind, stirring up unbelief, rebellion, infidelity, and hard thoughts against the living God; putting every gracious feeling out of sight, and infusing everything devilish and infernal into the carnal mind, is another cause that keeps a poor soul feelingly at "the end of the earth."

Now all these things working in the heart combine together to keep a poor soul at "the end of the earth" whom God has placed there for good and wise purposes, that he may there effectually and experimentally learn that nothing short of a manifestation of mercy and love can bring him from the "end of the earth" into the bosom of God, and into the enjoyment of the light and life of his gracious countenance.

ii. But was there nothing else? Yes; he speaks in our text of his heart being overwhelmed. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, *when my heart is overwhelmed.*" And what was his heart overwhelmed by? What is the meaning of the figure? Flooded, buried, drowned. But what was his heart flooded, buried, drowned by? By a variety of painful sensations, all conspiring together to sink his soul in grief and trouble. For instance,

1. He was overwhelmed with *doubts and fears* whether the work of grace was ever begun upon his heart; whether the Lord would ever be gracious to him; whether he would ever smile upon his soul; whether he would ever seal pardon upon his conscience; whether he would ever speak to him with his blessed voice, saying, "Fear not; I have redeemed thee; thou art mine."

2. He was overwhelmed with a *sight and sense of the evils of his heart*; the corruptions, the fearful corruptions of his fallen nature; the boilings up of that great deep within. Thus he was made painfully and experimentally to feel that by these waves and billows of internal corruption he would be, he must be, but by

divine interposition, eternally overwhelmed, flooded, drowned, swallowed up, lost.

3. He was overwhelmed also with *the fears of death*. Not having a clear manifestation of the love of God to his soul, death was to him a frightful enemy. Not knowing, not being persuaded, fully persuaded, that the last enemy was destroyed; and being in his feelings at "the end of the earth," at this distance from God, death appeared to him as a King of Terrors; and he was overwhelmed when he felt how soon he might be called away from this earthly scene without those sweet manifestations of the love of God in his soul for which his heart was so ardently panting.

iii. But how did he lie there? As a log of wood—unfeelingly, insensibly, prayerless, worldly-minded, buried in sin, drowned in carnality? No. Now we come to a mark of divine life in his soul. There are many who are at "the end of the earth:" yes; all men by nature are at "the end of the earth." There are many, too, who are "overwhelmed" with natural trouble arising out of the various things that come upon them in the providential dispensations of God. None but the Lord's people, however, are at "the end of the earth" *spiritually* in their feelings; none but the Lord's people are overwhelmed in their souls with spiritual exercises. But, above all (for *this* is the thing that I wish to lay my hand upon—here let me touch the secret spring of divine life in the soul)—none but God's people know what it is to *cry* unto him under these exercises, "From the end of the earth will I—do I—*cry* unto thee." O what a blessed mark have we here, in this one short word, of the life of God in the soul!

But are there not times and seasons with you when you are feelingly at "the end of the earth," but there is no cry in your soul? And are there not also times when you are well-nigh overwhelmed with exercises, perplexities, temptations, or accusations of conscience; and yet no cry in your soul? But again. Are there not times when in your feelings you are not only at "the end of the earth," and "overwhelmed" with many painful

exercises; but through mercy—I must call it a mercy—there is a cry in your soul towards the God of your salvation? If so—and I am sure if there be the life of God in your soul it is so—*here* is your experience; here it is traced out by the finger of God. Men may cast their slurs and contempt upon it. They may say, 'There is no such thing as a believer being at "the end of the earth;" or 'Away with being overwhelmed with *this, that, and the other.*' But *here* it stands. Have they yet succeeded in tearing the Psalms out of God's book? Have they yet succeeded in blotting this verse out of the 61st Psalm? No; here it stands, and ever will stand till the world is destroyed. Here it stands, and ever will stand, for the encouragement of God's poor, tried, tempted family, though all the towering professors in the world pour out their contempt upon it: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." And O, what a mercy it is to have a God to cry to! And O, what a mercy to have a heart to cry to him! It is the Lord, however, and the Lord alone, who can raise up a cry to him from the very depths of our heart. And be assured, wherever the Lord has raised up, and is raising up that cry in the soul, he has an ear to hear, a hand to deliver, and a compassionate heart to relieve. And God give us grace, when we are, as we often are, if one may speak for another, at "the end of the earth," and "overwhelmed"—God give us grace to cry again and again to him.

But what is meant by the expression "*cry?*" Is there not something expressive, deeply expressive in it? A "cry" denotes pain, anguish, with a desire to be delivered from that under which we are suffering. It is something more intense, more significant, more earnest than mere prayer. Prayer is good, a sigh is good, groans are good; they are all the work of the blessed Spirit, and therefore must be good. Yet a "cry"—O it seems as though this touched Jehovah's heart most. Their "cries," we read, "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James 5:4.) But, it is, for the most part, only through real trials and perplexing circumstances that the "cry" is pressed out of your bosom. There is earnestness, urgency, fervour, and importunity in *that*. It is as though we must be heard; we can take, we will take, no denial.

But what raises up this "cry?" The Spirit of God, doubtless, immediately. But through what medium? Why, by sending us to "the end of the earth;" by causing those various trials which I have been describing to come upon and overwhelm us. Thus, when he has put us there by his own hand, and caused these overwhelming sensations to come over the soul, he kindles, creates, and raises up this "cry" in the heart towards the Lord God of our salvation; for we are brought to this point—none but God can save our souls—none but God can deliver and bless us—none but God can do *for* us and *in* us that which our souls desire to have done. For observe, the "cry" implies not merely a sense of pain and grief—I might say, at times of anguish—but it also implies an earnest desire to be brought near. Is not this a mark of life? What says the carnal mind to God, 'Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thee!' How acted the carnal mind in Cain? He "went out from the presence of the Lord." There was no desire to be brought nigh; no desire after reconciliation, no desire after pardon and peace, no desire to come to God, and be blessed by the smiles, lovingkindness, and mercy of the Almighty. But where there is a "cry" raised up in the soul by the Holy Ghost, it implies not merely the anguish of separation, and the fears of the dismayed heart under the guilt of sin charged home upon the troubled conscience, but the panting and longing of the soul to be brought near to God, and to enjoy a sense of his fatherly favour and most merciful and blessed smile.

II.—This leads me to the *second* clause, which is closely connected with the *first*: "*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" There is something in this expression, which, to my mind, seems to throw a sweet light upon the figure. What is "the rock?" Need we ask? Will not every gracious soul in a moment reply, 'Jesus?' Yes; and in so replying you have the word of God with you. "That Rock was Christ." (1 Cor.10:4.) "On this Rock," he says, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18.) He is therefore called in the margin of Isaiah 26:4, "the Rock of Ages."

But why should the expression "*rock*" be selected here? I think,

without straining the expression, we may consider that this is the figure employed—a shipwrecked, drowning sailor, buffeted by the waves of the sea, and well-nigh overwhelmed in the billows. What does he see as he is ready to sink in the deep waters? A rock jutting out of the mighty billows which are about to engulf him. At once he feels if he can obtain a firm standing upon that rock, he shall be saved from the billows of the drowning ocean; but being unable to reach it by his own efforts, he cries out, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Let us apply this figure. Are not the children of God often in a similar condition to this poor shipwrecked sailor? "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me," says the prophet Jonah. (2:2.) Many have to buffet in the deep waters against a thousand waves, every one of which seems sufficient to drown them alive. "My heart," David cries in the text, "is overwhelmed;" as if he were pointing to the waves and billows of temptation, guilt, and shame, that seemed as though they would swallow him utterly up. But he sees "a rock." Is not this true spiritually? There is some discovery made to our soul of Jesus; and seeing who he is in the light of God's word, and in the light of the Spirit's teaching, he becomes to us an object of our heart's most earnest and ardent desire.

But there is something in this expression in our text, "*rock*," which seems, to my mind, to throw a sweet and blessed light upon what Jesus is to the poor and needy. The rock must go down to the bottom of the deep waters, as well as rise out of them, to be a sufficient place of refuge for the shipwrecked mariner. If the rock do not go to the bottom of the deep, it would not be firm; it would be but a quicksand. Is not this agreeable to the Spirit's testimony concerning the humanity of Christ? How deep that went into all our sorrows, into all our sufferings, into all our sins, into all our shame! However deep the waters may be, the rock is deeper than all, however deep the sufferings, sins, and sorrows of the church may be, the sufferings and sorrows of "Immanuel, God with us," were infinitely deeper. But the waves and billows beat in vain against the rock; they cannot move it

from its place. So it is with the rock Jesus. All the sins, temptations, sufferings, and sorrows of the elect, with the wrath of God, and the fury of hell, beat against that rock, but they never moved it from its place.

But this rock is spoken of in our text as "*higher than I.*" There we have the Godhead. For if Jesus were not God as well as man, the God-Man, what support could he be to the sinking soul? what efficacy could there be in his atoning blood? what power and glory in his justifying righteousness? what suitability in him as a Saviour to the utterly lost? But, being God as well as man, yea, the God-Man, the great and glorious Immanuel, he could descend in his human nature into the very depths of the fall, and rise up in his divine nature to the throne of the Most High; and thus, like Jacob's ladder, the bottom of it was upon the earth, but the top exalted to the clouds.

Now this makes the rock so suitable to the poor, troubled, exercised, well-nigh overwhelmed wretch. It is higher than he; higher than all his sins which seem at times as though they would swallow him up; higher than all his temptations, opening their mouths to drown him; higher than the sea of guilt ready to engulf him; higher than all the accusations of conscience, the assaults of Satan, the exercises of his mind; higher than all without and within which would conspire to cast him utterly away.

Thus, when he gets a view by living faith of the rock Christ higher than he, then longing, panting desires, then earnest cries go out of his breast, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." 'I cannot get there by my own efforts; I cannot swim there through the waves; I need the blessed Spirit to take, and by his own divine hand to plant my feet firmly and fixedly upon that Rock of Ages.'

Now, if the soul in its feelings never was at "the end of the earth," never was overwhelmed with doubts and fears, many sharp temptations and cutting trials, and never from knowing these exercises, cried unto the living God from the very bottom of

a troubled heart, there would be no suitability nor glory nor preciousness ever seen in the dear Lamb of God. But just in proportion as we are made to feel the depths of the fall, are at "the end of the earth," overwhelmed with many painful exercises, and cry unto the Lord from the bottom of a troubled heart, do we (as the Lord is pleased to bring it before our eyes, and shed abroad a sweet savour of it in our souls), see something of the suitability, blessedness, preciousness, glory, love, blood, and righteousness of the Lamb. And seeing in him such ample supplies for every want; seeing him to be "of God made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," the great High Priest over the house of God, "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him," there is raised up from time to time by the blessed Spirit in the soul, those earnest breathings, divine longings, and ardent pantings after that sweet enjoyment of Christ in the soul which alone can bring us near to God.

All this, and much more than this is contained in the words before us, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." 'Give my poor soul a firm and blessed standing upon this Rock of Ages; sprinkle my conscience with his precious, precious blood; shed abroad his dying love in my soul; reveal and make him very near and very dear to my heart; and bless me with an enjoyment of his mercy, goodness, and favour.'

But when the Lord is pleased to hear these cries, and lead the soul to the rock that is higher than we, then he plants the feet firmly upon it; and when the feet are planted upon that rock, the waves and billows may beat, but they beat in vain. They cannot wash away the rock; therefore they cannot wash away him that stands upon the rock. And as sure as that rock stands (and it will stand to all eternity), nothing can really harm those who through grace are blessed with a standing upon that Rock of Ages. But how often, O how often in our feelings, whatever blessed and glorious discoveries we may have had in times past, are we at "the end of the earth!" Guilt of soul, darkness of mind, hardness of heart, the accusations of conscience, the temptations of Satan,

how often do these things drive us to "the end of the earth;" so that we cannot get near to God, cannot find his gracious presence in our souls, cannot bask in the smiles of his loving face, cannot feel that loving favour which makes crooked things straight and rough places plain, drives away every mist and fog, and blesses the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And O, how often is the heart "overwhelmed;" so many painful things in providence, and so many painful things in grace; so many trials, so many temptations; so many things without, so many things within, all conspiring together to overwhelm and sink the soul!

And yet is it not a mercy to have a "cry?" Not to be wholly insensible; not to be altogether given up to hardness, carelessness, and carnality; but to feel the breathings of a heart made tender in God's fear, the goings out of a broken spirit, and the cries of a soul that really needs an answer, that keeps on crying till the Lord appear, and gives him no rest until he come down in the sweet manifestations of his mercy and love.

And shall we not, as long as the Lord shall spare us in this vale of tears, have reason, more or less, daily to cry, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I?" What a mercy, what an unspeakable mercy, then, that there is a rock higher than we, rising above all our doubts and fears, above all our guilt and shame, above all our corruptions and sins, above all our idolatries and backslidings, above all our accusations of conscience, above all the charges of Satan—a rock higher than all: not as we are, confused, sometimes buried, swallowed up, and covered over with the waves and surges of worldly and spiritual anxiety; but a rock that stands up out of these deep waters, and on which the face of God ever shines;—a Rock of Ages. And will not, must not, this be ever, as the Lord is pleased to raise it up, the cry of our soul, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I?" No salvation anywhere else; no peace anywhere else; no consolation anywhere else. Buffeted by the waves, and well-nigh drowned by the billows, away from that rock; but if led there, brought there,

kept there by the blessed Spirit, finding it a safe and sure standing for eternity. And what else but such a rock can save our souls, or what else but such a Saviour and such a salvation, without money and without price, can suit such ruined wretches? O what reason has the church of God to bless the God of all grace for having provided such a rock as Christ Jesus, and for raising up in the heart from time to time earnest breathings and longings after this rock; and, above all, now and then to favour the soul with the assurance that his feet are fixed upon this Rock of Ages, and that nothing can separate from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!

## **Entering into Rest**

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Evening, July 15, 1869

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."  
Hebrews 4:1

The word of God is not only full of promises and blessings, but full also of admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and sometimes very severe and keen reproofs. And as it is the province of faith to embrace the promises with affection, for faith worketh by love; so it is the province of faith to receive the admonitions with obedience, for there is the obedience of faith as well as the life, walk, and triumph of faith. The servant of Christ is a steward of the mysteries of God; and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. He is put in trust for the gospel, that he may speak as one not who pleaseth man, but God who searcheth the hearts. Paul bids Timothy "Preach the word: be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." And he charges Titus even to reprove them sharply, that they might be sound in the faith. If we look at the testimony of the old prophets, from Moses onward to Malachi, we shall see how they mingled admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and reproofs, with promises and blessings; and we see also how highly God resented the neglect of those to whom they spoke, in hardening their heart against these remonstrances and stiffening their neck against these admonitions. In fact, he brought down upon them swift destruction; for you will find it mentioned in 2 Chronicles 36, how "the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till

there was no remedy." If we look at the ministry of our Lord when he was upon earth, we see how he mingled reproof, admonition, and warning, with promises and blessings. We find the Apostle Paul in his ministrations—as, for instance, at Antioch—after he had preached forgiveness of sins, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," goes on, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." And we see all through the Epistles, and especially in that to the Hebrews, a large admixture of admonition, reproof, remonstrance, and warning, with a bold, faithful declaration of gospel doctrines and precious promises. But if a minister is to come forward with admonitions, warnings, remonstrances, and sharp rebukes, it must be done in a spirit of love and affection. He must not mingle with it his own spirit. It must not be done in the spirit of Pharisaism, legality, and self-righteousness. That will only provoke and stir up the carnal mind and wound the natural mind, instead of cutting deep into the soul, so as to leave a permanent effect. I in my time have spoken to you sometimes sharply, and perhaps were my time to come ever again I should speak more sharply still. I might handle the sword of the Spirit with a stronger hand and thrust it more keenly into everything ungodly. But I have always found if I have mingled with it a spirit of love and affection, if I have not indulged my own spirit or a spirit of legality, but have spoken it in the spirit of the gospel, it has been received by the people; and though there might be some, even of the dear family of God, who would rise up against it, they found in the end it was an excellent oil that did not break their head, and derived more benefit from admonitions and reproofs than they did from the promises and declarations of the gospel. I much admire the way in which the apostle speaks to the Hebrews, and especially in the words before us. There is no epistle in which so much admonition and warning is couched; in no epistle have we such threatenings and denunciations against turning one's back upon the truth and departing from the living God. But in the words before us, to soften, as it were, and to mollify the keenness of his words, he brings in himself: "Let us therefore fear;" as though he should say: "I, Paul, do not stand upon a lofty pedestal, having a

position upon a pinnacle, as though I were above all doubts and fears; as though I were so secure that nothing could hurt me, and was above all admonition and exhortation. No: I stand," he would say, "upon the same ground with you all: I have the same sinful heart, the same tempting devil, the same snares spread for my feet: a sinner saved by grace, and grace alone, as you are. Therefore, I don't stand apart," he would say, "and launch my denunciations against you; but I mix with you, as standing upon the same level, and say, Let us—you and me together—therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should fall short of it."

In opening up these words, I shall, with God's help and blessing, direct your thoughts to these three prominent features:—

I.—*First*, the *rest* spoken of, which is emphatically "God's rest."

II.—*Secondly*, the *promise* which is left, of entering into it.

III.—*Thirdly*, the seemingly or the really *coming short of it*.

The reference of the Apostle is to an expression in Psalm 95, which he quotes in the preceding chapter: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith), to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest." He takes that as his text, on which he builds his exhortation; and he draws from it very instructive lessons, some of which I shall endeavour to lay before you.

I.—The first thing is, that it is emphatically God's rest. "I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest." When God created man in his own image, after his own likeness, God and man were at peace. God looked down from heaven and saw man with the rest of his works, and pronounced him as very good. God then

rested, he says, from his works, and he sanctified and hallowed the seventh day as an emblem of the day on which he rested from his works and looked with holy satisfaction upon the work of his hands. In creating man after his own image, and after his own likeness, he gave him an intellect to understand him, conscience to feel the impress of his hand and to listen to his voice, a will to choose that which is good, a memory to retain the lessons of instruction he gave him, and affections to embrace him as his chiefest good. And all these faculties of the human mind, when man was created after the image of God, were in righteousness and true holiness: a clear understanding, a pure conscience, a holy will, a retentive memory, and loving affections. But the fall came in and broke up all this harmony. It entered into man like the venom-drop of the serpent, ran through the whole of his nature, and infected him with sin and confusion from top to toe. It darkened his understanding; made his conscience fitful, uncertain, and loaded with guilt; alienated his will from choosing good to choosing evil; spoilt his memory, so that it no longer retained what was good, but retained all that was evil, the one written in sand, and the other written upon a rock; and his affections it alienated from heaven to earth, debasing them from the Creator to the creature. Now God could no longer find rest in man. Man had lost the image of God in which he was created. Therefore, God could no longer look down from heaven as before, and rest in his creature; for his creature had sinned against him, departed from him, and become altogether evil and vile. Then should God lose his rest? God had a rest in his own eternal Son, who ever lay in his bosom as the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. No thought or conception of men or angels could ever enter into the infinite love and complacency wherewith God, from all eternity, regarded the Son of his love. He always rested in him as the brightness of his glory, the express image of his Person; and so when man fell away from God, God did not lose his rest, for he always rested in his love, and that love was in his only begotten Son. But he determined in his own eternal mind to choose a people out of the fallen mass, and bring them to enjoy the same rest that he himself enjoyed, so that the elect of God might rest in his Son, as God rested in

him, and thus God and man might unite in one object of affection and rest together in love towards one God. Therefore this is God's rest. "This is my rest, for I have desired it." Now, when his only begotten Son came into the world, assumed our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature obeyed, suffered, bled, died, and rose again,—all through those actings and sufferings, his manhood in union with his deity, God looked upon him with infinite complacency. "This is my beloved Son," was sounded from heaven, "in whom I am well pleased." Thus, whatever our blessed Lord did in harmony with covenant arrangements and eternal engagements, was exceedingly like a savour of rest complacent to his Father, so that he could rest with infinite complacency and unbounded satisfaction, not only in what his Son was in himself, as the eternal Son of God, but in what he did and suffered as the Son of man. Thus, when he, by his sufferings in the garden and upon the cross, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; when even on the cross, in his bitterest agony, the Father hid his face from him, it was not because he loved him less, but because he hated sin more. There was no suspension of the eternal love wherewith God loved him, nor of the eternal complacency wherewith God regarded him. But sin being such an evil thing, and he standing in our place and stead, and being, to use the strong language of the Apostle, "made sin for us," God hid his face from him to the agony of his soul, because he could not look upon sin with anything but disapprobation. He was always his beloved Son as now. And then when he had finished the work which God had given him to do, and he could say, "It is finished," God rested with infinite complacency in that finished work, that shed blood, that suffering death, that our dear Redeemer endured, to rescue his people from the depths of the fall. This is God's rest, for he rests in his love, and this love is manifested in the Person and work of Jesus.

Now God has given, and the apostle brings forward here, two types and representations of this rest of God.

The first we have named was the rest of the Sabbath; and the apostle applies that to the rest that remains for the people of

God; for it is in the original, and it is in the margin, the keeping of a Sabbath, and especially for this reason, that he who has entered into his rest hath ceased from his works as God ceased from his. Thus the Sabbath is a type of the rest of creation, because on it God rested from his works. And so there is no rest for a living soul until it ceases from its hand's work and rests in the finished work of the Son of God.

But there was another type, which was the promised land. He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; which rest was the rest promised in the land of Canaan. Now the land of Canaan is, I think, often misunderstood as a type. You will often find it explained as a type of heaven, and Jordan represented as the river of death. Now it may be so accommodated. I don't quarrel with the interpretation. But that is not the leading idea of the figure and type. Just look at the circumstances of entering into Canaan. Had they not to fight with the warlike inhabitants of that land? Was there not many a bloody battle fought before they could subdue them? And after they had subdued them, were not many of these nations left to be thorns in their eyes and goads in their side? Is this a type of heaven? Are there enemies to be fought with in heaven? Is the Canaanite to be found in heaven? You see the type does not hold. But now take Canaan as a type and figure of gospel rest. View it as the place where the children of Israel rested after their toils in the wilderness under the law, and view them coming to that good land where there were brooks and rivers, hills and mountains, and a fruitful soil, with vineyards and olive-yards. Thus it represents the gospel, in which there are brooks and rivers that gush out of mountains and hills, fruits to refresh, and vines sweet to the taste. The ark also no longer wandered as in the wilderness, but found a resting-place, first in Shiloh and then in Jerusalem. All this is typical of gospel rest. So that when the Lord said, "They shall not enter into my rest," he does not mean God's holy place in heaven, but into the gospel of the grace of God, in which God rests as the last dispensation, as the grand revelation of his mercy and truth, as shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ, the manifestation of the love, mercy, and grace of God. So that God can rest in the gospel, as being the full

manifestation of his love, mercy, and grace in the Person and work of his dear Son. And to enter into rest, God's rest, is to enter into the fulness of the gospel; and in a full gospel revealed to the soul by a divine power, to find rest and peace for the soul. We are not to wait till we get to heaven before we find rest. There is a rest which remaineth on earth to the people of God; and he that has entered into his rest hath ceased from his own work and found rest in Christ and all joy and peace in believing. This is God's rest.

II.—Now for the promise left us, of entering into this rest. In fact, all the promises of the gospel culminate and centre here; especially that sweet promise which fell like the rain and distilled like the dew from our dear Redeemer's lips in the days of his flesh: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There he invites the weary and the heavy laden to come to him, and to find rest in him. So when he says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and they that come I will in no wise cast out,"—there is a promise left us of entering into that rest. When he says, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," there is a promise given of entering into that rest by faith in the Son of God. And when in the Old Testament—for he speaks in the same language both in old and new—he says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the world;" there is a promise left to us of entering into his rest. Now these promises are scattered up and down the Word of God, for the express purpose that by believing these promises, laying hold of them, embracing them, and feeling their sweetness and power in the soul, we may enter into God's rest; for by the promises we are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And all the promises are in grace, Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us. It is by believing these promises we enter into rest. But that we may believe them, they must be sealed upon our heart by a divine power, brought into our spirit under the unction of his grace, and faith given, drawn forth, and strengthened to embrace them, as sure and certain promises which God will certainly fulfil for his own faithfulness' sake.

But to whom is this rest preached? To those who can find no rest anywhere else. God weans his people out of every rest to bring them to the true rest. He sends his law with power into their conscience, to convince them of unbelief and sin. He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, to discover to them that the bed is too short and the covering too narrow. It will send conviction after conviction, pang after pang, fear after fear, and loads of guilt after loads of guilt, until he uproot them and overturn them and bring them out of all false rest. There is such a tendency to fall short of the promised rest. Some rest on doctrine: as Berridge says:—

"Some sleep on doctrine's sound;"

others rest in a name to live when they are dead; some rest in the opinion of men concerning them; others in church membership and ordinances; some in a tolerably consistent life, joined with some knowledge of the doctrines of grace; others in a hope of what they may be hereafter, though they have little hope for the present. It is surprising how prone men are to rest in everything and anything short of God's rest. How they will catch up any faint or feeble evidence; and how, if they can, they will spin a web, like the spider, out of their own bowels, and wrap themselves up in their own righteousness. Nature dreads those cutting strokes that God deals at living consciences. They would sooner be daubed over with untempered mortar; sooner have "Peace, peace," cried to them when there is no peace; sooner be flattered into hell than frightened into heaven. They love false ministers who daub them over with untempered mortar, and false professors who will speak to them words of flattery, and for the sake of money or approbation will praise them to their face and abuse them behind their back. God makes his people honest. He plants his fear deep in their heart; he makes their conscience alive and tender; he won't let them rest short of his own rest, for he is determined to bring them to rest where he himself rests in the Son of his love; and all other rest is an insult to the truth of God, and a libel upon the gospel of his grace, and to persevere in

it will bring down certain destruction. But when a man, under divine teaching and by the sweet drawings of heavenly grace, comes with a broken heart and contrite spirit to the footstool of mercy, sees Jesus revealed to the soul by an Almighty power, beholds his beauty, his loveliness, his suitability, his blood, his righteousness, and embraces him in faith and affection, as the Son, the Christ of God, then there is rest. All these angry clouds of God's displeasure blow away. There is no wrath in God when we approach him through a Mediator. There is no letting down of his anger against sin, when we confess our sins, fall down before him, and look up in faith and affection to the Son of his love. Our eyes and God's eyes then rest upon the same God. He sees infinite beauty in the Son of his love; he has received satisfaction to his justice, purity, and holiness by his obedience, bloodshedding, and death; and when we drop into the same spot where God fixes his eyes of eternal approbation, then our mind is the mind of God, and our will the will of God, and we drop into the same place, viewing the same God, having the same thoughts and the same feelings, and crowning his eternal Son with heavenly glory, as God has crowned him when he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. This is entering into rest. And I would appeal to any living soul before me, if ever you have found a resting place for your poor, tried, exercised, tempted soul; if ever you have had ease from the pangs of guilt, a sweet hope anchoring within the veil, or any sensation of love warming your breast; any melting down of heart, under a sight and sense of your sins, it has always been from some view of Jesus, which the Spirit of God, who takes of the things of God and reveals them, has given you. And every moment's rest and peace that your soul has ever enjoyed, has been only by believing in the Son of God with all your heart and soul, and feeling sweet union and communion with him. Do not give the lie to your own experience. If God has chased you out of your various false rests, and ever dropped his peace and pardon into your soul, given you a good hope through grace, and led you to embrace his dear Son, do not give the lie to your own experience, and then seek other modes of quieting your conscience and speaking peace to a troubled mind. There is but one way of finding access unto God, one way

of obtaining rest and peace, and that is in Christ and his finished work. This is God's rest.

III.—But to pass on to our last point, there is a fear, and a well grounded fear, lest any of those who profess the truth should seem to, or really, come short of it. Now men may come short of the truth in two ways; they may come short of it for a time and in the end may attain it; or they may come short of it altogether and so perish in their sins. And it is often a matter of uncertainty, where the work of grace is not very plain or clear, whether those who have come short of this rest are amongst the number of those in whose hearts the fear of God is, and yet for the present come short; or whether they have only a name to live, the profession of godliness without the power, and therefore, in the end will come short of it altogether. This is the reason why there is such fear. But you say, "I have no fear." Then let me fear for you. "I have no doubts." Let me doubt for you. You that have no fears and have no doubts, may one day come into that spot where you will have nothing but your doubts and fears, and what is worse, be in a spot where those doubts and fears will never be taken away, but will sink you into perdition. Many who have stood in vain-confidence for years, upon a death bed have found all their confidence like leaning upon a bull-rush, found it deceive themselves and deceive others, and thus have perished in their hypocrisy or in their despair. Therefore, it is good to fear and be exercised upon this point; that we may not be led aside by vain-confidence, propped up with false props, and in the end find we have only been trusting to a name to live, and resting upon that in which there is no salvation. I would take these two characters and endeavour to unfold them.

Now you may be a child of God, have the fear of God in your heart, have faith to believe the word of God and the power you have felt in your soul; nay, more, you may have had views, gleams, glimpses, glances, a measure of evidence or testimony about Jesus, so as in some measure to encourage and strengthen your faith and hope; and yet you may have never entered into rest. You may never have had Jesus revealed to you, a sense of

pardon and forgiveness sealed upon your conscience, the love of God shed abroad in your heart, the witness of the Spirit to your spirit that you are a child of God, or the spirit of adoption to cry "Abba, Father." And yet, lacking this, there may be in you—because we don't know these things often at first, and may be many years groping our way towards them;—there may be in you, as I hope there is in some present, the fear of God, a tender conscience, an upright walk, a consistent life, and a desire to know the Lord for yourself; but you cannot enter into rest. You are a restless, miserable being; and you often wake at night, and you are almost tempted to roll upon your couch in a very tempest of doubt and fear as to the reality of the work of God upon your soul. You hear the servants of God set forth Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; you believe, implicitly believe, the doctrines of the gospel; you feel that none but the doctrines of the gospel can do you any good, and there have been times and seasons when you have felt the sweetness of them; but what with the darkness of your mind, the pressure of guilt upon your conscience, getting into legal bondage, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, the want of access to the throne, and a full satisfaction in your own mind as to the work of grace upon your heart, you come short of entering into rest. Now there is a labouring to enter into rest. We are not taken to heaven in a railway carriage, by an express train, and landed safe, sleeping half the way. It is a battle, a struggle, a conflict, a fight, and a pressing through a narrow gate, a walking in a strait path, an entering through much tribulation into the kingdom of heaven. And those who know nothing about fighting, fears, exercises, trials, temptations, sighs, cries, groans, and wrestlings with the Lord, need we wonder that they fall short of the promised rest? If the Lord mean to lead you into rest, he will exercise your soul first, he will send some trial or affliction or stir up the mind by his Spirit and grace, and sink you lower, perhaps, than ever you sunk before. And then, when all seems gone; when you are concluding almost to be without hope when despondency, almost despair, is making head, and you fall down before the Lord as a poor lost sinner, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" when you cast aside all your own righteousness and look with believing eyes to the Son of God,

there will come over your soul some sweet manifestation of the Son of God; some blessed words will drop into your soul with life and feeling, unction and power; faith will be raised up to embrace the Son of God in his suitability, blood, righteousness, beauty, and blessedness; and then there will be an entering into rest, and you will find the approbation of God in your soul, the witness of the Spirit to your heart that now you find rest, because you have rested from your own works as God rested from his. You look where God looks; fix your eyes where God fixes his eyes; have the mind of God, the heart of God, and the thoughts and counsels of God; and therefore find an entrance into God's rest. And if your conscience tells you under my ministration this evening that you have come short of rest, feel your need of it, are not satisfied with your present state, but want that full manifestation of pardoning love and applied blood to give you an entrance into God's rest, give him no rest until he accomplish your desire. There is the throne of grace open to you, his word to read, a preached gospel to hear; and if the Lord has given you a spirit of grace and of supplications, may he stir up that spirit within you that you may give him no rest till he manifest his love and mercy to your soul, take away all your doubts and fears, dispel your darkness, and speak words of peace and consolation to your breast.

But then, amongst those who profess God's truth, there are those who will come short of it, and perish in their deceiving. There are many things that make men come short of rest, and the grand thing is unbelief. God convinces his people of unbelief by his Spirit, that they may seek faith at his hands; for only those who are convinced of unbelief will really cry for living faith. But in the mind of man, short of regenerating grace, there is a determined spirit of unbelief: as we see in the Jews of old: all God's miracles in the wilderness could never convince them of the power of God. One would have thought, after seeing the destruction of Pharaoh's host, fed with manna in the wilderness, the cloud and pillar going before them daily, they would believe that God could take them to the promised land, and subdue their enemies. No; they could not believe it; and they fell short of rest through the

power of unbelief. This is the case with those who perish: "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." They do not believe and cannot believe, but harden their hearts in unbelief.

Again, grace calls us away from those things which nature loves. Grace says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Grace calls us out of the world, the love and spirit of it; but where there is no regenerating grace, the world cleaves so fast to men's hearts that they will not and cannot give it up; and, therefore, they never enter into God's rest, because they rest in the world and the satisfaction that the world gives. Others are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Satan spreads his snares for their feet: some base lust, some vile scheme, some covetous plan, some secret plan which he has baited with a bait exactly suitable to their fallen nature, he spreads for their feet; they are entangled, overcome, and become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now they find they cannot believe, because they are shut up in unbelief. The indulgence of sin has hardened their heart, and if there are times and seasons when, like Samson, they try to shake themselves, they find they cannot be anything but what they are. They may repent for a time, make resolutions, and promises, and vows; but they go back, like the dog to its vomit, and like the sow to her wallowing in the mire. Sin is too strong for them, hardens their heart, overcomes their better judgment, and drags them into the commission of it, until there remains no hope for them; and so they come short of rest. The others put away the evil day, think it will all be right with them in the end, are careless, and hardened, and obstinate under the preached word, turn their ears from hearing it, close their eyes from seeing it, harden their heart from feeling it, because there is nothing working or moving in their heart to unsettle them, disturb them, distress them, or remove them from their idols and their rests; and thus they come short of rest. They are saying, "O, I shall live many years to come; I shall not be always what I am now; I know matters are not with me as they ought to be; there is much in me," they will honestly confess, "which should not be. But I hope it will be better one

day. I shall not go on always thus, running headlong to perdition, living in sin and practicing it. I mean to reform, turn over a new leaf, and not go on as before." Perhaps the next thing you hear of this person is, that he has dropped down in an apoplectic fit, been found dead in bed some morning, been deprived of his reason and sent to a lunatic asylum, or perished by his own hands. Thus, while he was promising himself a longer life and space for repentance, hoping that matters would not be so bad with him as he feared they might be, God's patience, longsuffering, and forbearance are all worn out; and as he has preferred sin in the commission of it to self-denial, the fear of God, walking in his fear, and living to his praise; as he has sown to the flesh, so of the flesh he will reap corruption. And there are hundreds and thousands of shining professors who are in this spot, who come short of rest: not as those whom I have been describing, who have doubts and fears and are seeking to have them removed; but who are hardening their hearts through the love of sin, and deceiving and polluting themselves by false hopes. So you see there is ground to fear, and those who fear manifest some marks at least of a tender conscience. They are not altogether hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, not shut up altogether in unbelief, not given over to intemperance and obstinacy; but do manifest something like tenderness, contrition, brokenness, and those marks which attend the work of grace upon the soul. Thus, while I would solemnly warn those who are making a bed too short and a covering too narrow, who fall willingly and wofully short of the promised rest, and harden their heart through the deceitfulness of sin, I would not willingly say a word to wound, distress, or discourage any in whose heart the fear of God is, and who feel that they come short at present of God's rest, and yet can find rest in nothing else but what God rests in. We have to encourage the weak, the sincere, the humble, the penitent; we have to warn the impenitent, the ungodly, the unbelieving, the hypocritical; we have to draw a line of distinction between the living and the dead, and take forth the precious from the vile, so as to be as God's mouth; and while on the one hand we would "cast up the highway, gather out the stones, and lift up a standard" for God's exercised family, we would show no mercy to those who harden

their hearts against God's truth; who love sin better than holiness, and the ways of the world and of nature better than the ways of grace and the paths of righteousness.

I shall leave this to your consideration. The Lord bless it and seal it home with power, authority, unction, and savour upon believing hearts, so that, if it be his will, it may be a word of warning to all.

Note.—The readers of this Sermon may feel interested in knowing that Mr. Philpot remarked afterwards, to a friend, that he preached it with some sweet feeling in his own soul, and that he hoped and believed it would be read with the same.

## THE ENTRANCE OF LIGHT

Preached on Lord's Day morning, July 11, 1841, at Zoar Chapel,  
Great Alie Street, Whitechapel

"The entrance of they words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130

There is a very striking analogy between the first or natural creation, when God first spoke this world into being, and the second or supernatural creation, when he calls his elect into a new and spiritual existence. We find the apostle Paul clearly alluding to this analogy (2 Cor. 4:6): "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." We are warranted, then, by apostolic authority, to say that there is a resemblance, and no doubt an intended resemblance, between the natural creation and the spiritual creation. But what was this earth, before the Lord reduced it into beauty and order? **for we are not to lose sight of this fact, that the earth existed before "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."** "It was without form and void," or more literally, "emptiness and desolation;" a rude undigested chaos; a mass of confusion, where there was nothing that manifested beauty or comeliness. Thus it is spiritually. The soul exists before it is brought into an experimental acquaintance with God. But it exists as this world existed, before the all-creative fiat went forth from the lips of the most high—in ruins, where all is emptiness and desolation, a rude chaos, where there is no beauty nor comeliness but "a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job 10:22). We read in Prov. 8:25-31, that, even before this world was reduced into beauty and order the heart and affections of the Son of God were fixed upon his people, for under the name of Wisdom he thus speaks: "While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, I was then by him as one brought up with him,

rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." And thus, spiritually, even when the elect are in ruins before God, in their natural state of emptiness and desolation, there is a love which the Son of God bears unto them, as members of his body. The vessel of mercy is "preserved in Christ," until the season to favour it comes. It lies as Lazarus in the grave, waiting the all-creative energy of the Son of God to bring it "out of darkness into marvellous light," and out of the sleep of death into a new and spiritual life. But what do we read was the first act of creative energy, when the earth lay outstretched a rude chaos? "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The expression "moved," implies rather such an act as a bird performs when she covers her brood. It is the same word that is translated in Deut. 32:11, "fluttereth"—"As an eagle **fluttereth** over her young;" implying a tremulous movement, a thrilling of maternal affection, as well as a spreading of her wings as widely as possible, so as to communicate warmth to the brood which she is covering. Thus, when "the Spirit of God" is said to have "moved upon the face of the waters," it implies, that he covered it, as it were, with outstretched wings, that he communicated warmth and life and energy out of himself to it, that he fluttered over it with the affection that a bird bears to her young, when she broods over them in order to bring them forth into life out of the egg, and then to foster them with all her maternal warmth. Thus does the Spirit of the Lord brood over the hearts of God's elect, when he quickens them into spiritual life, and as he, full of love and power, flutters over them, he breathes into them life out of the fulness of Jesus, so as to communicate to their dead souls the life of God. And as a simultaneous act, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." When God spake the word, light came at his almighty fiat that best and brightest fruit of the six days' work burst forth upon a dark world. But when this blessed effect of creative power—the material resemblance of that eternal and ineffable light in which Jehovah dwells—when this material, created light burst forth into existence, what did it disclose? Beauty, order, comeliness? No. These natural types of supernatural beauty, these visible and earthly shadowings forth

of invisible and eternal perfections, did not then exist. All upon earth that the newborn light looked upon and discovered was one rude mass, a wide-spread chaos of confusion. So, when the Lord speaks the word, and spiritual light beams into the dark soul out of Him in whom all fulness dwells, it discovers neither beauty, nor order, nor comeliness. Emptiness of all good, confusion as to anything God-like, disordered passions, depraved affections, perverted faculties, mountains tossed over valleys, and valleys sank amid mountains, everything a rude distorted mass, where nothing is in its place, but all one universal wreck and ruin—such are the scenes which spiritual light discovers. Thus, when "the entrance of God's words giveth light," when by his speaking home his own commandment with power and authority to the soul, the Spirit conveys light out of Christ's fulness, he reveals to a man what his is; he shows him something of his fallen condition; he opens up that state of utter ruin, in which he stands before God, without any one thing that can please him; he manifests to him that he is altogether lost, without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without anything whereby he can gain the favour, or conciliate the pleasure of the Most High.

But "the entrance of the words of God giving light," runs through the whole experience of a child of God, from the first pang of spiritual conviction, to the last expiring hallelujah; for all through his life will he need communications of life and light to his soul out of the fulness of Jesus. And therefore, in endeavouring to handle these words, and to open up their spiritual meaning, I shall not confine myself to the first work of grace upon the soul, but shall attempt to show how the truth contained in the text runs through the whole path of the Christian, and how he continually needs to have light communicated and breathed into him out of the fulness of his covenant Head.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." There is a certain character here spoken of, to whom "the entrance of God's words giveth light," and he is called by an expressive term, "**the simple**." What gather we from that word? Does it mean to say, that the soul to which God gives light,

is simple, naturally? that all in God's family are fools? that the very circumstance of their believing the doctrines of grace stamps them as having inbred folly in them? Such I know is the charge of the world. But it is not the charge which God the Holy Ghost has laid against the people of God. They are indeed fools in the world's estimation, and they are indeed fools in their own opinion; but "the simple" here signify those that are made such by a work of grace upon their hearts. The word "simple" means literally something which is not folded or twisted together. But owing to the treacherous and desperately deceitful heart of man, all, without exception, in a state of nature are the reverse of this. All their plots and contrivances for worldly profit or fleshly pleasure are tangled and complicated; and they are continually twisting together some thread or other of carnal policy. But when God the Holy Ghost begins the work of grace upon the souls of the elect, he proceeds **if I may use the expression** to untwist them. He takes hold of that rope which Satan and their own hearts have been twisting together for years, and he untwists it throughout its whole length, so as to leave the strands not intertwined as before, but riven, separated, and torn from each other. The light that shines into the soul out of the fulness of Jesus discovers to a man the tortuousness, the crookedness, the complicated deceit and hypocrisy of which he is guilty. And he begins at the beginning, for the Spirit of God always makes thorough work; there is no compromising in his teaching, no huddling up of things together in his blessed operations. He commences at one end of the rope, and untwists it throughout from end to end. And when he has untwisted what our hearts are, with all their worldliness, with all their pride, with all their self-seeking, with all their hypocrisy, all their presumption, and all their baseness; when he has untwisted this complicated rope, he lays us out before the eye of God, with all the strands still writhing and curling, still retaining their crooked form, but no longer wreathed together into a solid mass of self-righteousness, nor "a cart-rope," with which "iniquity is drawn" (Isa. 5:18).

Now, it is this process of untwisting a man, which makes him "simple"—undoing that strong cable which his own heart and the

devil have been working at together for years, to try and twist him into something to please and satisfy self, or gain the favour of God. A man, then, is made "simple," when the folds and rumples of his heart are shaken out, and he is brought to see and feel that God looks into him; that his eye penetrates into every recess of his bosom; that let him endeavour to wrap and fold himself up as he may, yet still the eye of God is continually piercing through "the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles and the whimples, the hoods and the veils;" and that there is not a thought in his heart, nor "a word in his tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether" (Ps. 139:4); nor "any creature that is not manifest in his sight, all things being naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom he has to do" (Heb. 4:13).

This character is aptly represented by Nathaniel. We read that "he was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile" (John 1:47). He had gone through this untwisting work in his soul. He had been under the fig-tree and whilst kneeling and praying there, the eye of God looked into him, and just as a flash of lightning runs, in a moment, through a coil of wire, so, when the eye of God looked into Nathaniel's soul, that instantaneous flash unravelled and untwisted the devices of his heart, made him a simple man before him—"an Israelite, indeed, in whom there was no guile."

This, then, is the character to whom "understanding is given," and to whom "the entrance of God's words giveth light." Being divinely dealt with, and being by a work of grace upon his soul made honest and sincere, he is without admitted artifice, without allowed hypocrisy, without indulged deceitfulness, without the encouraged aim to stretch himself beyond the stature that God has given him. I use the words "allowed" and "encouraged," because he has indeed every evil still in his heart, but not reigning and rampant; what he does, like Paul, he "allows not" (Rom. 7:15). **His humility is not counterfeit; he is no actor of a part; but "he is as he is," as people say; a four square man, upright and honest, single-eyed and sincere; and therefore he stands simple before God, and he stands**

**simple before men.** The lord has shown him to himself in his true colours, has made him know himself; has experimentally taught and made him to feel that he is a poor, needy, naked, guilty, filthy wretch; that he is a complete mass of disease, corruption, and pollution; that by nature he is nothing and has nothing spiritually good; that there is no one thing in his heart that God can look upon with acceptance; but that he is a vile fallen creature, who must be saved, if saved at all, by sovereign grace. He that answers to this description is a "simple" soul, and as such, is interested in this promise. Very different from the crafty professor of the present day, very different from the boasting Arminian, and the notional Calvinist! The character that I am describing, is "**An honest man, the noblest work of God**" **for it is a true line taken spiritually, though written by a carnal poet**, one who can say with David, "let integrity and uprightness preserve me" (Ps. 25:21); one whose heart is right before God, and who desires to walk before him in "simplicity and godly sincerity."

These characters have an interest in this declaration, that "the entrance of God's words" into their souls, "giveth light." And, in fact, it was the entrance of God's words into their souls, which stamped upon them that character. It was this very communication of life and light out of Christ's fulness, that made them "simple;" and then, being made "simple," they became interested in the promises that are made to "the simple."

1. "The entrance of God's words giveth light" as **to the character of Jehovah**. How little is God really known! What a day of awful mockery is the day in which we live! God is more insulted in this Christian country **so called**, than he is in lands altogether heathen. In heathen lands his name is not mentioned. They bow down there to stocks of wood and stone. The name of Jehovah is not taken there into profane lips. But in this so-called Christian land, he is insulted and mocked on every side. Would it not have been a greater sin under the Levitical dispensation, to have rushed into the temple and profaned the altar, as King Antiochus did when he offered swine's blood upon it, than to

commit the same act upon a heathen altar, or profane the ancient mysteries of pagan worship? And is it not a greater profanation, a more daring insult and mockery of God, that his name should be taken into thousands of hypocritical lips, that he should be approached by thousands of ungodly professors, that the glory due to him should be trampled upon by crowds of traitors and renegades who call themselves by his name, than for his name not to be mentioned at all? Jerusalem exceeded Sodom and Samaria, her sisters, in wickedness (Ezek. 16:48), because she sinned against greater light and privileges. And thus the awful mockery of the ever-blessed Jehovah, in this so-called Christian land, seems stamped, in my eyes, as a greater insult to his glory, than the idolatries of heathen nations. Oh, how little is he known! How little is he feared! How little is he worshipped, and how little is he revered and loved! Nor can he be known to any except he reveal himself. "Darkness covereth the earth" **the world lying dead in profanity**, "and gross darkness the people" **the people lying dead in profession**. Only those can know him to whom he is pleased to manifest himself, as he manifests himself not to the world. And wherever he manifests himself, he leaves the stamp of his presence; wherever he discovers himself in glory and majesty, he raises up a godly fear and trembling awe of his great name.

"The entrance of God's words, then, giveth light" to a man's conscience, and infuses life into a man's soul, as to the character of Jehovah, before whom he bows down in reverence and godly fear; and he learns, by spiritual teaching, what a pure, holy, righteous, just God he is. He learns by heavenly tuition that he abhors evil. He is taught by heavenly manifestations that he is not to be mocked. He learns; through the channel of powerful convictions, that he is to be approached only with godly reverence and trembling awe, as "a consuming fire." Such an "entrance of light," concerning the character of God, fills the soul with reverential trembling before him, and bows it down with deep prostration of spirit before the throne of his majesty. But the same divine entrance of light into our consciences manifests our contrariety with that character of Jehovah, which is thus

revealed to us. We learn things by their contrasts. We know darkness by the previous presence of light; we know light by the preceding experience of darkness. The contrast of the one with the other shows more clearly each. And thus it is with that acquaintance, which an awakened sinner gains by divine teaching with himself. He sees light in God's light. His own character is contrasted with the character of Jehovah. Purity is contrasted with impurity, holiness with uncleanness, righteousness with unrighteousness, justice with sin, the brightness of heavenly glory with the foul workings of corruption; the majesty, greatness, and spotless lustre of Jehovah, with the base abominations and loathsome obscenities of the creature. Thus we learn to know what we really are, and to feel it deeply, too, in our consciences by having some spiritual acquaintance with the character of God. And no man can know anything of the horrible nature of sin, of the black pollution that lurks in his bosom, of the awful condition of our most depraved, diseased nature—no man can know them so as to feel what they really are—no man can shrink, as it were, into the very depths of self-abasement on account of what he carries about with him, except him into whose heart light has come, into whose soul there has been an "Entrance of God's words," and into whose conscience the entrance of that word has communicated light as to who God is and light as to what he himself is naturally before Him.

The knowledge of sin, then, is no doctrine merely learned from the Bible. A spiritually taught man does not read the third chapter of Romans to learn from it that "he is guilty before God." He does not turn to the seventeenth Jeremiah, to learn that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and note it down in his pocket-book as a certain doctrine which he has just found in God's word, an item of remembrance, a memorandum for a certain day of the month, lest it should slip his memory. But it is that which the Holy Ghost stamps inwardly upon his conscience. What that heavenly Teacher impresses there, is, so to speak, a counterpart of what is recorded in the word of God. Just as the printer's type stamps upon the paper, in a distinct and legible character, the exact letter that stands jutting out upon its

face; just as the coin from the Mint is the precise image of the die, and the one is the counterpart of the other, "so the heart of a child of God, impressed by the Spirit of the Lord, presents the very counterpart to the stamp which the Holy Ghost brings down upon it. The word of God is the type that the Spirit uses to imprint truth on the heart—powerless in itself as the leaden letters in the compositor's case, but effective in his divine hand; and thus, when that heavenly Teacher writes his lesson of convictions in the conscience, the living soul is brought to groan and sigh, to lament and mourn as a polluted sinner before God, as a deeply infected wretch, a vile leper who has to stand "with his clothes rent, and his head bare, with a covering upon his upper lip, crying; Unclean, unclean" (Leviticus 13:45). It is "the entrance of Gods words into his conscience, which has given him light upon this inward leprosy. And he sees it, feels it, knows it, and sighs under it, just as palpably, just as visibly, just as evidently, and just as undeniably, as Miriam beheld herself "leprous, white as snow" (Num. 12:10); as King Uzziah felt the burning leprosy burst forth in his forehead (2 Chron. 26:19); and as the leper excluded from the camp, smarted under "the quick raw flesh" (Lev. 13:10), that festered and broke out in his body.

Corruption is not a mere doctrine in God's word, or like an article in the creed of a church, incorporated into its writings, and received by all its members. It is not merely assented to, as a man may read over a doctrinal statement, and say, I agree to the doctrine of original sin," and subscribe his name, as the young men at the University subscribe to the thirty-nine articles. But it is a deep and abiding feeling, a spiritual and divine impression, seen in the light that the Spirit of God himself casts into the conscience. It is a felt disease. It is not like taking a medical book and reading therein the symptoms of consumption; but it is having the disease itself in our vitals. It is not like seeing a patient afflicted with a complaint, and with the learned one of a physician tracing out the symptoms, but it is suffering, labouring, gasping, and heaving under the malady, as developed in us. And that is the way that "the entrance of God's words giveth light—by teaching a man personally and individually, that he is everything

by nature that the word of God declares him to be, and making him as certain of it, as though he had handled it with his hands, and seen it with his eyes.

2. But again: "the entrance of God's words giveth light," not only as to the disease and wretched malady which has infected all Adam's posterity, the elect together with the rest, but it also communicates light as to the remedy, we want the remedy, friends. A patient does not go to the hospital merely for the surgeon to handle his sores, or to be made an exhibition for the students to be lectured upon. But he goes there to be healed. Thus the Bible, in the hands of the Spirit as making use of the Bible to teach God's people, does not merely reveal the deep-seated disease which has infected the elect, together with the whole of Adam's race, but it discovers also that remedy, that blessed remedy, which God has provided in the Son of his love. The Scriptures are full of Jesus. They testify of his glory, they speak of his power; they proclaim his atoning blood; they reveal, all through the sacred page his glorious justifying righteousness. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" And therefore, the whole word of God, from beginning to end, is one testimony of Jesus, as the Saviour of his people. But we want light to see it; we need life to feel it; we require power to believe it; we want application to enjoy it.

But "the entrance of God's words giveth light." The blessed Spirit is pleased sometimes to give some testimony concerning Jesus, to open up some passage of Scripture which speaks of Jesus, to cast a divine light before the astonished eyes, and to throw some of the blessed beams of gospel truth into our souls, whereby we see Jesus. We are brought sometimes in soul-feeling to the desires of those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, and went to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21); and from some apprehension of his beauty and loveliness, we pour out our soul before God, and say, "We would see Jesus." We want to feel his love, to have our eyes anointed to behold his glory, to look upon him as crucified for us and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may have a sweet and blessed

fellowship with him as our suffering surety, and thus, by faith, enter into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his "that passeth knowledge." Wherever there is a work of grace upon the soul, there will be this pining after Christ. The soul that is really taught of God can never rest satisfied short of Jesus. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9), and they can never be satisfied short of that rest, which consists in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, as revealed by the Holy Ghost to their souls. But before the enjoyment of this spiritual rest, there is often long delay; clouds of darkness for months and years together often envelope the mercy-seat; the cross of Christ cannot be seen; the Holy Ghost does not fulfil his covenanted office in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul; and in the absence of these heavenly manifestations, we cannot realise our interest in the things of salvation, nor can we feel our hearts sweetly composed and settled down in the blessed assurance, that when this life shall come to a close, we shall inhabit mansions prepared for us before the foundation of the world. When "with clouds he covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt" (Job 36:32), there are many doubts and fears and suspicions and surmises and jealousies whether we are not deceived and deluded altogether. At such seasons, everything seems to be against us, and to stamp us as being nothing but nominal professors.

It is in such dark and gloomy seasons as these that "the entrance of God's words giveth light." For instance, some such promise as this is made sweet to the soul: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). As that promise is brought home with power to the heart, and is shed abroad with some sweetness in the soul, it draws forth and strengthens faith, and the toiling pilgrim comes to the Lord, feeling himself "weary and heavy laden," and as he comes, he is indulged sometimes with a few sweet moments of rest. He is enabled to look out of fallen self, with all its miseries, and to look upon Jesus in his grace and beauty. He is favoured to cast himself simply, as he is, upon Jesus, and some sense of his

atoning blood, dying love, and complete propitiation for sin is opened up to his heart. Faith springs up to lay hold of and embrace it, and he begins to taste the savour and sweetness and healing efficacy of a Saviour's blood and love. Thus "the entrance of God's words giveth light," and he feels by the divine coming in of what God has externally revealed, that inward light is shed abroad in the recesses of his soul, and he can, in some measure, realise the power of the cross of Jesus in his heart.

3. But we often get into such dark paths, that we seem altogether out of the secret, and feel as if there were no more grace in our souls, than in one altogether dead in trespasses and sins. And whether we look back at the past, or view the present, or turn our eyes to the future, one dark cloud seems to rest upon the whole; nor can we, with all our searching, find to our satisfaction that we have one spark of true religion, or one atom of grace, or one grain of vital godliness, or any trace that the Spirit of God has touched our consciences with his finger. Now, when we are in this dark, benighted state, we want light; we want the blessed Son of righteousness to arise; we want the south wind to blow a heavenly gale, and drive the mists away; we want the clouds to part, and the light of God's countenance to shine into our souls, so as to show us where we are, and what we are, and make it clear, that base and vile as we are, yet that we are interested in the love of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

Are you never there In soul-feeling? Do you not sometimes look into your hearts, and weigh up your evidences, and examine yourselves, and say, "I must honestly confess" **and you sink fathoms in a moment** "that I cannot find in my soul one mark of grace; I am as worldly, as stupid, as ignorant, and as carnal, as though the finger of God had never touched me." In these seasons, then, you want the entrance of light. You cannot run to a friend, and say, "Be so kind as to give me a little flattery. Do just take the whitewash brush, and brush me over; get out the mortar and trowel, and daub me over with a little plaster. Pray, put a little putty into these cracked evidences; shore up my

sinking religion, that it may not be altogether" a tottering wall, and a bowed fence." No; you would rather ask a man of God to take his trowel, and pick out with the pointed end all the putty, instead of putting fresh into the crack. You would rather stand naked before God, that he himself might, in his own time and way, clothe you with the garments of salvation, than be wrapped up in the veils and mantles of profession, or borrow a robe from your neighbour. Thus in these seasons you cannot go to man. You cannot angle for praise. If you resemble me, you cannot go to a child of God with a head hanging like a bulrush, and with demure looks throw out some disparaging, condemnatory sentence against yourself, for the express purpose of your Christian friend taking it up in order to underprop with it your religion. But you will act as Jeremiah says he did (Jer. 15:17), "I sat **alone**, because of thy hand;" you will do as we read (Lam. 3:28) he does who bears the yoke,—"he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." You will be crying unto the Lord in some secret corner, be tossing on your midnight couch, wrestling with the Saviour for a manifestation, and big scalding drops will be rolling down your cheeks, that the Lord would make himself known unto you, and sprinkle your conscience with his atoning blood. You will be sighing and mourning, away from every human eye and every human ear, that the Lord himself would lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and cause you experimentally to know the meaning of the words: The entrance of thy words giveth light." You can't be satisfied with **the doctrine** of Christ's blood, and **the doctrine** of Christ's righteousness, and **the doctrine** of God's everlasting love, but you want the feeling application of it; the spiritual and supernatural entrance of it into your souls, so as to raise up that in your hearts which shall bring you out of prison to praise and bless his name. And you want this entrance of light into your heart, that it may give you entrance into that which is within the veil, even a sweet and blessed entrance, by faith into the very heart and compassionate bosom of Jesus, so as to drink into his spirit, and to be melted into his likeness. This is the religion that I want; and as to any other, I would, in my right mind, tear every shred of it from me. As to any religion that does not stand in

divine teachings, sweet applications, blessed manifestations, and heavenly testimonies, I would throw it aside from me as an unclean garment—I would bury all such rags and tatters in the first dunghill that I came to.

Thus, "The entrance of God's words giveth light." And when his word begins to distil like the rain and to drop like the dew, when the Lord himself is pleased to speak home one sweet testimony, one little word, one kind intimation—what a change it makes! The clouds break away, the fog clears off, the mists dissolve, and the soul becomes sweetly persuaded of its interest in the blood and love of the Lamb.

The religion of God's people will always be utterly distinct from the religion of the professor. Their religion is a lo! here and lo! there, a running to and fro, with fleshly excitement, little else but bustle and noise, a work that the creature has to perform. This is their whole object. They have a weight to lift to the top of the house, and so they go to the crane, and work hard at the winch; though it often runs back, yet they keep toiling on; and when they have got the bale to the top of the warehouse, and seem just ready to bring it in at the window, it slips off the hook, and down it falls to the ground; but nothing discouraged, they begin again, until the end will be, if grace prevent not, that the bale of good works, which they are endeavouring to raise, will pull them down headlong with it into hell. But God's people, when rightly taught, want no such working at the winch. They want to lie passive, to do nothing, to be nothing. Their sweetest spot is that described in Isaiah (Isa. 64:8): "We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." They want to know nothing but what God teaches; to feel nothing but what God inspires; to have nothing but what God gives; and to be nothing but what God makes them. So far as they are spiritually taught, and are living under divine influences, they desire to have no more will, or power, or strength, or wisdom, or righteousness, than the clay that lies on the potter's wheel; and the simple breathing of their heart is, to feel the potter's fingers working in them, moulding them, framing them into vessels of mercy; for

they know if they can but have the potter's fingers in their soul, that he will make them all that he would have them to be.

4. But again: we often get into states and frames of mind, where we need something else besides consolation. A child would not grow, if it were always fed upon sweetmeats. It must have exercise, and be exposed to the weather, and have the cold winds blow upon its face, and be hardened, so as to enable it to bear the chill winter and the nipping frosts. So the child of God is not always petted, and fed upon love-tokens. He is not always carried to the warm bosom, or sucking the breasts of consolation, but he has to learn lessons to fit him to be a soldier. The soldier we know has to endure hardships. He has to lie all night upon the wet grass; to be pinched with hunger, parched with thirst, and nipped with cold; to make harassing marches; to hear the roar of the cannon and the whistling of the bullets, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting;" to see the flash of the sabre uplifted to cut him down, and the glitter of the bayonet at his breast, aye, and to feel painful and dangerous wounds. So with the spiritual soldier in God's camp. He has to hunger and thirst, to suffer cold, nakedness, and hard privations, to be shot at by the arrows of calumny and the fiery darts of Satan, to make harassing marches through an enemy's country, to suffer painful wounds, and by these very exercises to learn to be a soldier. Only so far as he is thus exercised spiritually can he learn the art of war, can he know how to fight and make effectual battle under the banners or the Lord against the enemies of his salvation. As a parent, when his child is old and strong enough, often sends him away from home that he may push his way in the world, so does the Lord often put down his children from the lap on which he has dandled them, and thrusts them out of doors, that they may buffet with the storms of life. By being exposed to these hardships, a child of God begins to learn what that rich and sovereign grace is, of which he has had already a taste, but the fullness and sufficiency of which he has yet to experience; his eyes are more clearly opened to see the wondrous way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and he becomes initiated into, and inured to those paths of trial and difficulty, in which the Christian pilgrim must walk.

After the Lord has blessed a soul with a taste of his goodness and mercy, he will often withdraw his comforts, and leave it, perhaps for weeks, months, and sometimes for years, to toil on in darkness and despondency, without dropping in any blessed testimony of his love. By these things the soul learns that the way to heaven is a rough and rugged road, encompassed with difficulties and beset with temptations, that it is no easy smooth path, but one that requires a vigorous traveller, one strengthened and upheld by the power and grace of God to hold on to the end. When he is in this path he wants light; and his secret cry is "Where am I? What am I? Am I a child of God? Am I in the way of eternal life!" Sometimes he can look back on the past, and then he says with Job: "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (Job 29:4, 5). And contrasting his former experience with his present, he says: "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him" (Job 23:3; Job 23:8, 9). He is "full of confusion" (Job 10:15); he cannot tell where he is, having lost his way, and being embarrassed with the different state he is in now, from the time when "he washed his steps in butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil" (Job 29:6). He now wants some fresh, some peculiar entrance of light into his soul, to show him the path, and that he is in it, as well as to make plain to him the very spot in the road where he is. And when the Lord applies some such words as these: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isa. 42:16),—when these words are opened up by the Spirit, and power is communicated with them, faith is raised up to act upon them, light comes with them, and the soul sees where it really is, that God has been fulfilling his promise of "leading a poor, blind, ignorant, wayfaring fool by a way that he knew not."

5. Sometimes we get into a cold, carnal, careless, backsliding state, wherein there seems to be no more concern for the things of God and Christ, than if we had never had one spiritual feeling. The soul in this state seems altogether lost and buried in worldly business or the cares of this life, and as to real religion, though the form is preserved, yet there appears to be little else than the mere shell. It is as though all the flesh had dropped off the bones, and there were nothing left but the bare skeleton. In these seasons a man wants light from the entrance of God's word; and light he shall have. But what light will God give him? Not the light of his countenance, not the light of blessed manifestations or gracious discoveries of love. That would not do for him. He wants other remedies. He needs the rod, not the love-kiss. He wants stripes, not smiles, for "stripes are prepared for the back of fools" (Prov. 19:29); "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways;" and "whom the lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). When the soul is in this state, the entrance of God's words giving light, shows us where we are, and where we have been, how carnal, how earthly, how covetous, how proud, how buried in the things of time and sense, how thinking, speaking, and acting, in a thousand instances, in a manner unbecoming one that fears God, how little separated in heart and spirit from those we have formerly condemned, how wrapped up in the folds of sensuality and sin, and how glued and fettered down to the perishing vanities of life. The entrance of life discovering to us our base backslidings, brings with it some deep and solemn pangs of guilt and condemnation. Jonah ran away from the presence of the Lord, and hoped to arrive safely at Tarshish. But what were his successive steps? he first fell asleep "in the sides **"hold"** of the ship," and next was tumbled headlong out of them into the belly of the whale, and there he found himself, in soul feeling, "in the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2). There was but a short interval between his sleep in the ship and the "weeds being wrapped about his head." But he never came to himself till he got into the fish's belly. So in the moments of solemn recollection produced by the entrance of the sentence of reproof, we consider what we have been doing, where we have been, how we have backslidden from

God, how base and carnal we have been; and as the Lord drops some severe rebuke and cutting sentence into the conscience, the afflicted soul groans and sighs with the up-heavings of bitter reflection, and he puts his mouth into the dust with the deepest self-loathing and abhorrence.

6. But again; there are times when we get into such a state of mind as to be shaken as to the truth of God altogether. We see those perhaps whom we held in high esteem, gone utterly astray from truth, slidden back into the world, made shipwreck of their faith, or even to have died in despair. We hear or read of ministers who once stood boldly forth as champions of truth, that they have swerved into some awful error, or have fallen into open sin, and have been made manifest as hypocrites. And perhaps those whom we ourselves have walked with, in times past, in sweet friendship, and what we then thought was soul union and communion, we see manifested as enemies of truth, and haters of the people of God. Being ourselves full of darkness and unbelief, and thus open to the withering blasts of infidelity, we pause, and say, "Is there such a thing as religion? Is it all delusion?" To see these pillars fall, it makes the very earth shake, and we say, "Is it not a lie of priestcraft altogether?" But there comes some solemn testimony out of God's word, such as a text of this kind: "Let God be true, and every man a liar" Rom. 3:4. We bow and fall down in our hearts and consciences before the testimony; and instruction is communicated to our souls from this entrance of God's word, showing us that these things must be, that it ever was so in the church; that it is God's will that there should be wheat and tares, sheep and goats; that "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" Rom. 11:7; that God knows them that are his, and that he will keep his own people by faith unto salvation. And being brought to rest here, we are glad to abide by the immutable promises of Jehovah, and be weaned from leaning upon an arm of flesh, or putting any confidence in man.

7. But again: we want from time to time some recovery of our soul out of that state of carnality and deadness into which we

often sink. We need revivals; we want to have our heart and affections drawn upwards, that "our youth may be renewed like the eagle's." We wish to plume our wings, and not always be chained down to "a body of sin and death." We desire some enlargement of heart, some revival of faith and hope, some going forth of soul after, and some spiritual acquaintance with Christ. But it must be "the entrance of God's words," carrying a divine light into the chambers of conscience, which can alone show us our election in Christ, the cleansing away of all our sins by the atoning blood of Christ, the justification of our persons by the imputed obedience of Christ, and our certain perseverance in the faith and hope of the gospel until we arrive to the realms of endless bliss, to see Christ as he is.

8. Sometimes we want light as to the path of practical obedience in which we are called to walk. A difficulty presents itself which we cannot well surmount; or the right path is diametrically opposed to our natural wishes, or worldly interests we begin to inquire, "How shall we act in this dilemma? How shall we conduct ourselves in this matter?" An enigma has to be solved, a knot has to be untied. But what does the word of God say? What does conscience say? What do the whisperings of the Spirit say? "O," but answers the carnal mind, "**that** is such a painful path. Cannot there be a little edging? Is there not a little path in the meadows there, inside the highway? Must the feet be always galled by the rough road? Is there not a little relaxation sometimes allowed from such a strict line of conduct as the precepts of the gospel point out? May we not, in a little degree, just on one occasion, decline out of the path? Surely a little sin once in a way cannot damn a man?" Here is Satan laying his snares and endeavouring to catch the unwary traveller, striving hard to plunge us into sin, by hiding its real nature and horrible character from us, and urging us to say of it, "Is it not a little one?" Here again "the entrance of God's words giveth light," showing to us that right is right, and wrong is wrong—that what God has declared to be sinful must stand stamped for ever with his holy indignation, above all the sophistry of man and the subtlety of the devil, let them endeavour to disguise it as much as they can. The word of

God is unerring truth; what he has there revealed is, under the teachings of the Blessed Spirit, our only rule of conduct, our sure standard of practice; and when, through the entrance of his word, light is communicated, and the soul is enabled to make the sacrifice, to walk in the self-denying path, to take up the cross and follow Jesus in the regeneration, he will drop some sweet whisper, impart some blessed consolation, and manifest to the soul that it is treading in a path that leadeth to eternal glory.

Oh, that we could have more and more of the entrance of God's words into our souls to give light! What happiness, what peace should we feel at the entrance of his word, giving us light to see, and life to feel our interest in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; light into the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; light into his tender compassion for his dear people; light into the work of the Holy Ghost, the certainty of his teaching all the family of God, and the certainty of his teaching us; light in all crooked dispensations and trying paths; in poverty contempt, and hatred; light amid the persecution of professors, and the hard speeches of some of the living family of God; light upon, and life under all the difficulties that beset the way that leads to life. Oh, how happy, and how full of everything that the soul longs after should we be, if we had more of this heavenly light to show us the things of God, and seal them with sweetness and power upon our consciences! But it is the want of this light, the absence of these cheering beams, the withholding of these gleams of consolation and instruction, that leaves us so continually struggling here, and staggering there, scarcely knowing what we are, and where we are. It is the Lord hiding his blessed countenance and not unveiling it, that we may look on it, and see mercy and love shining there, which leaves many of us, at times, full of doubts and fears and suspicions and surmises, whether we are the children of God or not. It is the not being able, experimentally and inwardly, to realise all that is contained in these words, "the entrance of thy words giveth light;" it is the not having these blessed things fulfilled in our experience, that leaves us oftentimes uncertain what to speak, what to think, or what to do. But still the promise remains good. If the Lord has made our

hearts simple, if he has untwisted us, and laid us at his feet, simply desiring to be taught of him, if he has riven us asunder from that carnal policy, that empty profession, and that base hypocrisy which is stamped upon thousands, and has made our hearts spiritually upright before him, he will fulfil his own promises. Their fulfilment depends upon his own eternal faithfulness; for he hath purposed, and he will also do it, yea, he hath spoken, and he will surely bring it to pass.

## **The Eternal God the Refuge of His Saints**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Sunday Morning, September 29, 1867

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Deuteronomy 33:27

It is very beautiful as well as very interesting to observe and trace out, in the record of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the distinction which is so clearly visible between Moses, the man of God, as mediating between the Lord and the people in the giving and executing of the law, and as mediating between them as an intercessor. Let me explain my meaning a little more clearly and fully. Moses, as a servant faithful to God in all his house, sustained as such two distinct characters: 1. He was the mediator of the Old Covenant. When the Law was delivered from mount Sinai in all its terrible accompaniments of "blackness, and darkness, and tempest, the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words," all the people that was in the camp trembled. (Exod. 19:16, Heb. 12:18.) And well they might, for the Lord himself in his terrible majesty came down upon the Mount, as we read, "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Exod. 19:18.) All these terrible accompaniments were designed to impress upon the people the majesty and holiness of God as revealed in the Law, and that he was indeed under that dispensation a consuming fire. They were, therefore, not allowed to pass beyond certain fixed bounds, but were commanded to stand at the nether part of the mount. As the people, then, were not suffered to approach the mount itself, or at least the higher part of it, it was needful that there should be a mediator who should ascend it, and speak to them for and from God. Moses was this mediator; and we therefore find the apostle thus speaking of the Old Covenant: "It was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator." (Gal. 3:19.)

This mediator was not Christ, as some have wrongly interpreted, but Moses who mediated between God and the people as speaking to them in the name of God, and taking back their words to him. "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." (Exod. 19:7, 8.)

2. But Moses was also a *typical* as well as a real mediator, mediating between God as full of mercy, grace, and truth, as the covenant God of Abraham, as well as mediating between him in a fiery Law. We therefore see him sustaining, on various occasions, two distinct characters: one, that of a stern law-giver, and the other that of an earnest and successful intercessor. This may explain why sometimes he is so stern, and sometimes so meek; sometimes so severe, and sometimes so mild; sometimes armed with a curse, and sometimes armed with a blessing. It is not the man that differs, but the mission; and his conduct varies according as he speaks and acts as the real mediator of the Old dispensation, or as the typical mediator of the New. I call him a typical mediator because in that character he was a type of our blessed Lord who is the true mediator of the New Covenant. It is, therefore, very blessed to observe with what energy and success he stood forth on several occasions, as a mediator of mercy between God and the people when, but for his intercession, God would have let loose his anger upon them and destroyed them from the face of the earth. One of these occasions was, when they had made the molten calf, and God said to him: "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." Hear how Moses interceded with God: "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to

consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." (Exod. 32:11, 12.) You will recollect also how on another occasion after the rebellion and destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when, in consequence of the murmurings of the people, God said unto Moses, "Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment," that Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces; and you know with what success their intercession was attended: "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." (Num. 16:46, 47, 48.) In both of these instances we see Moses acting as a typical mediator interceding for the people, and pleading on their behalf the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He thus stands before us in the Old Testament under two different characters, and representing two almost opposite relationships—one that of a lawgiver, and the other that of an intercessor; and according as he sustained these two distinct characters he acted and spoke very differently. As a lawgiver, he was severe, harsh, unforgiving and implacable, for as such he was a representative of God's fiery law, and dealt forth the fire with both hands. Thus after he had interceded with God on behalf of the people, in the affair of the golden calf, and, as typical mediator, had obtained mercy for them, he resumes his character as lawgiver, armed with which he had come down from the sacred Mount; and observe with what stern severity he fulfilled that office: "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. (Exod. 32:26,

27.) Here was Moses the lawgiver dealing out the fire which was given to him by a fiery law. So when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram set themselves up against Moses and Aaron, at God's command Moses spake and the earth opened and swallowed them up. There again was Moses the lawgiver, executing the sentence of a burning, fiery law. So in the case of the blasphemer (Levit. 24:14), and the sabbath breaker (Num. 15:36), Moses, as lawgiver, executed the sentence of God in a fiery law. Similarly, when speaking in the name, and with the authority of God, he pronounced conditional curses and conditional blessings (Deut. 28), assuring the people on the one hand, that if they were obedient, they should be blessed in the city and in the field, when they came in and when they went out: but if disobedient, that God would rain down upon them every curse, he spoke as a lawgiver.

But when we come to the last words of Moses, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, we see him laying aside all that severity and harshness which he wielded as lawgiver, and standing forth with nothing but blessings in his heart and in his mouth. There he wears again the character of typical mediator.

These remarks may, perhaps, throw a light upon the character of Moses, and clear up any difficulty which may possibly have presented itself to your mind in seeing in him, words and actions that may seem at first sight inconsistent with each other.

It is, then, under his character of typical mediator that we find him speaking in the words of our text, in which, I think, we may observe four leading features: two *statements*, a *promise*, and a *charge*. The two statements are,

I.—"The *eternal God* is thy refuge," and

II.—"*Underneath* are the everlasting arms."

III.—The *promise* is, "*He shall thrust out the enemy before thee.*"

IV.—The *charge* is, "*Destroy them.*"

I.—The first statement contains a grand, blessed, gospel truth: "*the eternal Goal is thy refuge.*"

But the question may arise, What right have I, what right have you to claim these words as ours? Were they spoken to us? When Moses in his old age stood and addressed these words to the people, did he speak to them that you, that I might take them as ours? Now this is a point very little understood. I don't know that I ever heard it explained from any pulpit, or saw it made clear in any book, at least, in any full or satisfactory manner, why it is that we may take promises spoken to ancient Israel—that I may preach from them, and you may receive them as if they were mine and yours. Of course my knowledge both of books and ministers is but limited. I do not say, therefore, that this point has not been clearly explained both from the pulpit and from the press; but it has never fallen within the reach of my eyes or ears. I find it assumed again and again that every promise made to the children of Israel belongs to us; and most true it is, if indeed we are believers in the Son of God; for if so, "all things are ours," and amongst them all the promises, for "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (1 Cor. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:20.) Still it is well to know our title as well as enjoy our possession. I may enjoy an estate and lawfully possess both it and the fruits of it, but I ought to be able to show, if I am called upon, my title to it. It is a point which I have often thought upon and considered, and I have felt sometimes as if I should like, if life be spared and opportunity given, to lay before the church of God the nature of our title, and why, if we believe in the Son of God, we may take the comfort of such passages as are now before us and receive them as spoken by God himself to our souls. Many such thoughts and projects struggle in my breast; many sweet openings of the word; many rays of light illuminating my heart, and warming my soul, feed me in my hours of solitude, as I read the Scriptures; and in such moments I feel a desire to communicate the same light of life instrumentally to others; but alas! they often perish in the birth, and leave me too much as I

was before, retaining perhaps the knowledge thus gained, but not retaining the power. For the present then, I shall only briefly mention two or three reasons why we are warranted in believing that such statements and promises as are made in the text belong to us.

1. When our gracious Lord came in the flesh, Israel, instead of receiving him as the promised Messiah, rejected him. By this voluntary Act they broke the covenant which was made with them in Abraham, from whose seed Messiah was to come, and as a consequence were cast off for their unbelief and disobedience. This the Apostle (Rom. 11) calls "a breaking off of the branches of the good olive tree," and tells us why: "Because of unbelief they were broken off." But that the olive tree, which with its root and branches signifies Christ and the Church, might still bear fruit, God in pure mercy grafted into it what the Apostle calls "the wild olive tree," that is, the Gentiles, in order that they, by being thus engrafted into it, might partake "of the root and fatness of the olive tree." The root is Christ, the fatness is the oil of his grace which flows out of him into the branches, and, as in the case of the natural olive tree, fills them with that oil which swells and manifests itself in the rich and ripe fruit. As then in succeeding to Israel's place the Gentile church succeeds to Israel's blessings; and as among these blessings the promises are not the least or last, for "by them we are made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4), the spiritual promises made to Israel in the Old Testament belong to believing Gentiles in the New, as a part of the fatness of the olive tree.

2. Another reason is that Jew and Gentile are united into one mystical body of which Christ is the glorious Head. Now the consequence of this is, that by this union of Jew and Gentile into the one mystical body of Christ, all external distinctions between them, such as those of circumcision and uncircumcision, virtually cease, and Christ is all and in all. There are, therefore, no spiritual promises made to ancient Israel—I say spiritual, for the literal promises stand upon another foundation on which I shall not here touch—which do not form a part of the inheritance that

belongs to the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, since they are all one in Christ Jesus.

3. Another reason is, that not only is there "one body," but there is also "one new man;" in other words, not only are Jew and Gentile united eternally and mystically in one body, but they are also united in time spiritually by being baptised into and made to drink into one Spirit. The possession of this one Spirit obliterates all external distinctions between Jew and Gentile, which are at best but national and natural, and knits them together as one in Christ, as the apostle speaks: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him; where there is neither Greek or Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." (Col. 3:10, 11.) And again, "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:27, 28.)

It is, chiefly, for these reasons that such passages and such promises as lie before us in our text become the property and the privilege of all the believing family of God, and allow and embolden me to preach from them, and you to listen to them as ours through faith in the Son of God; and if this morning we are enabled to lay hold of and appropriate them as our own, and they are blessed to our soul by the power of God, they are as much ours and are as much spoken to us, as if we had stood among believing Israelites in days of old and heard the words as they were spoken to them by the lips of Moses.

In the hope, therefore, that what I have just said may strengthen your faith and dispose your hearts to listen to the voice of God in the words before us, I shall now address myself to our text.

i. It contains, as I said, a *statement*, "*The eternal God is thy refuge.*" Let us look first a little at what a refuge is, and see how and why the eternal God is the refuge of his saints.

There are several reasons why the word "refuge," conveyed to the mind of a believing Israelite stronger ideas than it may carry to ours.

1. First, you must observe, that the natural position and circumstances of the land of Canaan differed widely from our own. Protected by the sea all around our shores and by our powerful fleet, we are not exposed to the sudden incursions and invasions of enemies; and, therefore, our towns, except a few on the sea coast, are not walled or fortified. But it was not so in Palestine. There they were exposed to continual invasions from the warlike tribes that lay upon their frontier, and from the unsubdued Canaanites who dwelt in their very midst. They were obliged, therefore, to have strongly fortified cities, situated usually on elevated spots to protect themselves, and especially their women and children, their flocks and herds, from these invading foes. This will explain why in the Psalms David so continually speaks of the Lord as his "fortress," his "strong tower," his "high place;" for these fortified cities were generally situated on mountain tops.

2. Another circumstance which made the figure of a refuge so prominent in the Old Testament is connected with the peculiar nature of the climate of Palestine, which required accessible and speedily reached shelter, sometimes from severe thunderstorms, in which not only was the lightning very dangerous, but which were usually attended with destructive showers of hail; sometimes from the intense rays of a burning sun; and sometimes from hot pestilential winds, such as the sirocco, which blew from the wide and vast Eastern desert. We find, therefore, the prophet speaking, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." (Isa. 25:4.) And again, "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isa. 32:2.)

3. But there was another reason why we find the figure of a refuge to occur so frequently in the Old Testament. As you well know, Moses set apart six cities of refuge for the manslayer who had killed his neighbour unawares. But into this point I need not enter, as you are no doubt well acquainted with it, and I have much that lies before me in our text.

But the main reason why I have endeavoured to explain the scriptural meaning of the word "refuge" is, that we may understand more fully, and grasp more believingly, the blessing intimated in our text, "The eternal God is thy refuge." A refuge, then, signifies a shelter into which we may run when danger threatens, and find in it, as a hiding place, safety to be obtained nowhere else. Even natural men will sometimes seek a refuge in what they think or believe is religion. Natural conscience works in the breast of many sufficiently to make them feel that they cannot die as they have lived without something like repentance and amendment of life. They know sufficiently of the anger of God revealed against sinners, and of their own sinful lives, to show them that something must be done, or at least known and felt to remove from their conscience the sting of death. It is from this instinctive sense of needing a refuge that all the false religion springs which we see on every side. Ignorant of Christ and of salvation by him, they trust to their own good works or to some form of godliness whilst they deny the power. Now all these refuges God has declared to be "refuges of lies," and he tells us very plainly how he deals with them in the case of his people. He says, "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. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." (Isa. 28:16, 17.) We gather from these words that even his own people may make lies a refuge until the Lord drives them out by laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. This he does by the application of his law to their conscience, by which "judgment is laid to the line, and

righteousness to the plummet." The figure here is that of the law, measuring a sinner's words and works in the same strict way as a mason measures, by his plumb line and level, whether a wall stands perfectly horizontal and perfectly perpendicular. Now no sooner does this strict and unerring law detect the crookedness of the wall we have built up, than the hail sweeps it away as a refuge of lies, and the waters of God's wrath overflow the hiding place. And what is the consequence? The covenant with death is broken, and the agreement with hell no longer stands. Can you not recollect the time when you made as it were a covenant with death? Were not these, or similar ones, the thoughts of your mind? "Was not God merciful? What had you done worse than others? If you went to hell, what would become of thousands? Who could charge you with any great or open sins? Were you not as religious as most, indeed a great deal more than many others?" Now all this was making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, and saying, "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto me." O how numerous are these lying refuges! Some fly to good works, this is their refuge; some to the sacrament and the prayers of a minister, called almost at the last hour, as if that would save them. Some fly to man's opinion, as though man's opinion would pass with God, and endorse them for heaven like a banker's bill; and some, of whom we should hope better things, fly to church membership and church ordinances, not knowing there are many members of churches who never were members of Christ; that a man may be baptized in water, who was never baptized with the Holy Ghost; and that to partake of the Lord's Supper is not the same thing as eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God. In fact, everything short of Christ made known to the soul by the power of God, everything short of the eternal God, as experimentally known, believed in, looked unto, laid hold of, and embraced by faith, is a refuge of lies, and will be found so in that day when God will break up the covenant which so many have made with death, and disannul the agreement which thousands and tens of thousands have entered into with hell.

But O what a mercy it is for the family of God that there is a

refuge provided for them. I showed you when I was describing the places of refuge in the land of Canaan, that sometimes an invading foe, merciless and cruel, sometimes a terrific thunderstorm, sometimes the guilt of having shed blood, made a refuge both needful and desirable. And is not a refuge on similar grounds, spiritually viewed, needful and desirable now? Have we not cruel and merciless foes on every side, without and within, who would spare neither body or soul, but trample the one into the grave, and the other into hell? Is there not the storm of a fiery law ready to burst upon our head? Does not guilt, if not of actual blood, yet of crimes of as deep and dark a hue, at least in our feelings, lie upon our conscience? O the unspeakable mercy then, O the unutterable blessing, that there is a refuge provided for those who have no refuge in themselves, who have been hunted out of house and home, whose false refuges the hail has swept away, and whose hiding place the water-floods have overflowed.

But let us look a little more closely into the meaning of the words "*the eternal God.*" How these words, as opened up and applied by the Holy Spirit, set before our eyes a blessed refuge for the poor guilty sinner who knows not where to hide his bleeding soul. "O where, O where," he sometimes cries, "shall I hide my guilty head? Wherever I go the wrath of God pursues me; wherever I turn all is darkness, blackness, and despair. If I look to self, what find I there but a wreck and ruin? If I look to the law, what are there but curses and bondage? If I look to man, I must say with Job, 'Miserable physicians are ye all.' If I look to friends, what can they do for me upon a dying bed, when the cold sweat will stand upon my brow and I must soon pass into eternity? Wife, children, relations, even the dear family of God, or the servants of his choice, may surround my bed, but can they speak peace and pardon to my guilty soul when I need it most?"

Now as the soul is thus hunted here and there, and driven out of false refuges, then does the eternal God begin to open his blessed arms, and to unfold what he is as the refuge of poor sinners who are driven out of every other.

But who is this eternal God? He is the great and glorious Jehovah, eternal in his Trinity of Persons, and in the Unity of his Essence. As such, the Father is the eternal Father, the Son is the eternal Son, and the Spirit is the eternal Spirit; and these three eternal persons in a glorious Trinity form one eternal God. Must it not needs be so? Can one of the Persons in the Trinity be eternal and another not eternal also? How weak then, how more than weak, how wicked to own an eternal Father, and an eternal Spirit, and to deny and disown an eternal Son. What dishonour is thereby cast upon the glorious Person of the Son of the Father in truth and love, and how the Trinity itself is riven asunder and made no longer a Trinity of three co-equal, co-eternal Persons in one eternal, undivided Essence.

But what a depth of blessedness there is in this God being an eternal God; and that in and of this eternity, each Person of the Godhead has an equal share. Look at the *love* of the eternal God. How eternal was that—not a thing of time, not fixed upon us when first brought into being, not issuing out of his bosom first when we were quickened into divine life; but a love from all eternity, as being the love of an eternal God. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." And how eternal are the thoughts of God—those *thoughts* which were of good, not of evil. They were eternal thoughts of peace to the Church; eternal thoughts of mercy to his beloved family; eternal thoughts of manifesting his grace in the Person and work of his dear Son; eternal flowings forth of goodness and love to those whom he had chosen in Christ, that they might be one with him, members of that glorious body of which his dear Son should be the Head. And eternal *purpose* also that nothing could defeat, that all the waves of time could not break through; eternal *wisdom* also to devise, and eternal *power* to accomplish. O this eternal God! We look back into eternity; we see what God was from all eternity; and then we look forward to what he will be to all eternity. And we see him unchanging and unchangeable, resting in his love without variableness or the shadow of a turn, whether in eternity past, or in eternity to come.

We think of the spirits of just men made perfect; we follow in faith and hope the souls of our dear departed friends; we view their drinking the pleasures which are at his right hand for ever; and so they will be there to all eternity, ever basking in the smiles of an eternal God, ever living in his favour, ever conformed to the glorious image of his eternal Son, and ever drinking fresh draughts of love and bliss in his eternal presence. O this eternal Father in the depths of his fatherly love in the gift of his dear Son! O the love, condescension, and tenderness of this eternal Son in the depths of his mercy and grace in suffering, bleeding, and dying for poor guilty sinners! O the wisdom, the power, the grace, and the blessedness of this eternal Spirit, in taking of the things of Christ, unfolding the Person of Jesus, bringing him near, revealing him to the soul, sprinkling the conscience with his blood, and making him known and precious! What a depth of gratitude is everlastingly due from the redeemed church of God, to all the three sacred Persons of the glorious and undivided Trinity, and that both in his Trinity of Persons and his Unity of Essence the eternal God should be their refuge!

Now, poor sinner, upon whose head the beams of a fiery law are darting; now, poor sinner, distressed in thy mind, guilty in thy conscience, plagued with a thousand temptations, beset by innumerable doubts and fears: canst thou not look up a little out of thy gloom and sadness, and see that the eternal God is thy refuge? Dost thou not cleave to him with the utmost of thy power, as being beaten out of every other? Hast thou not taken hold of his strength that thou mayest make peace with him? Art thou not looking to him? And does he not say: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?" He bids thee look at him as Moses bade the Israelites look to the brazen serpent. Poor sinner, groaning under the weight of thy transgression, he bids thee look to him. Has the blessed Lord, he into whose lips grace was poured, not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" Why should you not look? Why should you not come to him? Will he cast you out? Do you not feel the secret drawings of his grace, movements upon your heart which make you come often with strong crying and tears, with groans and sighs,

earnest, vehement, and continual supplications? What are these but the inward teachings of God? as our Lord said, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45.) And do you not know that the Lord himself said, that no man can come to him except the Father which hath sent him draw him? These comings, therefore, of thy soul in earnest and vehement desire are, according to his own testimony, from the special teachings and gracious drawings of God in thee. Having made his dear Son to be the refuge of thy soul, he is now drawing thee unto him that thou mayest find pardon and peace in him. But perhaps you will say, "I am so sinful, so guilty, I have been such a sinner, much worse than you can form any conception of; and it is this which sinks me low." Art thou lower than brother Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and, in his own feelings, in the belly of hell? And yet what said he? "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." Canst thou not look again toward the holy temple? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? So David felt and feared, but it was not so, for "his mercy endureth for ever;" and that is a long and strong word. Look and live, look and live! What! Hast thou no eyes to see the suitability of Jesus? No eyes to see the glorious Person of the Son of God? No eyes to see his bleeding wounds? No eyes to see his dying love, no eyes to see his power to save, no eyes to see what he has done for others, and what he can do for thee if he has not done it yet? "The eternal God is thy refuge."

ii. But I must not linger here. I must go on to the other statement, equally full of Gospel truth, if I am able to unfold it: "*And underneath are the everlasting arms.*" How Moses brought before the people the eternity of God. He will have nothing to do with time. What is time? A fragment, merely like the foam of the sea compared with the mighty ocean. The ocean is eternity; time is merely the foam upon the wave. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." And depend upon it, if the everlasting arms are underneath the saints of God—for it is of and to them that the words are spoken,—they are there for some purpose. Let us see if we can find some of those purposes for which these everlasting

arms are underneath them.

1. You are *burdened with sin*. Guilt lies hard and heavy upon your conscience; you feel what a wretch you are and have been; you sink at times very low in your soul under the weight of your iniquities and backslidings, in thought, word, and deed; you want something to support your troubled mind, and relieve your anxious heart from it. Now, this very burden under which you sink so low, is laid upon your conscience for an express purpose. God has laid everlasting arms underneath your tried, condemned, and guilty soul, that your very guilt may bring you down upon them. You would not want, still less, would not prize everlasting arms spread beneath you, unless your guilt pressed down your soul so heavily as to make you sink down into them and fall upon them with your whole weight. Few sink low enough to feel the everlasting arms underneath. They have still some strength left of their own; they are not thoroughly helpless; they cannot bear the thought of ever sinking, sinking, sinking, as if they would sink to where there was no bottom, or as if nothing were beneath them but the very pit of hell. They do not know, they do not feel, that everlasting arms are spread beneath to catch them, so to speak, before they fall, and bear them up, even as on eagle's wings. They, therefore, try to struggle out of them, like a timorous child that cannot trust its mother to hold it up. They don't see they must sink low, very low, to fall upon the everlasting arms. They are like a person who cannot swim, that has fallen into a river, and who is often drowned by his struggles in the water, and his very trying to save himself. How often it has happened, that a drowning man has defeated the attempt to save him, by struggling with his deliverer, who could have borne him easily to the shore if he were but passive. His rescuer has, therefore, to sometimes wait till the man has nearly gone, that when his struggles have ceased, then he may lay his strong arms beneath him, and bear him safe to land. Is it not better that he should passively fall into the arms of the strong swimmer, who has gone in to his rescue, than lose his life by struggling to save himself? Of course, this is but a figure, and therefore you will not press it too far, or surmise from it, that I think any saint of God

can perish. But do you not find, if you carefully examine the movements of your own heart that you are still struggling in some strength of your own; that you have not given up all your own righteousness, or some lurking hope of gaining the favour of God by your prayers and supplications, and thus are really making good works out of them? If so, like a drowning man struggling in the water, you are wasting your strength by your attempts to swim, and, perhaps, drinking in the water that may drown you. Sink, sink, sink, and then you will find the everlasting arms underneath.

2. But again, you have *many afflictions*. "O," you think, "there never was a poor wretch like me. Wave upon wave, billow upon billow roll over me. Sometimes trials in providence, then trials in my family, then trials in my soul; trials with the children of God, trials with the men of the world; and my poor body often as much afflicted as my soul. Painful days, and sleepless nights seem allotted to me, and such a sense of bodily weakness and exhaustion as I cannot describe, making every little exertion a difficulty and a burden. Was there ever such a poor, afflicted creature as I?" You want the everlasting arms underneath. What else can support you under your distressing afflictions? What else can bear you up under your severe and cutting trials? You are looking sometimes to this or that friend, this or that Christian brother or sister to get some help from them. But what can man do for you? Let man try it. Are man's arms everlasting arms? Are *your* arms everlasting arms? Who has everlasting arms but the eternal God? And why should the everlasting arms be underneath unless there were afflictions to bring you down upon them? God puts affliction upon affliction to bring the soul down, that it may fall into and upon the everlasting arms, and find how firm and strong they are. And have you not often found it so? Do not lie against your right. How many trials in Providence you have been brought through. How conspicuously the Lord has appeared in this and that instance, so that your unbelief and infidelity were, for the time at least, thoroughly silenced, and faith saw the hand of God so clearly that you felt as if you could never doubt again. Have you not had many sweet supports on your bed of

languishing, many precious seasons when you could bless God for laying upon you his afflicting hand? And have you not found that strength was always given to you according to your day, that with every trial power was given you to bear it, and that out of your deepest afflictions came your greatest blessings? Why are you not in hell? Do you not deserve to be there? Why still upon praying ground, with a good hope through grace, and your soul waiting for the Lord to appear, more than those that watch for the morning? If these arms have once supported you, will they not support you again? Would they be everlasting if they could part asunder and let you fall through? Rest upon them and you will find how strong they are.

3. But you say, "I have so *many temptations*." Well, do you expect to go to heaven without temptation? What does James say upon this point? "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." "Aye, but my temptations are so peculiar." You may think so, but do we not read that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man?" And do we not also read, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it?" (1 Cor.10:13.) "Ah, but I am so peculiar." Well, then, you are one of those peculiar people who think, and feel, and are different from every body else. "I cannot tell any body what my temptations are." It is good you cannot, but you can tell God. Was not the Lord tempted on all points like as we are, yet without sin? Don't speak, then, as if your temptations are so peculiar that nobody else was tempted like you. The blessed Lord was. But this is the grand point: do your temptations bring you down upon the everlasting arms? Can you grapple with your temptations yourself? "No," say you, "I cannot." Well, then, your temptations bring you down upon the everlasting arms, and these arms will support you under them and bring you through them.

4. But there is a day to come upon us all; a day in which we shall specially need the everlasting arms to be underneath; and that is a *bed of death*. It may be a bed of languishing, a bed of long and

painful illness, when the poor body may be racked with torture, or brought down to such a state of weakness and suffering, that life itself shall be a burden. Perhaps, too, it may be a season of much darkness of mind, though we would not anticipate unknown evils, and God may be better to us than all our fears. But shall we not want, if we never really felt our want before, everlasting arms underneath both body and soul in that day? A languishing body, a sinking soul, a holy God above, and a conscience naked and open before his eye, death in sight, eternity in prospect—shall we not, then, want everlasting arms to bear us up through the dark valley and land us safe through Jordan on the happy shore? How many of our dear friends have found upon dying beds everlasting arms! How these everlasting arms were so sensibly spread underneath their afflicted bodies and their believing hearts, that they could die in peace, with a sweet testimony of pardoned sin, and that their souls were going to glory. What could human arms do for them then? The soft arms of wife, the strong arms of husband, the tender arms of mother, or the kind arms of friends, what could those arms do for them, vitally and spiritually, when they lay upon their dying pillow? But underneath them were the everlasting arms, and those arms held them up and bore them through, and landed them safely in eternal bliss.

III.—But I must pass on to the *promise*: "*And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee.*" This was true literally of the Canaanites and other nations whom God thrust out before his people; and what he promised to do for them (and did accomplish in a literal and temporal sense), he has promised to do for us, spiritually, and will do it as effectually, who have succeeded by faith into their place.

i. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." You will often hear people of a murmuring, fretful, repining spirit, of whom, alas! there are too many in the Church of God, continually complaining "I have so many enemies." No doubt you have your enemies, and so we have all. It is one of our evidences that we are on the Lord's side, if we are hated of all men for his namesake. But I will tell you where you have an enemy, and a

greater enemy than ever you have found yet in man or woman: *yourself*. I have said what I have often felt, that I could do myself more harm in five minutes than all my enemies could do me in fifty years. I have had many enemies: do I care for them? Not a whit. Have they hurt me? You, who have known me so many years, know whether they have hurt me or not. Where are all the books that have been written against me? Sunk and forgotten, and their authors either mostly dead, or sorry and ashamed that they ever wrote them. Of course my flesh has felt their cruel sayings and hard speeches, but I have never really felt anything which they have said or written, unless it touched my conscience, and I had deserved it. I desire not to fear my enemies, but to fear God, to fear myself. I don't fear enemies unless I give them reason. If I myself tip the arrow with a feather from my own wing, I may well fear my enemies; but if I give no real ground of attack to my enemies, I need not fear what they may do or say. I fear myself more than them all, knowing what I am as a sinner, the strength of sin and the power of temptation. But be sure of this, that you are the worst enemy you ever had; and you, that know your hearts, know it to be so. Well, therefore, has the Lord said in the text, "the enemy," instead of "the enemies." Thy sin, thy lust, thy covetousness, thy pride, thy self-righteousness, everything in thee that works against God and godliness—this is "the enemy" which God has promised to thrust out from before thee. You observed, perhaps, in the chapter which I read this morning (Deut. 7) that the Lord promised to put out the nations before Israel "by little, and little" (verse 22.) It was not all done at once; and we have a remarkable reason given in the book of Judges, why so many enemies were left. It was "to prove Israel by them; even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan, that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least, such as before knew nothing thereof." (Judges 3:1, 2.) Thus, there were two reasons why these enemies were left in Canaan: 1, to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and 2, to teach them how to fight. The Lord has, therefore, left this enemy in our heart, for the same two wise reasons; but he will thrust him out, little by little, so that he shall

not have dominion over us. Once he was in full possession, held sovereign dominion of all our heart and affections. The strong man kept his palace, and his goods were at peace. But a stronger than he came, dispossessed him, turned him out, and divided his spoils. And the strong man armed has not possession of the palace of the Son of God now. But still he knocks at the door, peeps in at the window, and would creep in at the cellar hole, unless kept out by the mighty power of God. But God has promised to thrust him out; that Esau shall have no portion with Jacob; that the Canaanite shall not be for ever in the house of the Lord of Hosts. And every token for good, every sweet evidence, every visitation of the Lord's mercy and goodness, is a thrusting out of the enemy of our souls.

But observe, also, that it shall be "*from before thee.*" Thou shalt see that God himself has done it. He will make it manifest before thine eyes and in thy conscience that he is thrusting out the enemy. He will make thee first feel that he is an enemy. Thou shalt see something of his accursed designs; how sin has deceived you, betrayed you, brought guilt upon your conscience; how God, in consequence, has hidden his face, and made you a burden to yourself. You shall be brought to feel, and say, "There is nothing I hate so much as my own vile heart, my own dreadfully corrupt nature. O what an enemy do I carry in my own bosom. Of all my enemies, he is surely the worst; of all my foes, he is the most subtle and strong." Now, as you feel these things, God is thrusting out this enemy from before thee. He shows you his hideous face beneath his fair mask, manifests his plots, discovers his contrivances; and as he does this by his Spirit and grace, there is a thrusting out this enemy that he may not dwell in thy heart in power.

IV.—But there goes together with this sweet and blessed promise, a solemn *charge*, which is closely connected with it: "And shall say, Destroy them." God takes us, so to speak, into partnership with himself in this matter; to enlists us on his side, puts weapons into our hand, and bids us go forth in his strength to make use of them, and so do his work. As Moses bade the

Levites arm themselves against their brethren and slay every man his friend and companion; so God the Spirit puts into our hands the weapons whereby we are made willing to destroy these enemies, though they are our own flesh and blood, and a very part of ourselves. And why are we willing to do this work, and smite them hip and thigh, and if we could, would destroy their very life? Because they have been and are such a plague to us; because they have wrought in our heart such havoc; and because we have found and felt them to be enemies of God and man. Now have you not sometimes felt in your soul as though you could take your lusts by the neck and dash their heads against a stone? Have you not felt you could, if possible, take out of your breast this vile, damnable heart, lay it upon the ground, and stamp upon it? And when tempted with pride, or unbelief, or infidelity, or blasphemy, or any hateful lust, how you have cried out again and again with anguish of spirit, "O this heart of mine!" Upon your knees some blasphemous thought has rushed in; in reading the Scriptures some infidel suggestion has darted into your soul whether it is the inspired word of God; in talking to a friend, some loose desire has crossed your mind; some vile thought, only fit for the worst purlieus of sin, or a cell in Newgate. "O," you say, "was there ever a heart like mine? O that I could take it out of my bosom, and have no more to do with it. I would be holy in body and soul; but O this heart of mine, it has no more holiness in it by nature, than the very devil himself." Now this makes you understand the charge: "Destroy them." God says, as it were, "Take my weapons into your own hands, and execute vengeance upon your sins, that I may see your sincerity; not sparing one of them, as Saul spared Agag, but hewing them all down, without pity or mercy." Now, when we hate them, when we would, if possible, have no more to do with them, and can say to this lust, idol, or temptation, "O thou filthy creature, What an enemy thou art to my soul; O that I could for ever have done with thee," here you are doing what God commands. "Destroy them," God says; "This is what I charge you to do." But if you are indulging your lusts, feeding your pride, gratifying your covetousness, seeking how to satisfy every base desire,—are you fulfilling the charge, "Destroy them?" You never will fulfil that charge till you learn

what an enemy sin is in itself, and what an enemy it has been personally to you. But when you have suffered, groaned, sighed, cried, loathed yourself in dust and ashes, and wondered at the long-suffering of God, that hell is not now your place, then he gives strength and grace, and you are made willing that these lusts of yours should be destroyed. This indeed will not be accomplished till death, for only

"Death that puts an end to life  
Will put an end to sin."

But let us now see, by way of conclusion, how the whole text harmonises, and how we have in it a description of the work of grace from first to last. First, we have the poor sinner without a refuge, brought to see that without a shelter for his guilty head he must perish under the wrath of God. The eternal God opens his arms as his refuge; he flees to that refuge: "I flee unto thee to hide me." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe." The eternal God becomes his refuge. He is led up and down this world; trials, temptations, and afflictions are his portion here below. Now come "the everlasting arms" to bear him up. Grace still goes on with its blessed work. He finds the enemy strong within. God fulfils the promise to thrust him out. And then, as he gets further on in the blessed things of God, he feels more and more a holy indignation against himself, a solemn vengeance upon his cruel sins, and he is made willing to take them in his own hands, if power were given him, and to dash them against the stones. And then he fulfils the charge: "Destroy them."

Thus the words take in the work of grace from first to last, are a sweet epitome of the dealings of God with the soul, and lead our thoughts to the eternal God as our refuge, to see what this God is in himself, what this God has promised, and what this God will surely perform.

## **ETERNAL LIFE A GRACE AND A GIFT**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, June 26th, 1859

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17:2,3

The high priest under the law was a type and figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest over the house of God, and as such he had two main offices to perform: first, to offer sacrifice; secondly, to make intercession for the people. These two acts were not indeed confined to the high priest, for they were necessarily connected with the priestly office, and therefore existed before the law was given from Mount Sinai. We see this very clearly in the case of Job, who lived before the institution of the Levitical priesthood, in that patriarchal period when each man was a priest in his own family. In the opening chapter of the book of Job, we find him offering for his children burnt offerings "according to the number of them all;" for he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." (Job 1:5) Here we see the patriarchal priest in the act of offering sacrifice. But in the closing chapter we see him performing the second act of the priestly office—intercession, for the Lord gave an express command that Job should intercede for his friends by praying for them:—"Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept." (Job 42:8) Thus daily in the service of the tabernacle not only was a lamb offered morning and evening by the ordinary priests, but incense was also burnt by them morning and evening in the holy place, as we see from the instance of Zacharias; (Luke 1:8,9) for as the offering of the lamb was the perpetual daily sacrifice, so the burning of incense was the daily standing intercession. But though both these acts were

necessary parts of the priestly office, yet they were peculiarly so those of the high priest, who differed from his brethren not merely in superiority of rank and dignity, but by offering sacrifice and intercession on a day, the great day of atonement, and in a manner, by taking the blood with the incense into the most holy place, which they were not suffered to do. Now Jesus, as the great and glorious antitype, being made of God a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, fulfilled both these two offices of the high priest. The first and main branch of the priestly office he executed here below, when upon the cross at Calvary he offered the sacrifice of his spotless humanity—the sacred blood of his pure body and the meritorious suffering of his holy soul. Combining in himself all types, he was at once the offerer and the offering, the sacrificer and the sacrifice, the high priest and the slaughtered lamb, as we read: "For such a high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself;" (Heb. 7:26,27) and again, "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9:26) This sacrifice of himself had in the sight of God an infinite efficacy to put away sin, for it was the blood of the Son of God, and had therefore in it and on it all the value and validity of Deity. This sacrifice he offered "once for all," and therefore never to be repeated here upon earth, when he suffered, bled, and died on the cross. The other act of the priestly office, to make intercession for the people, he now executes in heaven in the very presence of God. As the apostle speaks—"But this man, because he continueth ever," that is, ever at the right hand of God, "hath an unchangeable priesthood;" or rather as we read in the margin, one "which passeth not from one to another," as was the case of the Levitical high priests, "who were not suffered to continue by reason of death;" being poor dying men out of whose hands the office was ever dropping. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:24,25) Again, as we read in that noble challenge of the apostle,

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34)

These two offices of the high priest were intimately connected; in fact, the latter was but a branch, a kind of continuation, of the former. Two striking instances will I think clearly show you the connection of these two parts of the priestly office. When the high priest went into the tabernacle on the great day of atonement, he took live coals from off the brazen altar, wherewith he filled a censer; and as he went into the most holy place with the blood of the bullock he sprinkled upon the burning coals incense beaten small, the fragrance of which filled as with a cloud of smoke the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant was. Two acts of the Lord Jesus Christ as our high priest were typified thereby. The burning coals taken from the brazen altar typified the offering which he made for sin, for on the brazen altar all the sacrifices were burnt; and the incense beaten small and lighted by the burning coals, and then taken within the veil into the most holy place, typified his intercession now in the presence of God, it deriving its chief fragrance from the sacrifice of himself. The other instance is that of Aaron making an atonement for the people by putting incense on a censer filled with coals from off the altar. (Num. 16:45,47) Then we see the same connection between the coals from off the altar and the incense rising up and propitiating the wrath of God. Strictly speaking, then, the second branch of the priestly office of our most blessed Lord commenced when he ascended up on high and entered within the veil there to carry the efficacy of his blood into the presence of God for us, and fill heaven with the incense of his all-prevailing intercession. But Jesus anticipated, so to speak, that part of the priestly office in the prayer before us. That, viewing the end from the beginning, he did sometimes anticipate the end of his own work is plain from an expression in this very prayer, where he says—"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4) The work was not then really finished, for the sacrifice had not then been offered, as when he spoke with expiring lips—"It is finished;" yet in anticipation he speaks of it as already finished,

for it was so in his mind's eye, and he was fast nearing the end and object of his sojourn here below. So in anticipation of the second branch of the priestly office which was really to be carried on in heaven, even whilst upon earth he offered as an interceding high priest, for his disciples and all his future saints the prayer recorded in that holy, that sublime, that touching chapter, John 17. Not that the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father now offers vocal prayer as he did when upon earth. But as in the case of the high priest on the day of atonement, the incense filled the house; so, rising up from the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon Calvary's tree, the incense of his mediation, without vocal intercessory prayer, fills the courts of heaven, and thus he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Having just dropped these preliminary remarks, I shall now, with God's blessing, open up my text; and in so doing, I shall, as the Lord enable, speak chiefly upon three points:—

**I.** First, the power which God has given Jesus over all flesh.

**II.** Secondly, the object wherefore God has given him this power; that he might give eternal life to as many as God has given him.

**III.** Thirdly, the nature of the eternal life which he gives to those whom God has given him: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

**I.** When Jesus rose from the dead, ascended on high, and took his seat on the right hand of the Father, all power was given to him in heaven and on earth as a reward of his obedience, and as the inheritance promised him before the foundation of the world—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. 2:8) He therefore said to his disciples before the ascension—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." God, so to speak put the reins of government into his hand, made him his vicegerent, constituted him supreme Lord of all things,

and gave him power over all persons, circumstances, and events in heaven and earth, so that nothing should be done without his controlling direction, or as regulated by his sovereign will. Now when we can see this by the eye of faith, it carries our minds up into the very courts of heaven to view our nature there united to the person of the Son of God. We thus behold the honor put upon humanity, the glory wherewith flesh and blood is invested in the person of the Son of God; for he always lay in the bosom of the Father as his eternal Son. But viewing him as God-Man, Immanuel God with us, as having united to his glorious person as the Son of God a nature like our own, actual flesh and blood, though glorified beyond all conception, brighter than the rays of a million suns, and filling heaven with unspeakable glory; though it be all this, still we see that it is human nature in conjunction with the person of the Son of God, on which the Father has conferred such dignity and glory. We see, then, his beauty and blessedness not simply as the Son of God, such as he was in the courts of heaven before his incarnation, but as the very same Jesus whose feet toiled in this vale of tears; the very same whose lips spake the blessed words of our text; the very same who groaned in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and sweat great drops of blood from his overcharged brow; the very same whom the apostles saw rise up in a cloud when he was received out of their sight; the same sympathizing, merciful, and faithful high priest who lives and rules and reigns at God's right hand, and has had power given him "over all flesh" in his character of God-Man.

**1.** In looking at the words "all flesh," we may view them thus: first, as comprehending men generally, the whole human race, irrespective of their state before God as sinners or saints. Power is given to him over all flesh; therefore, over the ungodly as well as the godly; over kings, queens, emperors, and princes, as well as men of all sorts, ranks, and conditions. Well nigh every day brings us tidings of fearful events now taking place in foreign lands, and of fields being watered by human blood. But if power is given to Jesus over all flesh, not a man in either of the hostile armies can raise a musket, wield a sword, or draw a trigger except by the permission or the providence of the Son of God. We

may well, then, lie passive in his hand, and bow down in quiet submission before him, as believing that all these events are under his control and working out his own counsels for the church's good and his own glory.

**2.** But if power is given to Jesus over all flesh, we may a little extend the term to include all the thoughts of the flesh, however numerous; all the counsels of the flesh, however deep or subtle; all the works of the flesh, however multiplied or various. There is not a thought in any man's heart, nor a word in any man's lips, nor a secret counsel in any man's mind, nor an action performed by any man's hands, over which Jesus has not a supreme controlling power. Were it not so, the world could not be habitable. Did he not restrain by his providence the crooked wills of men, did he not put a hook in their jaw, men like wild beasts, would tear each other to pieces. Earth would be an Aceldama, a field of violence. But the Lord reigneth, and though the floods lift up their voices, yet the Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. (Ps. 93:3,4) Could we, then, by the eye of faith view how all events and circumstances are under the guidance of infinite wisdom and almighty power, and that the Son of God holds in his hands the reins of government, we should look around upon human events as we might stand upon a lofty hill and gaze upon the landscape around us—as free from harassing doubt and fear as to the ultimate issue of present events as at seeing sheep and cattle moving in the fields, or a railway train rushing along in the distant prospect. It is because we do not carry in our bosom a prevailing faith that Christ has power over all flesh, that we are so tossed up and down by external circumstances. Thinking that the Lord cannot or will not manage our affairs, or the affairs of others in which we are interested, our mind is racked by a thousand apprehensions and a thousand anxious fears as to what the coming morrow may bring forth. But Jesus has "power over all flesh." And so over the flesh of all the saints of God as of all the enemies of God; over the workings of our rebellious flesh, over the desires of our covetous flesh, over the conceits of our proud flesh, and over the lusts of our sinful flesh. He has power

over them all, for he has power over all flesh. Then how good it would be if the saint of God, looking up with a believing eye to the Son of God as having power over all flesh, would lay before him all that he suffers in and from the flesh, would bring before him all his trials as still in the flesh, spread before him all the accusations of law and conscience, tell him all his troubles as bound down by a body of sin and death, pour out before him all his complaints, and beg of him to take all that concerneth him into his own hands, and guide and direct it according to the council of his own will. If we, for instance, should have committed any of our worldly affairs into the hands of a person, from his integrity and ability, fully able to manage them, need we be always interfering with him? You may have some very difficult matter in business, or some very perplexing point in law, where you need the ablest advice, and not knowing yourself how to act for the best, you consult a friend, faithful and wise, or put the whole case before the best counsel that can be obtained. Having put the matter into his hands, why cannot you leave it there, without further doubt or fear? By putting it in his hands, you have to a certain extent relieved your own: you have given it into his charge, because you believe he can manage the matter better than you, or better than anyone else. Now stay quietly at home and let your friend or your lawyer act: he has taken the matter in hand, let him carry it out, if you believe that he has skill and power to do so, and if you can fully rest in his integrity and faithfulness. So it should be with a believer and his Lord. When once he has committed his body and soul, family, property, and all matters temporal and spiritual, for life and death, for time and eternity, into the hands of him who is able to manage them all with the greatest wisdom, power, and faithfulness, he should then quietly and believingly leave the Lord to work. Does not he himself say, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass?" (Ps. 37:5) This was Paul's blessed confidence: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12) After, then, you have once unfeignedly and unreservedly, in the actings

of a living faith, committed yourself and all that concerns you into the hands of your heavenly Friend, then to be ever tossed up and down upon a sea of uncertainty, wondering how the matter will end, how disparaging is all this to the wisdom, the love, and the power of him whom God has set at his own right hand as the supreme Ruler of all persons and the sovereign Disposer of all circumstances.

**II.** But, to pass on to our second point, the Lord here expressly tells us why power was given to him over all flesh: that he "should give eternal life to as many as God had given him:" not then to save all flesh, nor to sanctify all flesh, nor to bring all who were at that time, or should be hereafter, clothed with flesh, into the enjoyment of heavenly bliss. No such words as these, or any inference to be drawn from them, ever escaped the Lord's lips. Why then should we thrust into the Lord's mouth words he never uttered? Why place in the Book of God thoughts and plans, doctrines and views, that the Holy Ghost never revealed, and which have no place or part, room or seat, in the bosom of Jehovah? It seems to me, that apart from the light of divine teaching and the work of God upon the soul in conviction and consolation, a man who can merely read, who has his eyes in his head, and possesses sufficient intellect to understand what words put together mean, could not read a sentence like this and not believe that a people was given to Jesus Christ, and that he gives eternal life unto them. We have no mysterious language here to require a skilled interpreter to explain its meaning, no dark parables or intricate expressions, demanding the aid of schools of learning and professors of divinity to unravel their hidden signification. All is so plain that "he who runs may read." Language itself could not be framed to express with greater perspicuity or greater simplicity the solemn fact that there is a people whom God has given to Jesus, and that to them Jesus gives eternal life.

**1.** But in those two simple declarations, how much is wrapped up! Take the first: that there is a people that God had given to Christ. Surely, God acted as a Sovereign in giving that people to his dear

Son. The gift has no control over the will of the giver. Be it much or be it little, of great or inconsiderable value, the present passes from the hand of the giver to that of the receiver, without the gift itself having any voice or authority in the transfer. Apply this to the gift of a peculiar people to Christ by the Father before all worlds. Were you there on that solemn occasion? Was any human being present in those mysterious counsels? Did angels themselves intrude into the presence of the holy Trinity, to suggest persons and whisper their desire that certain friends might have an interest in those eternal decrees, and that their names might be written down in the book of life? Surely, in those eternal counsels, in those solemn covenant transactions between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the eternal Three-in-one perfectly knew their own mind and acted in the fullest union with each other; for in the glorious Trinity there is no division of sentiment, no disunion of will. As they are One in essence, power, and glory, so are they One in mind, will, and counsel. Thus in those solemn transactions, a people was given into the hands of the Son of God, a people that no man can number, a people exceeding in multitude the stars in the midnight sky or the sands upon the sea-shore, a people of every tongue, and land, and nation, and age, and clime. Why God chose this particular individual and why he did not choose that, are matters into which we cannot penetrate; they are deep mysteries which exceed a finite intellect: our wisdom in the contemplation of such inscrutable mysteries is to be mute, for "secret things belong unto God." We believe them as we believe other matters of divine revelation, because God has revealed them. This people, then, of whom the Lord here speaks, were given him that they might be members of his mystical body; the bride and spouse of the Lamb; the inheritance of the Son of God, in which he should take eternal delight. He received them from the Father's hand with the same love with which they were given, for he and the Father are one; so that he could say to him in all the meekness of filial love, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6,10) Nor did he love them less, nor did he love them more, than the Father loved them; but he had a peculiar joy and

supreme delight in them as the special jewels of his mediatorial crown, and the promised reward of the travail of his soul.

Now the question for you and me to ask ourselves is, "Do I, do you, belong to this happy number?" If there be a people given to Jesus—and how can we doubt that solemn fact when it was so expressly declared by the lips of him who cannot lie?—May I not well ask myself, "Have I any evidence in my bosom that I belong to that people?" I was not present in those eternal counsels; I have never mounted up to heaven to read my name in the book of life, and no angel has ever brought it down and opened the scroll before my wondering, gladdened eyes. How, then, am I to know whether I be one of that favored number which the Father gave to the Son? As I cannot know it by any external revelation, it must be by some internal testimony or by some evidence of God's own communicating on which I can rely in life and death, for it will not do to venture into eternity without some knowledge whither my soul is going. The main evidence of belonging to this people, and which enfolds in its bosom every other, is the present possession of spiritual life, what the Lord calls in our text "eternal life;" for though born in time it lives to all eternity. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Let us pause over these words, for they are full of truth and blessedness. Eternal life is the gift of Jesus, and is given by him to as many as God gave unto him. If given, it must be received, or it would be no gift; and it is given and received as a present grace. This is the point I am aiming at, to show you that eternal life is a gift and a grace, and that it is the peculiar mark and distinctive possession of the people given to Christ. If our text does not mean this, I am at a loss to understand, much more to explain it. I do not wrest a sense out of it which it will not bear, to suit any peculiar views of my own. I merely, as a faithful interpreter of God's word, open it up as I see it in the light of the Spirit. I can do no less; I do not wish to do more. Bear then in mind these three points, that eternal life is the distinctive privilege and the peculiar mark of Christ's people; that it is Christ's special gift to them; and that in this time state it is a spiritual grace. We may perhaps now be better prepared to

answer that momentous question—"Am I one of those who were given to Christ?" What is the answer? It lies in this. Has spiritual life been given to me? If so, I have Christ's own testimony that I am one of those who in eternity were given to him. But when was that spiritual life given? On that day, in that hour, when God the Spirit was first pleased to communicate divine life to my soul, and raise it up from its death in sin or death in profession, and so make it alive unto God. But if given, it could not have been merited, earned, deserved, or worked for. Surely gift excludes merit; as grace, in the language of the apostle, excludes works, so the very nature of a gift excludes purchase, and lifts it beyond the domain of all mercenary bargains, all laborious earnings. Were there no other proof, the universal experience of all God's living family would amply prove this. Take the whole range of God's children, interrogate them first and last, and say to them, one by one, "Did you merit the grace of God? Was there anything in your life, anything in your heart, anything in your lips, before you were called, so truly holy, so invariably pure, so pleasing in God's sight, as to merit his grace?" Every child of God, whose heart and conscience have been made tender in his fear, would answer in a moment, "No; for whatever I might have been in the sight of others as moral and religious, I certainly was in myself the farthest off of all from God and godliness. If I was not an open sinner, I committed sin in secret; if my life was not outwardly vile, my mind was full of pride and worldliness, and my lips of vanity and folly; if I was not altogether abandoned to gross licentiousness, my heart was as a cage of unclean birds. I had no true fear of God, no real love to him, no sure hope in his mercy. My religion was almost my worst feature, for I was a Pharisee, building up a Babel of good works, trying to climb to heaven on a ladder of duties, and reckoning God my debtor for the poorest acts of mere legal, external, and I now see hypocritical service." I have purposely taken the best case that, according to man's judgment, could present itself, for no one would say that a life of open sin deserved eternal life, though a more favorable verdict might be given to a moral and upright one. Thus every saint, whatever he was before effectual calling, moral or immoral, religious or profane, carries in his own bosom an infallible witness

that he did not by any merit of his own obtain so unspeakable a gift as eternal life; but that it was freely given him only for this reason, that he belonged to Christ. Besides which, if we compare the thing given with any conceivable degree of human merit, assuming that there could be such a thing; as, for instance, that you had lived for a few years the life of an angel—that there was no corruption inherent in your very nature—that your lips had never spoken folly, your heart never conceived iniquity, your hands never practiced any deed of sin—assuming that it were possible for you to have lived a life for many years in a way as pleasing to God as angels please him, could even all this merit such a blessing as eternal life? Must there not be always a proportion between what is bought and what is paid? If eternal life could be bought, what equivalent sum could be offered for it? What price could be paid at all adequate to an eternity of bliss? But when we put into the balance what man is as a sinner by nature and practice, then to presume to proffer a few paltry deeds, which men call good works, a few duly muttered prayers, a few shillings dropped into a charity plate, a regular observance of private and public worship, an unflinching sacramental attendance, a due keeping of feasts and fasts, when the heart is really absorbed in sin and folly,—to lay these poor miserable performances down before the throne of a holy God as so many meritorious acts, and say, "I have done my duty, regularly attended church or chapel, and now I want to be paid: give me heaven; give me eternal life; give me bliss unspeakable; give me that which will ravish my heart through endless ages:"—common sense revolts at the idea of a poor fallen sinner using such language and attempting to drive such a bargain with God for heaven. I appeal to you if it is not insulting to God, mocking the Majesty of heaven, to tell him in heart if not in lip that a few good works can merit eternal life. I have purposely used strong language to show you what human merit and what human presumption are in all their naked deformity. Heaven is not to be bought, eternal life is not to be earned. It is granted or is withheld; it is a free gift, or it is never received at all. But is not merit in some shape the language of a thousand pulpits? May I not say of all that do not proclaim aloud in the language of the

apostle, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?" (Rom. 6:23) Remember, then, there must be no compromise; no mixture of grace and works; no Christ doing his part and we doing ours. To be a gift it must be sovereign, or the creature could defeat it; free, or man could merit it; irrevocable, or God could recall it; eternal, or death and hell could destroy it.

Sweet, then, it is to look up with a believing eye, and see power given to Jesus over all flesh; and for this express object, that he should give eternal life to as many as God has given him. As such we see him installed in glory at the right hand of the Father, and the reins of government put into his sacred hands that he may from the courts of bliss, from time to time, send his Holy Spirit down to quicken into spiritual and eternal life the members of his mystical body.

How encouraging is it to his ministering servants to see him at the right hand of God blessing their labors; how encouraging to hearers to pray for the manifest communication of that divine life to themselves and others; how encouraging to the drooping to seek for a revival; to the backslider in heart for a gracious restoration; to the mourner in Zion for a word of consolation; and to all who believe in the Son of God for fresh visitations of his grace to their souls that they may enjoy more of his presence, walk more in his fear, and live more to his glory.

**III.** But this leads me to show the nature of the eternal life spoken of in the text; for the blessed Lord, in condescension to our ignorance and many infirmities, has not left us in the dark as to what it really is, and in what it essentially consists. But for this gracious intimation from his own lips, we might have formed very strange and very erroneous conceptions both as to its nature and its end. Groping in ignorance of its real character, we might have pictured to ourselves a Mahometan paradise, or, as the wild untutored heathen, have dreamt of carrying out in heaven the pursuits followed upon earth. Or we might have pictured to ourselves a kind of Elysian fields, where a perennial Spring and eternal youth would yield such delights as now suit the

unrenewed heart; and that heaven would be but a second earth, without earth's sorrows, poverty, old age, sickness, misery, and death. Even with the Bible in their hands, the most vague and loose ideas are still entertained by thousands as to the nature of eternal life, and what is the happiness and blessedness of heaven. But all such fleshly ideas are cut down to the very root, and all such vain delusions utterly extinguished by those words from the Lord's own lips which we have now to consider.

"And this is life eternal," or, as the words might be better rendered in harmony with the original, "This is the life eternal," the life, namely, of which he had just been speaking as his own gift, "that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." How these words not merely for ever cast out all the vain imaginations of the carnal mind as to the nature of life eternal, but what a blessed ray of light they also throw upon the experience of believing souls, and what an assured evidence they give them that eternal life is even now in their bosom. The words are frequently incorrectly quoted. We hear them often uttered from the pulpit or quoted in books thus: "And this is life eternal, to know thee," etc. The words read not so as they dropped from the lips of the Holy Lamb of God, but as follows?—"And this is the life eternal, that they might know thee," etc. There is a marked difference in the two modes of expression. The words, as the Lord uttered them, are not so much an abstract definition of the nature of eternal life as something distinct from the persons who enjoy it, as an explanation of the peculiar privilege enjoyed by the people of Christ. We may now perhaps clearly see the force of the article which is suppressed in our translation, for the meaning of the words, slightly paraphrased, is, "And this is the life eternal of which he has spoken as his to give, that they who have been given to him may know thee," etc. We are thus led from the mere doctrinal view of the abstract nature of eternal life to fix our eyes upon that special people to whom it is experimentally given. For who are the "they" of whom the Lord here speaks? Those whom the Father had given to him, as the objects of his eternal love; those for whom he was about to shed his precious blood, and redeem to God by his

atonement sacrifice, sufferings, and death. He thus instructed them that this eternal life was not, as they might have dreamed, some shadowy greatness and exaltation in mansions of light, or some visionary bliss apart from the possession of grace and holiness; but that even upon earth it was given to them in the new birth; and that not only its very nature but its essential blessedness consisted in this, that they might spiritually and experimentally know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

**1.** The first branch of eternal life is, "That they might know thee the only true God." Man by nature cannot know God. He "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto." No man hath seen or can see him, for he is essentially invisible. It is true that in the days of man's primeval purity God made himself known to Adam, but only as the God of creation: he was not known before the fall as the God of redemption. But in and by the Adam-fall, this knowledge of God was almost wholly extinguished. Tradition preserved for a while some relics of this primeval knowledge of God, but it grew gradually fainter and fainter till "darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people." The very knowledge they had by tradition they perverted and abused; and yet a few inextinguishable sparks still illuminated the world. A conscience was still in man's bosom, sadly fallen, grievously defaced, but yet retaining some faint traces of the knowledge of God possessed by Adam in Paradise. But as to any spiritual knowledge of God, that none could have who were devoid of God's Spirit. The Old Testament saints had, indeed, eternal life as much as the saints of the New, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will sit down in the same kingdom with God as the disciples, for whom Christ here prayed. There can be but one eternal life, whether it dwelt in the bosom of Abraham or of John. One main branch of this eternal life, then, consists in the knowledge of the only true God. This knowledge must be communicated, or we cannot possess it. For the most part it is given thus:—"The Holy Spirit shines upon the Scriptures, for in the Scriptures God has revealed himself, and applies some quickening word to the heart, thus begetting the soul into spiritual life. Thus James speaks, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" (James 1:18)

and so Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23) We do not come to know God by any miraculous revelation; by any voice sounding in the sky; by any supernatural discovery of him in the clouds, breaking through them with flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. Not but what, as in Paul's case, Augustine's, and Col. Gardiner's, a voice may have been heard from heaven, speaking, as it seemed, in audible accents, and this accompanying the more distinct and peculiar work of the Spirit upon the heart. But as in the Scriptures the true God has revealed his great name, so it is by the application of his word to the soul by the power of the Spirit that he for the most part makes himself known to the sons of men. A holy light shines upon the word of truth and is reflected from the sacred page into our understanding, communicating thereby light and life to the soul. In that light we see God, for we see light in his light, and as he is "the fountain of life," in his life we feel life. (Ps. 36:9) Thus divine light and life given by Jesus, through the application of his word of truth, make us to see and feel that there is a God, for faith is thus raised up in the heart to believe what the Scripture says; and by faith thus divinely communicated we see God, who is invisible. You may not be able perhaps to trace distinctly when, how, and where God first made himself thus known to your soul; but you were conscious of a marked change that took place in your feelings at a certain most memorable period, and of a mighty revolution that then rolled over your breast, giving you altogether a new being and making you a new creature. Now look at the contrast between what you are and what you were. There was a time when you were almost uncertain whether there was a God or not; when you neither feared his frown nor sought his smile; when you might have taken his name into your lips, but had no real knowledge of him; neither faith nor hope, neither love nor fear. But a time came, never to be forgotten whilst your soul has being, when other thoughts arrested your mind, and other feelings, like wave after wave, rolled in upon your conscience, and amongst them this as an overtopping billow, which seemed almost as if it would sweep you away into hell, that there was a just, holy, heart searching

God, and that you had sinned against him. For the Scripture in revealing God, and the Holy Spirit in applying it, do not reveal him abstractedly as God; do not, for instance, say to us, "There is a God," as providence and creation make him known; but show us his character, how holy, just, and pure—thus setting before our eyes God in his infinite perfections. In the same light and by the same teaching, we see and feel our sins before him. This revelation to the soul of the character of God plants his fear in the heart, which is "the beginning of wisdom;" for the light which comes from heaven is not a dead but a living light; not a cold, straggling moonlight beam playing over a field of snow, but a warm sunlight ray, vivifying the heart into warmth and motion; for it is the very life and power of God. The light that illuminates gives the life that quickens, and both by their united action communicate faith and feeling. Like a man waking out of a sleep, or Lazarus coming out of the tomb, you wonder at the change which has taken place; and others, as they look upon you, wonder too, for you are become one of "the men wondered at." (Zech. 3:8) "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. 4:9) But you realize in a measure those words—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17) And amongst the old things passed away is the old, formal worship whereby you used to mock God; the old, ceremonious Pharisaical religion, whereby you worshipped him with your lips when your heart was far from him. Now you know and feel that God is a Spirit, and that those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth; for with regenerating grace invariably comes a Spirit of grace and supplications, and by that Spirit you are enabled to pour out your heart before God. Nay, at first you are so earnest in secret prayer and supplication that you seek him almost night and day. But at first he appears to you exceedingly terrible: you see little else, so to speak, but the dark parts of God's character. As it was with the Egyptians and the children of Israel, the pillar of the cloud was light to one, but darkness to the other; or rather as it was at Mount Sinai, where there was "blackness and darkness and tempest, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled." So in the first

manifestations of the righteous character of God, you see his wrath against sin, his inflexible justice, infinite purity, majesty and holiness, and that you, as a sinner by nature and practice, are amenable to his law and are verily guilty before him—a wretch justly doomed to die. But there are very mingled feelings in the first work of God upon the soul, for besides the sensations of guilt and condemnation which I have named, there are many very earnest desires to know him for ourselves, to obtain his favor, live to his praise, seek his honor, and consult his glory. It is impossible to describe, though, I trust, I have known the feelings in my own bosom, all that is contained in the knowledge of the only true God by the discovery of himself to the soul. We know its effects and fruits better than the thing itself; for there is a mystery in regeneration into which we cannot penetrate; as the Scripture speaks, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." (Eccles. 11:5) But one main effect of this divine knowledge is to show us that God has a people upon earth, and to draw our affections towards them. Another effect is, that it makes us watch over our hearts, our lips, and the actions of our hands. It makes also the conscience tender, the heart contrite, and the spirit broken. It makes us see and feel that heaven is everything and earth comparatively nothing; that the salvation of the soul is our grand concern, and that what becomes of the body in life or death matters little if the soul be saved in the bosom of God. Never is there more real uprightness of heart, or greater strictness of life than when God first sets his hand to the work. No hypocrisy is then indulged, no insincerity allowed; old and inveterate sins are broken off, evil habits forsaken, the world and all worldly company given up, and everything interfering with the salvation of the soul laid aside; and all this willingly and cheerfully through the constraining influence of God's Spirit at work in the heart. Religion is with a new-born soul his all in all. He must have God for his friend or perish. To please God is his chief concern; to have his soul saved his inmost desire; what God approves he loves; what God abhors he hates.

Now though you may not be able exactly to tell when God first awakened your soul, have I in any way drawn out a map or chart of your course at a particular period of your life—anything resembling your feelings, desires, exercises, doubts, misgivings, sighs, groans, and prayers, when that mighty revolution took place in your soul which is called the "new birth," when you came out of darkness into God's marvelous light? (1 Pet. 2:9) I like to insist upon the beginning of the work of grace. It tends to establish the saints of God: it throws light upon those in whom the work is in some measure obscure, and revives the hopes and expectations of those who have fallen, through the power of temptation, into darkness and deadness of soul.

**2.** But this is not the only branch of eternal life. There is "the knowledge of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." How the Lord Jesus Christ here puts himself on a level with God. For could it be said of the highest saint or the most exalted angel, that a knowledge of him is a necessary ingredient of eternal life? We have seen that one main branch of it consists in knowing the only true God. But is that all? There is another branch of equal importance, of equal value—a branch that must be known by the same divine power—a personal, spiritual, and experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Now what are we to know in Jesus Christ? First, we are to know his eternal Deity. It may be that your mind has been at times tossed up and down upon this grand, vital, fundamental point. You have wondered how Jesus, who lay in the womb of the Virgin, and was crucified upon Calvary's tree, could have been the eternal God. Infidelity may have racked your soul to its very center. I am sure it has mine, and does so even to this day. Yet you find that you cannot give this grand truth up, for you see that without it there could be no salvation for your guilty soul; that he must be God, or his blood could not wash out crimes like yours; that he must be God, or his righteousness would not avail to justify your guilty soul; that he must be God, or he could not now hear or answer your prayers. Thus, when we come to look at the things of God in the light of the Spirit, we see that the deity of Jesus Christ is so involved in every gospel truth, in every branch of living

experience, in every part of holy practice, that to give up that is to give up the Scriptures, and stand before him who is a consuming fire in all our sin and guilt and crime. I know what I am saying, for these are things my mind has been exercised with now for many years, and I preach to you only what God the Spirit, I hope and trust, has taught me.

But in seeing the deity of the Son of God, we see his eternal sonship, for the two are connected together. If not the eternal Son of God, he is not God; for the eternal sonship of Christ is intimately connected with the deity of the Lord Jesus. What sweet views does the child of God sometimes enjoy of the eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ! How he views the love of God flowing through his own beloved Son, and salvation, pardon, and peace all involved in that most blessed mystery of the Son of God taking our nature into union with his own divine Person. The deity of Christ shines through the scriptures as with a ray of light, and sometimes beams into the soul with a ray of heavenly life. In fact, it is the animating ray that quickens the whole spirit of a believer, and makes the life of God to be what it is in the soul in its power and preciousness. Take away the love of the Son of God to his Church from all eternity, his atoning blood and justifying righteousness, and his present advocacy in heaven as an interceding high priest, and where is your guilty soul? Must not the law come down upon us with all its awful thunders unless divine blood has put away its curse, divine righteousness become our justifying obedience, and divine love be still pleading divine merit at the right hand of the Father?

But there is the pure humanity of the spotless Lamb of God— a pure body and a pure soul united to his glorious person as the Son of God, and Godhead stamping infinite merit upon all its gracious acts and sufferings, which we are also savingly and experimentally to know as a part of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. O the precious blood that dropped from his sacred brow in the garden of Gethsemane and fell from his hands and feet on the cruel tree! And O the efficacy of it to cleanse a guilty conscience, for Godhead is in every drop! If there were no Godhead in it,

there could be no availing pardon and no real peace. So it is with the righteousness, so with the love, so with the grace, so with everything concerning the blessed Jesus.

Let me then again and again sound in your ears, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" and let me apply the subject to your consciences. Do you know the only true God by any revelation of his power and presence to you soul? Do you know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent by any manifestation of his love and grace? Has the mighty revolution taken place in your bosom of which I spoke as manifesting the new birth in its beginning and progress? Then you have eternal life; you shall never die. Sin may often dim your evidences; Satan often fight against your soul; clouds may surround the throne of God and darkness beset your mind; but if you know by divine teaching and by divine testimony the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, you have eternal life, and as sure as God is true will reign in his presence for evermore. Think upon these things; they are solemn realities. May God seal them home with his mighty power upon your heart and conscience!—

## THE ETERNAL REFUGE

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, On Lord's Day Evening, August 13, 1843

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Deuteronomy 33:27

We were considering this morning, a passage (Ex. 33:16), which came from the lips of Moses very shortly after the children of Israel had entered into the wilderness: and the words which I have just read issued also from the same lips forty years afterwards, shortly before Moses closed his eyes, and entered into everlasting rest. But do we perceive the strain altered? Do we find that forty years further experience had made a difference in the doctrine that Moses believed, and in the blessings that Moses enjoyed? Did a longer experience of his own backslidings, and of the idolatry of the people committed to his charge, give him a better opinion of human nature? Did it alter the deep conviction, which he doubtless had before, that man's heart was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" Or did God's mercies and blessing, displayed for forty years, lead him to depreciate, to under-estimate, to form a less idea of what superabounding grace was, than he felt forty years before? I venture to say, that not only had his experience been enlarged downwards, but enlarged also upwards; that he not only had a deeper sense of man's ruin and misery, but also a higher and more abounding sense of the riches of God's grace. He was not like some preachers, such as the late Dr. Ryland and Rowland Hill, who began Calvinists and ended Arminians; or, if they did not end in Arminianism, were not much further from it than Edens-street from Tottenham-Court-Road. **Not a hundred yards.** No, he died as he lived, in the sweet enjoyment and blessed testimony that salvation was of grace from first to last: and, almost with expiring breath, he traced all the mercies that were showered down upon the people of God to the eternal covenant

settlements, and he looked forward into eternity, as though that would be the only termination, if termination it can be called, of the original source of God's mercy and love. "The eternal God." says he, with expiring breath. "is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Not a word here of creature merit, not a syllable of human righteousness. not a single iota of what **they** were to do in the matter, but the eternal God was to be "all in all."

We will, then, with God's blessing, look at this passage, which this man of God breathed forth, for the comfort and encouragement of the church of God in all times, ages, and dates, and we will consider the words in the order that they lie before us.

I. "The eternal God is thy refuge." We will look at the last word first, "**Refuge!**" What does "refuge" imply? It implies escape. We hear of "harbours of refuge," that is havens and ports along an iron-bound coast, which were either originally constructed by the hand of God, or else, in later days, by the hand of man, for the purpose of affording ships an escape from the coming storm. Again, we have the idea still more plainly conveyed to us in a Scriptural figure. You are, of course, familiar with the expression, which occurs in Numbers (Num. 35:11), and also in Joshua (Josh. 20:2), "the cities of refuge." There were certain cities belonging to the Levites, which were set apart, six on one side of Jordan, and six on the other, where the man-slayer was to flee, who had slain a person unawares, that he might be safe there from the sword of the avenger of blood and next of kin to the person whom he had unwittingly slain. Now, both these figures give to us this idea a place of escape, a spot of safety, a harbour where we may take shelter and find security from some coming danger, or some threatening enemy.

Having seen, then, a little of the idea contained in the word "refuge," we will look at the various refuges which men devise for themselves. It seems that there is in man's conscience, by

nature, some intimations, very dark and feeble, but still some intimations of a God, of a judgment to come, of a heaven to be obtained, and a hell to be feared. These convictions work with more or less power in men's minds: some men, it appears, know but little of natural convictions. I think Mr. Huntington, in one of his writings, mentions a man, who told him that he never had had one conviction of sin in all his life, which he said he could scarcely believe. No doubt cases, however, do occur in which men pass through life, and drop into an awful eternity, who have never had one conviction of sin until they are plunged into the billows of everlasting despair. But many, if not most men, have, before the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron, not spiritual convictions, mark you! issuing in gospel deliverance and gospel blessings, but such workings of natural conscience, as the apostle speaks of in Rom. 2:15, "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

Now, when these natural convictions work in a man's mind, they set him to seek some escape from them. He is like a mariner, who, when he sees the storm brewing in the horizon, flees to harbour, that he may escape from it. These natural convictions, then, working in men's minds, put them upon thinking how they may escape from them. And they resort to various means. Some, in order to escape the pungent convictions at work in their minds, plunge headlong into sin. They are determined to get rid of them, and, with daring rebellion, rush into sin as the Gadarene swine into the sea. And I think we have this intimated in the passage, "Thou saidst, There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. 2:25). Conviction produces a sense of despair, and that being unbearable by the natural mind, the man plunges into sin, in order to drown and get rid of it. That is one refuge, and a most desperate refuge it is. Others plunge headlong into infidelity, to escape conviction of sin; they get hold of sceptical publications, attend infidel spouters, and soon drink down the damnable doctrines of infidelity. And there is in the human heart by nature, such a spirit of infidelity, that very soon it gains a complete hold of the mind, and forms there a miserable

and impregnable refuge, until they learn in hell, with the devils, to "believe and tremble." But the majority fly to works. Legality, self-will, self-righteousness, and human merit, are a part of that "folly" which is "bound up in the heart of a child." Our nature can never understand and can never relish anything but human merit and freewill.

Now, this being the case, when the conscience is alarmed with convictions of sin. good works are at once fled to. It is the most natural, the most easy, and the most simple refuge. Others, again, who have sprung from professing parents, or have sat for some time under an enlightened ministry, are convinced, in their judgment, that works cannot save them. That doctrine has been drilled into them from infancy: and therefore, by the natural information of their understandings, they do not flee to works, for they know that it is of no use to do so: but they flee to a profession, to a sound creed, to ensconce themselves in some religious nook, and hide themselves in some doctrinal refuge, that they may persuade themselves—and you know that maws deceitful heart loves to be persuaded to believe a lie—that they may persuade themselves that, because they have embraced the truth in the judgment, they have all the blessings and all the mercies connected with an experimental reception of the truth. And I believe that this is the grand refuge of hypocrites, self-deceivers, and dead professors in our day.

What is the religion of the present day? It is an imitation; and you know that every imitation must bear some resemblance to the original. The forged bank note, the counterfeit sovereign, bears some resemblance to the good note, to the legitimate coin. This aping mimicry, then, of the present day, imitates true religion in two points, which are the two leading features of a gracious experience—a work of the law upon the conscience to convince of sin, and a gospel deliverance to persuade the soul of its interest in mercy. Notional convictions mimic the work of the law, and a reception of Calvinism and of the doctrines of grace into the judgment, apes a gospel deliverance: so that, equipped by the devil and by the deceit of their own heart, with an

imitation of the work of the law and a mimicry of the work of the gospel, they go forth accomplished counterfeits; and make this their refuge, when God knows it is nothing but a refuge of lies.

The Lord will never let his people hide themselves in a lying refuge, whether this or any other. They all gladly would do so if they dared. If any of you have been brought out of a refuge of lies, there are no thanks due to you. I am sure that you hid your head in it as long as you could: I am sure that when God pulled you out of it, it was the last thing you wished to be done for you, and the last thing you desired to be done in you. You resisted. I fully believe. To be stripped of your religion was like having the skin stripped off your bones: as Job says. "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." But God has said in Isa. 28:17-18, of those who have "made a covenant with death, and with hell an agreement:" **and these. I believe, are his own people** that their "covenant with death shall be disannulled, and their agreement with hell shall not stand, for the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." But God's people never get into the true refuge till they have been beaten out of all false ones. They are like a ship at sea, which, when the storm comes on, will often try every shift before it runs into harbour. It will reef its sails, or take in every thread of canvas, or beat up to windward, and bear in its own strength all the pitiless pelting of wind and waves rather than run into port. And so God's people will often bear in their own strength the storm of the law before they flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. But, after they have tried every means, and find all ineffectual to keep their ship from sinking, how glad they are, at last, by God's mercy and grace, to take on board the unerring Pilot, who steers them into the harbour of eternal safety.

We see that Moses, speaking here by the Holy Ghost, lays a very great stress on the word "**thy.**" Luther, I believe, says somewhere that all the marrow of vital godliness, and all the honey and honeycomb of Scriptural truth, lie in the little words, "Me" and "Thee," "My" and "Thy", and so on. Thus Moses lays a great stress on the word "Thy:—The eternal God is **Thy** refuge."

It is as though he had said, The heathen nations all around you have their refuges: but thy refuge is a refuge different from theirs, one peculiar to thyself; one which no one else knows anything about, into which no one can enter, and in which none will be found but thyself. Quarrel with it as men may, it is in the peculiarity of the mercies, which God's people receive that their blessedness mainly consists.

But he tells us who this refuge is: "**The eternal God** is thy refuge." To my mind, there is much sweetness in the contrast betwixt the eternal God being the refuge of his people, and the lying refuges that most hide their heads in. God's people want **an eternal** refuge. They have a never-dying soul: and unless they have a never-dying refuge, it is not sufficient for a never-dying soul. Works! these are for time: the never-dying soul wants something to stand when works and workers cease. Doctrines, opinions, sentiments, ordinances, the good opinion of men, the applause and flattery of the creature—these are of the earth, earthy: they fail when a man gives up the ghost. But a child of God wants a refuge, not merely that his soul may anchor in it in time, but that when time is ended, when the angel proclaims "That there should be time no longer," and his liberated soul escapes its prison-house, and is wafted into the presence of the eternal God, it may find in him at that solemn moment a refuge. Nay, all through eternity, in the rolling circuit of its never-ending ages, the soul will still want a refuge. For could it even in eternity exist for a moment out of Christ—in a word, were the refuge of the elect anything but eternal, the moment the limited time of their shelter closed, the frowns of God would hurl them into perdition; so that nothing but an eternal God can ever be a refuge for a never-dying soul. It does not say, "His grace is thy refuge." No; because grace will end in glory. Nor does it say, "His mercy is thy refuge," for his mercy will end in blessing and praise. Nor does it say, "His attributes or his perfections are a refuge." It drops the gifts and leads the soul up to the Giver, as though God's own gifts and mercies were not sufficient, but that the immortal soul must have the immortal God, and the never-dying spirit is only safe in the bosom of an eternal Jehovah.

By the word "immortal," we are also reminded, not only of eternity to come, but of what divines call "eternity past;" for we cannot limit the word "eternal" merely to what God **is to be** to his people, but must include what God **ever has been** to them. The "eternal God," then, ever was, as well as ever will be, the refuge of his people. The refuge began **if we may use the word begin** before all time; for it began in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. The eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, three eternal Persons in one eternal Godhead, were, are, and ever will be the eternal refuge to the Church of God; and all the attributes of the three Persons of the Trinity will be glorified in the people of God enjoying this eternal refuge. The eternal electing love of the Father, the eternal, justifying, redeeming, and atoning work of the Son, and the quickening, comforting, upholding, and teaching of the Holy Spirit, are all wrapped up in that one expression—the eternal God.

But must there not be some experience of these truths in the soul? However well we may be persuaded of the truth of these things in our head, will that satisfy you and me? It will not satisfy me, I am sure. Nothing short of the vital experience, the divine application, and the spiritual manifestation of these blessed truths, under the solemn unction and powerful preaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience, will ever satisfy a fainting spirit. But, if a man has never known what it is to be hunted out of house and home, if he has never had his refuges of lies broken up, if he has never had the bed too short and the covering too narrow, stripped away from under him; if he has never stood naked and needy, helpless and hopeless, before the eye of offended Justice, what can he know experimentally of a refuge, of hiding himself in God, of fleeing to him, as David says, "I flee unto Thee to hide me;" and burying, so to speak, himself in the mercy and love of God poured down into his heart, and richly streaming into, and divinely covering and encompassing his soul?

II. **"And underneath are the everlasting arms."** What, eternity again? Could not Moses be satisfied with telling us only

once about eternity? It is sometimes thrown in the teeth of experimental ministers that they are always harping upon the same truths. "O," say some, "They have only about half a dozen tunes, which they play over again and again, for that is the sum total of their music." Does not Moses twice harp on one string? Does he not, in playing his "harp of solemn sound," again strike the same note? He does not think it irksome, having spoken of the **eternal** God, to repeat the expression; but he goes on to say, "Underneath are the **everlasting** arms." But what is the meaning of this expression? Generally speaking, we best gather the meaning of promises by looking at their contrast. Promises are always suited to certain circumstances; by looking therefore at the circumstances we can sometimes gather the spiritual meaning of the promises. For instance, if the Lord promise bread, "bread shall be given him" (Isa. 33:16): by looking at hunger we gather a clearer view of what is meant by that promise. If the Lord promise a justifying robe, "I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4), by considering what nakedness implies (Hos. 2:3), we see the propriety and suitability of that promise. When the Lord says he is a refuge, by seeing the danger and destruction to which that promise is applicable, we gather a sweeter view and a clearer knowledge of what is conveyed by the expression. Thus, when it says, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in order to enter into the beauty, the sweetness, and the suitability of the expression, we must look at the state of the soul as needing everlasting arms to be placed underneath it. The idea implied is that of falling. The arms are not put above to keep the soul from rising, but underneath to keep it from falling.

Unless, then, a man knows experimentally what it is to be a poor fallen creature, and such a fallen creature that he cannot move one step of the way alone, such a helpless wretch, that, like a poor paralytic child, he must be carried in arms through the whole of his journey; if he does not know something of that experience in his soul, he has yet to learn the meaning of the everlasting arms being **underneath**. When the Lord shews his people what they really are, he puts an end to all the boasting of the creature. When he brings his holy law with power into their

conscience, and opens up the deep corruptions of their fallen nature, he convinces them that, if they are to be saved, they must be saved by grace alone; and he makes them feel that they are so completely fallen, so entirely helpless, and so thoroughly hopeless, that nothing but a miracle, a daily miracle of mercy and grace, can ever carry their souls through the waste, howling wilderness, till he sets them before his face in glory. But the expression of the "everlasting arms being underneath," conveys not merely an intimation of what man is by nature, and of the sinner's feelings, when he first has his eyes opened to see, and his heart spiritually quickened to feel, the power of eternal things; but it also casts a ray of light on his experience all his journey through: the everlasting arms being underneath his soul, from first to last, to keep him from falling out of them into a never-ending hell. After all the goodness that God may have shewn to the soul; after all the mercy and truth that he may have brought into the conscience, let him but leave the man a moment, and he would infallibly fall into hell.

Yea, if God had led you up to this point of time, and now were to leave you to law and justice, sin, self, and Satan. that clock opposite would scarce beat another stroke before your enemies had utterly overwhelmed you. Rutherford says somewhere in one of his Letters—"that if he had one foot in heaven, and God were to bid him shift for himself, he should tumble headlong into hell." He would want the power of God to put his other foot into heaven, so to speak, or he would drop down into the abyss of ever burning flame. So that what the soul wants is "the **everlasting** arms;" not as the mother says sometimes to her child. "I am quite tired of carrying you; I will take you a little further, and then you must walk home the rest of the way." No; that would not do for God's people. Like the poor paralytic child to which I have just alluded, we must be taken home every step of the way, and when we get home the Lord himself must take us into his own bosom. It would not do to be put down at the very threshold, nor in any place short of being brought into his own bosom, there to enjoy the smiles of eternal love.

The "everlasting arms," then, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the divine Jehovah, are "underneath" every one of his people, and, being underneath them, they can neither fall through them nor out of them; but they are borne, and supported, and carried along by them until they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of a three-one God. Now, if these "everlasting arms" were not underneath a man, so "deceitful" is his heart, so "desperately wicked" is his corrupt nature, such awful stratagems does Satan lay for his feet, and such numerous perils encompass every step, that he must infallibly perish. But, my friends, what we want to **feel** is, that these arms **are** underneath us. What good will the doctrine do us? The doctrine of the "everlasting arms" being underneath us will not satisfy our souls, if we feel that we are sinking fathoms. If we keep sinking, sinking, sinking, and are afraid, at times, that we shall sink at last into hell, the bare doctrine that the "everlasting arms" are underneath God's people will not satisfy us; but we want to **feel them under us**, so that we can rest upon them, and enjoy a blessed support in them and coming out of them. How secure the babe lies in its mother's arms as long as it can **feel** the arms touching and supporting its body; but let the mother withdraw the arm, the babe is in fear; it cries out in alarm: but so long as it feels the pressure of the mother's arms it sleeps on calm and secure. So with living souls: if they cannot find the "everlasting arms" underneath him, they cannot rest in the mere doctrine of God's upholding the church: but when they can feel a support given: when in trouble, in affliction, in sorrow, in temptation, there is a sensible leaning upon the everlasting arms, and a sensible support communicated by them, then they can rest calmly and contentedly upon them.

But, again, these "everlasting arms" must needs be very strong, for they are the arms of the Almighty, of him who has all strength concentrated in himself. Well; but are **strong** arms put underneath a man for no purpose? Do we not always proportion the machine to the work, and the work to the machine? Who ever constructed a steam-engine of 200 horsepower to break sticks and pick up straws? There is always a proportion betwixt the power and the work. Then, if the "everlasting arms" of the

Almighty are underneath his church, they must bear a very great weight. Surely there must be some analogy betwixt the strength of God and the weakness of the soul, betwixt the iron character of the arms and the burden and weight, which they have to sustain. Just in proportion, then, as a man's soul is weighted down with burdens, exercised with temptations, tried by the devil, and harassed by the base corruptions working within; just in proportion as he is helplessly sinking down, does he find the value, and test the reality and divine efficacy of these "everlasting arms."

To talk, therefore, of knowing anything about the everlasting arms being underneath the soul, and not to feel that we are so burdened and weighted down, so exercised and harassed, so buffeted and tempted, and have such a pressure of heavy trials upon us, that we want all the power of God to support us, is nothing but folly and delusion. But, when a man is absolutely so weighted down that, could all the united arms of the creature, could all the human beings upon the face of the globe unite all their strength, and concentrate in one pair of arms all the power that is diffused through the whole human race, and then feel that these would not be sufficient to bear up his sinking soul; why, then, when a man is brought to see that all this power would be no more to him than if they were so many straws and sticks, he then begins to see and realize the sweetness of having the everlasting arms of an Almighty God stretched beneath him. Do you then want to prove that these arms are everlasting, and do you want to know that these everlasting arms are underneath **your** soul? It is not by reading what Elisha Coles says about the final perseverance of the saints, nor by looking into Dr. Hawker's morning and evening portions **though doubtless you might find very sweet and very appropriate remarks and proofs in each**: but it is by trying them for yourself: it is by being really so exercised and burdened in your soul, that nothing short of the everlasting arms can support you. This is the way to find its reality, to prove its truth, and to come into the sweet and blessed experience of it. But when you find your soul so burdened that nothing earthly or human can support it, and then drop into the

arms of infinity, cast yourself as a poor sinking wretch into the arms of a covenant Jehovah, and then feel sensible strength and evident support communicated, so that you can rest upon them for life, for death, for time, for eternity, this is to know of a truth that the everlasting arms are indeed underneath your soul.

### III. **"And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."**

What a free grace preacher Moses was! Moses sustained two characters. He was the mediator of the law (Gal. 3:19), and as such he preached the law powerfully; and, as "the man of God," he preached the gospel, too, blessedly; for "his doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew," when he testified of "the Rock, that his work is perfect" (Deut. 32:2-4). There is sweet gospel wrapped up in what Moses spoke here. There is no appeal to the creature. When he delivered his parting discourse, and preached his farewell sermon, he did not lay a load of exhortation upon the people: they were not bidden to cultivate piety, to make themselves holy, to overcome their sins in their own strength, that it was their duty to repent and believe, and to do a number of good works. No; Moses, like a faithful preacher, kept the law and gospel separate; and in preaching the gospel to the people in this, his dying sermon, did not load their shoulders with heavy burdens; but he points the eye of their soul up to God; he leads them away from the wretched, fallen creature, and directs their minds to their blessed Creator, who could work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight. **"He** shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." But must not **they** do something? Must not they fast and pray? Must not they mortify and macerate their bodies? Must not they put their hand to the work? Must not they be up and doing, and would not that be amply sufficient to overcome all their enemies? No, we find nothing about that. The Holy Ghost by Moses says nothing of what man is to do here: he says. **"He** shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."

Now who is "the enemy"? No doubt, literally and historically, the enemies were the seven accursed nations whom "the Lord would put out before them little by little" (Deut. 7:22); but it would be a poor interpretation to limit it to this. We have worse enemies

than literal Canaanites; we have the spiritual Canaanites within. We have the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, and all the seven accursed nations in us, for we have by nature "seven abominations in our heart" (Prov. 26:25), and none but God can thrust out these enemies from before us. But we must learn that they are **enemies** first. The children of Israel did not always feel that they were enemies. They often made a league with them, bowed down to their idols, and in various ways learnt their wicked works. There was a time when we acted in a similar manner; we made a covenant with our lusts, and entered into bonds of enmity with our treacherous foes, loving the world, and the things of time and sense, having our hearts set upon idols, and hugging in our bosom base abominations.

But when God enlightens the dark understanding, quickens the soul into life, and brings a sense of his grace and presence into the heart, we learn that his enemies are our enemies, and that our enemies are his enemies; and we learn what an enemy our flesh is to God and godliness. And when we have learnt that, we want the enemy "thrust out." We do not want, at least in our right minds, to hug our enemies as bosom friends, but we want them "thrust out," put out of our heart, their power and dominion overcome, and our feet placed upon their necks. But we cannot do it; they are so strong; they have such chariots of iron, and they are so crafty too; they will stay in the promised land as long as they can, so that there is no getting them out by our own wisdom and strength. Sometimes they will entice us to let them stay, and sometimes declare they will not go: but stay in they will as long as they can: and thus we find that **we** cannot thrust them out.

Do you not sometimes find the world an enemy—covetousness an enemy—your wretched idolatries and spiritual adulteries enemies? Do you not find the base lusts that work in you, craving for gratification, the enemies of your righteous soul? And do you not find what powerful, what subtle, what flattering and deceitful enemies they are, that they will often come with an "Art thou in health, my brother?" when they carry a sword to smite you under

the fifth rib? It is not, my friends, our outward enemies that can hurt us: it is our inward foes that are our worst enemies. Your outward enemies can little touch you. They may oppress and persecute you; they may wound your mind; they may hurt your character, but they cannot separate you, in soul-experience, from God: they cannot quench the spirit of prayer in your bosom; they cannot stop the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost in your heart; they cannot bar out the presence of God from visiting your soul; but, on the contrary, as I have felt myself, when outward persecution is most active, inward peace often most abounds.

But our inward enemies! O, these are enemies indeed, because they shut out the presence of our best, our only Friend. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. "If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Then when we are serving mammon we are not serving God, and when we are loving the world, the love of God is indeed damped for the time as if lost out of the soul. Of all foes these bosom enemies are the worst, for they are like traitors within the garrison. If the wife of your bosom should ever become your enemy: if ever, which God forbid, if ever she should prove unfaithful to you, and betray all your bosom secrets to her paramour, could you find such an enemy as that? So your darling lusts, that you have hugged in secret to your bosom, are the worst of enemies, for they keep out the presence of God, and by their base workings shut out, so to speak, the approach of the Comforter. We want them, then, put out of house and home; we want them "thrust out:" not indeed, that they can be eradicated out of our heart, or we be made perfect in the flesh, but that they may be thrust from their dominion, from their high throne and exalted seat in the affections.

And none but the Lord can "thrust out" these enemies from before us: none but he can really subdue and overcome these wretched foes in our bosom. But he will do it: for "He will thrust out the enemy from before thee." Whatever lust, whatever temptation, whatever secret snare, whatever bosom idol, you feel to be your enemy, God "will thrust it out from before you:" not, indeed, whilst you are hugging it as a friend—the promise runs

not so, but when with grief you feel it to be your enemy, when you can appeal to God that his enemies are your enemies, and that you want these enemies of your soul to be slain, this pride overcome, this presumption rooted out, this hypocrisy trodden under foot, these darling sins crucified by the hand of God as his enemies and yours: when you come in soul-experience to that spot, then he will "thrust out the enemy from before thee;" and, in fact, he is at that moment thrusting out the enemy when you feel it to be the enemy of your soul's peace. The moment that a poor child of God feels his sins to be his enemies, that moment God is working in his heart to thrust out these enemies from before his face.

IV. But he will do more than that: "**He will say, Destroy them.**" The words do not run thus, "He will destroy them," but he will **say to you,** " Destroy them," that is, will bid you destroy them. "O," say you, "that is an impossible task, I cannot do that." Nor can you, but God can enable you; and we may depend upon it that our lusts and passions will never be overcome, never be subdued, till we can enter into the experience of the words, till we can destroy them, that is, commit them into the hands of God to be destroyed.

Have we never found this to be true? Here is that monster **pride**, that subtle foe. It is always whispering its accursed breath in our hearts. Have you never felt yourself to be such a wretch, because this vile monster crept and crawled in your bosom, that you could deliberately stamp him under foot? Now, when you were there you were, in the experience of the text, destroying him. Did you never feel what an accursed thing is hypocrisy, and did you never come before God's throne, and want to have this hypocrisy trampled under foot, eradicated, exterminated? When you came to that spot in soul-experience, you said. "Destroy him." And did you never want your covetousness, your unbelief, your idolatries, your spiritual adulteries, your going out after the things of time and sense, everything that your corrupt heart most craved and loved, did you never find a solemn sentence of condemnation passed upon it in your soul, so that you could, so to speak, put

your hand into your bosom and pull out lust after lust, and base desire after base desire, dash them upon the ground, and stamp them under your foot?

Now, if your soul was ever brought there **and if the Lord ever blessed you with a sense of mercy and grace, it has been brought there**, if ever your soul was brought there, you have been in the experience of the text—"And shall say, Destroy them." And you were enabled, so far as God worked in you, to destroy them. You no longer encouraged them; you no longer held communion with them; you no longer embraced them with affection: but you said, "Get out of my sight, ye vipers. O, that God would utterly exterminate you: O, that he would never suffer you to rise up again in my carnal mind: O, that I could always be humble, and broken down, and melted at the feet of the Redeemer. O that cursed pride, and awful hypocrisy, and dreadful presumption, and miserable worldliness, and all the hateful and all the horrible lusts of my carnal mind, were completely swept out of my heart!" Now, if your soul was ever there, you know what the text means—"And shall say, Destroy them."

My friends, we must take the text as it stands; it is a part of God's word. There are many people who are very glad to hear about the eternal God being their refuge, and what a blessed thing it is to have the everlasting arms underneath the church—they would almost pull a man out of the pulpit who did not preach that: but when we come to thrusting out bosom enemies, and enforce the destruction of inward lusts—"O," say they, "that is legal, that savours of Arminianism. What we want is this—and this is our gospel—the doctrines of grace preached up to the very heights: as high as you like; then plenty of assurance, and as much carnal comfort as ever we can have: with a half a dozen bosom lusts sitting day by day round our table, eating and drinking to their heart's content—no cross, no self-denial, no crucifixion, no melancholy. Let us have the doctrines, let us have the assurance. and then let us and our lusts be the best friends possible: let us live and die in their embrace: and firmly believe we shall see God in glory." That is dead doctrinal Calvinism: but

that is not the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience: that is not the work and witness of the blessed Spirit in the soul.

He that teaches one truth teaches another: and the same blessed Spirit that brings into the soul a sweet sense of the eternal God being our refuge, and the everlasting arms being stretched underneath to save us from a never-ending hell, will convince us and make us feel that God's enemies are our enemies. He will, from time to time, though again and again we shall feel the poisonous tooth of the serpent within; but he will, from time to time, thrust out the enemy from before us, and again and again he will enable us, with holy jealousy and blessed indignation, to say, "Destroy them." O may they be crucified within us, and may our soul be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, that he may reign and rule in our heart, that we may serve him with every faculty of the mind, that we may yield up to him body, soul, and spirit, live and die in his blessed embrace, follow him in the strait and narrow path, wear his cross that we may one day wear his crown: and suffer with him that we may be also glorified together. This, I believe, is sound doctrine, and this, I believe, is sound experience, and, with all my heart, and with all my soul, I pronounce to it, a solemn Amen.

## **Everlasting Consolation and Good Hope through Grace**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, April 27, 1862

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thess. 2:16, 17

Have you ever sought to enter by faith into the mind and meaning of the Spirit as expressed in the prayers of the saints of old, recorded for our instruction in the inspired Scripture? Or have you ever been led to compare your own prayers with them? As you may not be prepared to give an immediate reply to these two inquiries, let me make the attempt to answer them for you in my own person. First, then, when I look at the prayers of the saints of old, as recorded in the Scriptures of truth, I see in them a simplicity, a beauty, a power, a savour, a nearness of access to God, which I feel better than I can describe. And when I compare my prayers with theirs, O how poor, how meagre, how feeble, how imperfect are they when thus laid by their side! Many thousands of times have I prayed in private, in the family, and before the assembled saints of God; but how often have I been ashamed both of myself and of my prayers! How dark often has been my mind, how void my heart, how confused my thoughts, how feeble my expressions! But, perhaps, it is hardly fair to judge of one's own prayers or of the prayers of others by this high standard, except as a cheek upon self-conceit; for the prayers which we have preserved for us in the Scripture are treasured up there not only for our instruction and consolation, but as patterns of what true prayer should be. They were inspired by the Holy Ghost in the breasts of the ancient worshippers of God in spirit and in truth; and when they had been presented before the footstool of mercy, were written down by inspired pens that they might be standing testimonies of what real, spiritual prayer is in the heart of God's people.

As being such, I shall devote a few moments' attention to them.

1. When, then, we come to look at these prayers a little more closely, we see that some of them were very *short*. But O how effectual! Prayer is something like the rifle contests which are now so much in vogue. It is not the number of times that a man shoots which decides the prize, but how many times he can hit the centre of the target. So with prayer: it is not how many times a man prays that makes him a winner in the contest: he may pray seven times, yea seventy times a day, and yet his prayers may be all wide of the mark. It is the prayer that brings down the answer which hits the target in the centre. I will give you two short prayers recorded in the Old Testament, and you will see how effectual they were and what an answer they obtained. One was the prayer of Jacob when he wrestled with the angel: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Gen. 32:26.) How short, but O how effectual! For we read, "And he blessed him there." Another is the prayer of David: "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." (2 Sam 15:31.) Few words, but how effective! for the Lord did in very truth turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. He gave counsel which would have been David's destruction; but the Lord turned it into foolishness, for it was rejected, and the counsel of Hushai preferred; for "the Lord," we read, "had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." And not only did this short prayer of David overthrow the counsel, but it overthrew the counsellor; for when "Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed," maddened with vexation, and seeing that Absalom's case was now desperate, he "saddled his ass, gat him home, put his household in order, and hanged himself." (2 Sam 17:23.)

Now I will give you two short but effective prayers out of the New Testament. The one, that of the publican in the Temple: "God be merciful to me a sinner." How short, but O how effective! for he "went down to his house justified;" he carried home the sentence of pardon and justification in his breast. The other is that memorable prayer of the thief upon the cross: "Lord, remember

me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How short, but O how effective! How at once the answer came: "To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

2. But besides these short and effective petitions, which plainly show us that we are not heard for our much speaking, we have in the Scriptures examples of prayers at greater length, and yet dictated by the same Spirit. I will give you a few samples in the Old Testament which you may look at at your leisure: The prayer of David, as recorded (1 Chron. 17.) when he went and sat before the Lord after he had sent him a gracious message by the prophet Nathan that he would establish the kingdom in his house; the prayer of Solomon, which he offered up at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 6.); the prayer of Jehoshaphat, when the children of Moab and Ammon invaded the land (2 Chron. 20.); the prayer of Hezekiah when Sennacherib sent a great army against Jerusalem (2 Kings 19.); the prayer of Daniel when he set his face unto the Lord God, and prayed, and made his confession (Daniel 9.); and not to take up longer time, the prayer offered up by the Levites on behalf of the children of Judah as recorded in Nehemiah 9. All these prayers are deserving of your deepest and most prayerful examination and meditation, as divinely recorded patterns of the prayers of the saints, which, perfumed by the incense of Jesus' mediation at the right hand of the Father, ascend up before God, and enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. (Rev. 8:4; James 5:4.)

And now, to come to the New Testament, let me give the first place to that prayer, unapproached and unapproachable, which our blessed Lord poured forth, as recorded in John 17., when he specially entered upon his high priestly office and offered up that intercessory prayer, which we may regard as the model of the intercession which he now presents before the throne of the Most High. Next to this let me place before you the two prayers which the apostle offered up for the Church of God at Ephesus, as recorded in chapters 1. and 3. of that blessed epistle. But, besides those two special prayers which the apostle offered up as recorded at full length in the passages just quoted, he, being a

man whose heart was full of prayer, was perpetually putting up aspirations and breathings for heavenly blessings on the saints of God, which we therefore find continually scattered through his epistles; for instance, such as, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost;" "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit;" and that ampler benediction (2 Cor. 13:14) which, from its fulness and blessedness, has been adopted into the public worship of all Christian assemblies as containing everything which the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost can bestow.

In our text we have another aspiration of Paul's heavenly mind in the pouring out of his soul before God on behalf of the Church of Christ at Thessalonica: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

In the desire to be a spiritual interpreter of the mind and meaning of the blessed Spirit as prompting this prayer, together with its connection, in the heart and by the pen of the apostle, I shall direct your thoughts to three leading features which seem most prominently stamped upon it.

I.—*First, the eternal Source and Fountain of every heavenly blessing, as intimated by the words, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us."*

II.—*Secondly, the streams of consolation which had already flowed down to believing saints from this eternal source: "And hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."*

III.—*Thirdly, blessings still to come from the same ever-flowing, over-flowing Fountain: "Comfort your hearts, and stablish yourself in every good word and work."*

I.—If you look at the opening words of our text, you will see that the blessings prayed for are asked from "our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father." There is something remarkable in the collocation, or, to use a more familiar expression, the placing of these words. In the order of their divine existence, and in the economy of grace, the three Persons of the glorious Trinity are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is the order of their eternal being, for though the three Persons are in themselves co-equal and co-eternal, so that, to use the language of the Athanasian Creed, "None is afore or after other; none is greater or less than other," yet they subsist in the order I have named; and this, too, is the order of their economy in the covenant of grace, in which the Father is represented as choosing, the Son as redeeming, and the Holy Ghost as sanctifying the people of God. But here, as in some other passages, our Lord Jesus Christ is put before the Father; from which we gather his co-equality and his co-eternity; and that he is not, as the Arians have asserted, naturally and necessarily inferior to the Father. Thus we have in our text a standing and striking proof of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; for who could dream for a single moment of putting a creature into such a place as he occupies in it? How would it stand if it read thus: "Now may Gabriel the angel;" "Now may Peter the apostle;" "Now may the blessed Virgin Mary?" As I use the words, even by way of supposition, how they grate upon the ear! Surely it must deeply shock every believing heart to see a creature exalted as if it could stand upon a level with the very Majesty of heaven, so that heavenly blessings should be prayed for as coming directly and immediately from it! Thus, were there no other passage; did this prayer of the apostle stand alone in solitary beauty, it would be a testimony, not to be overthrown by men or devils, that our Lord Jesus Christ is equal with the Father, because the same petitions which are addressed to the Father are also presented to the Son.

But though I have thought it right to lay this before you, yet, in opening up these words, I shall rather invert the order of our text, and speak first of "God even our Father" in his eternal love,

and then of "our Lord Jesus Christ himself;" not as if I meant for a single moment that our blessed Lord was inferior to the Father, for I have already declared my belief to the contrary, but because it is more convenient thus to handle the subject, as the love of the Father in some sense precedes, and is the foundation of the love of the Son.

i. "*God is love:*" that is his name and that is his nature; and it is because he is love that he is the source and fountain of all the love that flows down to his creatures.

1. But in looking at the love of God, the first thing that strikes our mind is its *inscrutable and unsearchable nature*. When we look at man and consider for a moment his *insignificance*; that in the eye of God, man viewed merely as a creature, must be less than a fly upon a window, an ant in an ant-hill, a worm crawling in and out of the earth are in ours, nay less than that; for the Lord himself, speaking of the nations, says, "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust in the balance" in his eyes who weighs the heavens and the earth and takes up the isles as a very little thing;—When thus we look at man's utter insignificance, a creature of the day, well may we admire and wonder that the infinite Being, he who fills all time and space, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should love one so utterly unworthy of even a glance from his glorious eye. But when we take a further glance at man, and view him not only as being of himself so insignificant by creation but so *fallen by sin*, so *defiled and polluted*, then our wonder is still more increased that God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity," and who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto," can look down upon sinful man, an object in himself so utterly detestable, and not only look upon him, but even love him with an everlasting love.

2. But there is another feature in this love of God that demands a few moments' thought, which is, that the love of God towards sinful man is one also of *pity and of mercy*. As the apostle says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he

loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Love in God, viewed at least in its relationship to fallen man, is blended with the most tender compassion and ineffable pity. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." His love is indeed antecedent to all consideration of the fall; for he loved his people in Christ, chose them in him, and accepted them in the beloved, before sin broke in to mar the image of God in which man was created. We may see the same feature in earthly love. A man does not love his wife, nor a mother her child, because of any infirmity or affliction; but should some infirmity or affliction befall the beloved object, then that love becomes blended with pity. The love is the same, but pity is now mingled with it. Indeed if the love of God were not mingled with the most infinite compassion and tender pity, how could it flow down into our breast? For are we not in a pitiable case? Has not sin utterly marred us and shamefully and cruelly defaced the image of God in us? Are we not full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores? There is a beautiful description of this blending of love and pity in that striking language of the prophet: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them." So speaks also the prophet Joel, "Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." (Joel 2:18.) And again, "For he will judge his people and repent himself for his servants when he seeth that their power is gone and there is none shut up or left." (Deut. 32:36.)

3. But there is another feature of the love of God which we must take into consideration, or else we shall sadly miss the mark and darken counsel by words without knowledge; which is, that the love of God to his people is wholly and solely *in Christ Jesus the Lord*. Were there no other passage of holy writ to prove this, it would be sufficiently plain from the words of the apostle, where he declares that neither height nor depth nor any other creature "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:39.) God never loved his people out of Christ; in fact, he never viewed them out of him. In Christ they were chosen, in Christ they were loved, in Christ they were

accepted. May this truth ever be deeply graven in living letters upon our heart, that only as members of the mystical body of the Lord the Lamb do the people of God find favour in the eyes of the Father, for they are only acceptable to him as they are "accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1:6.) When, then, we speak, as I have already spoken, of man's utter insignificance and his fallen state by nature, as enhancing the wondrous love of God, we must not look upon man as a mere creature of God's hands, or view him in a state of isolation in himself and separated from the Lord of life and glory. To look upon the Church as with the eyes of God, we must view the elect as standing for ever in covenant union with the Son of God; creatures, it is true, of an all-productive hand, but exalted to an immortal dignity and glory as members of the mystical body of Christ. Our blessed Lord, therefore, in that wondrous intercessory prayer to which I have already referred, uses these remarkable words, "And hast loved then as thou hast loved me." O words of depth, unfathomable to human measuring line! that the infinite Majesty of heaven, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, should love his people with the same love as that wherewith he loves his only-begotten Son! But this can only be as they are viewed in the Son of his love as so one with him, that, so to, speak, the all-comprehensive eye of the Father sees at one view, and his all-encompassing love embraces with one grasp, Head and members, folding them all to his bosom with the same equal and eternal affection.

4. But I must name one feature more of this eternal love of God before I pass on to show the love of Christ, which is, that, like himself, it is *unchanging, unchangeable*. This indeed necessarily springs from the circumstance that it is eternal: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." But could it come to a close it would cease to be everlasting. How tenderly does the Lord again and again assure the Church of the unchanging character of his eternal love! How he says, "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee." Again, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." (Isa. 54:8, 10.) So also he says, "I have graven thee on

the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." (Isa. 49:16.) One more testimony: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6.)

ii. But now for a few words upon *the love of Christ*. This we find distinguished in the Scriptures from the love of the Father. Thus in the prayer of Paul for the Church at Ephesus, to which I have already referred, we find him entreating the Father that he would grant to the Ephesian saints that they might "comprehend," or, as the word means, embrace, "with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Thus there is not only the love of God in Christ, which I have endeavoured to unfold, but, as in some way distinct from this, there is the personal, peculiar love which the Son of God bears to his people. But as this is tender, delicate ground, let me seek to move on it with all holy caution, that I may not introduce any separation between the love of the Father and the love of the Son. In one sense, therefore, the love of Christ to his people is precisely and identically the same as that borne to them by God the Father, for he and the Father are one—one in essence, one in purpose, one in will, one in heart. In that sense there is no distinction between the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son. Yet when we view the Son of God as taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, then we see there is something personal and experimental, something which I may almost call peculiar and individual in the love of Christ to his people, which seems to distinguish it very clearly to our spiritual senses from the love of God the Father. But as this point may not be at once obvious, let us look at it a little more closely, and I think we shall find that there are several features in the love of Christ to his people which distinguish it from the love of God to them.

1. First, then, the blessed Lord loves his people as being *the gift of God*. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." (John 17:6.) It always was the eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son; and in order to glorify him he gave him a people for his own inheritance; for Jesus is "to be glorified in his

saints" as well as "admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. 1:10.) He loves his Church, then, as the Father's gift and as his own inheritance. In this sense, therefore, he loves his people as his *own property*, folding them to his bosom with that peculiar love wherewith we, in our measure, love that which peculiarly and personally belongs to us, and loved all the more if it be also a free gift from one who warmly loves us and whom we warmly love.

2. But again the blessed Lord loves the Church as having *taken her nature into union with his own divine Person*. This indeed is the peculiar feature of the Lord's love which stamps it with its chief distinctness. The apostle opens up this feature very clearly and blessedly where speaking of earthly marriage, he traces up its foundation to the conjugal union which subsists between Christ and the Church: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church." (Eph. 5:25, 27.) There the apostle intimates that the Church is the bride and spouse of the Lord the Lamb, and therefore that the love which he bears towards her is conjugal love, that is the love in its highest, most refined, and spiritual sense which a man bears to his wife. We may well say with the apostle that "this is a great mystery;" but, as viewed by faith, it casts a blessed light on that peculiar feature of the love of Christ whereby he loves her as his own flesh, he being one with her by a participation of her nature, and she one with him in his saints as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

3. But I must name one more distinctive feature of the love of Christ. Just look at what our blessed Lord *suffered for her*. Look at the depths of sorrow and suffering in which he had to wade to redeem her from the dreadful consequences of the fall! Look at the unutterable weight of agony sustained by him on her behalf in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane. See the wrath of God which he endured for her sake at Calvary, and how he hung upon the tree taunted by man and forsaken by God, with all the unutterable horrors couched in that dolorous cry, "My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And all for the love of her. May we not then truly say, "Dearly bought, dearly prized; dearly won, dearly worn?"

Taking these three features into consideration, I think we may draw a scriptural distinction between the love of the Father and the love of the Son, without infringing upon that unity of will and mind which subsists between them as one in the same eternal undivided essence. I may indeed have failed to convey the distinction to your mind, but I seem to see and feel it clearly in my own.

But I shall not tarry longer at the fountain head. I shall now come to the streams which have already issued out of this ever-flowing Source of all happiness and holiness.

II.—"*And hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.*"

Two heavenly blessings are here spoken of as streams from the fountain of eternal love—consolation and good hope.

i. The first is "*everlasting consolation,*" which God is said to have given his dear people. "*Consolation!*" The very word opens up a source of much spiritual thought as well as gracious experience. Its very name, its very sound, implies at the very outset that those to whom God has given consolation were in a state where that consolation was needed, and to which alone it was suited, for as Hart well says,

"Balm is useless to th' unfeeling."

Even naturally, what is consolation except to the afflicted? The mourning widow, the bereaved orphan, the distressed in providence, the prisoner in the low dungeon, the houseless and homeless, the oppressed, the persecuted, and the desolate—such only are subjects for natural consolation. How much more then in a spiritual sense! Thus the Lord speaks to Zion, "O thou afflicted,

tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours." It was because she was afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, that she needed the consolations of her God. (Isai. 54:11.) "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you." (Isai. 66:13.) And again, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." (Isai. 51:12.) Once more, "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted his people." (Isai. 52:9.) But the clearest testimony to this point is the apostle's language, where, speaking of his own experience, he says, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ...And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye also be of the consolation." (2 Cor. 1:5, 7.) Thus we may lay it down as a most certain truth that in order to receive any measure of consolation from the Lord we must have a proportionate degree of affliction. But let us examine this subject a little more closely. I like to clear up my points to the best of my ability, and to leave as little unexplained as I can, that I may rightly divide the word of truth.

Let me first, then, show what is necessary before there can be any consolation from the love or mouth of God.

1. There can be no consolation to those who *are still in their sins*. Do you believe that God would drop consolation into a sinner's breast, I mean of course one who is still a rebel, still an alien, still an enemy? "There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked;" and if no peace, what room is there for consolation? Before, therefore, consolation can be given, there must be a bringing out of sin; in other words, there must be that work of grace upon the heart whereby sin is charged home as a burden upon the soul, guilt of conscience experienced, all iniquity confessed and forsaken, and a turning to the Lord with all the heart, and that with weeping and supplication.

2. But further, will the Lord administer consolation, "everlasting consolation," *to those who are still in the world*? What says James

in his emphatic language? "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4.) Does God give consolation to enemies? Does he drop the comforts that belong to the righteous into the breast of those who are still in the world which "lieth in wickedness?" There must then be a separation from the world before there can be any consolation dropped by God himself into the soul. What is God's own exhortation to his people? "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, 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.) Thus there must be a clean and clear separation from the world before the Lord himself will receive us into his arms, bestow upon us the Spirit of adoption, and give us a testimony that we are his sons and daughters.

3. Again, there must be *some knowledge of the truth*, some sight and sense not merely of our lost and ruined condition by nature and practice; but some view also by the eye of faith of that eternal source of happiness and holiness from which all true consolation springs. Thus there must be not merely a being awakened out of a state of sin and a being brought out of the world, with that sight and sense of the anger of God, of the curse of a broken law, and of our own ruined state, which bring grief and trouble into the heart, but there must be that communication of divine light to see and of divine life to feel the beauty and blessedness of the gospel, whereby the truth is embraced in the love of it. Our text speaks of "our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father which hath loved us," as having "*given us,*" already given us, "everlasting consolation." Do you not see from this that "consolation" is here spoken of as a thing already given, as a divine and heavenly blessing which the Lord himself has already breathed into the heart by his Spirit and grace?

Now the chief instrument whereby "the Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father" give consolation to the wearied soul is *the Gospel*. You will see this very clearly unfolded by comparing

Isaiah 40:1, 2, with the reference made to it by Peter: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." He then, after unfolding the nature of this comfort, adds, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but *the word of our God shall stand for ever.*" Now the apostle Peter, quoting this inspired declaration by the pen of Isaiah, thus comments upon the language of the prophet: "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which *by the Gospel* is preached unto you." See how he connects the comfort wherewith God comforts his people with the "word of the Lord which endureth for ever:" which "word of the Lord" he declares is the Gospel preached in their ears by himself and his brother apostles. In fact, the very word "Gospel," which means good news, glad tidings, carries consolation in its bosom. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and its chief power of consolation lies in this, that it reveals and seals the pardon of sin. And is not that a comfortable sound to a guilty sinner? You will recollect that when the Lord said to his servants, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," they were "to speak comfortably to Jerusalem," and to cry unto her that "her warfare was accomplished, her *iniquity pardoned*; for she had received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." There is no pardon except through the Gospel; and without pardon there can be no real consolation for a guilty conscience or a wounded spirit. It is only when the soul can take up that blessed language, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away;" that it can add, "And thou comfortedst me."

4. But again, the Lord favours his people from time to time with *his sweet presence*; and when he is thus graciously pleased to draw near and fill their hearts with all joy and peace in believing, then he administers to them "everlasting consolation." You never can be unhappy as long as you are favoured with the presence of the Lord. It is his absence, the withdrawing of the light of his countenance, the hiding of his face behind a dark cloud, which shut up the soul in misery and gloom. To be blessed with the light of his uplifted countenance, the testimony of his favour, the

shining in of his mercy and love—if there be any happiness upon this earthly ball, then and there alone is it to be found. This is consolation indeed; and may well be called "everlasting consolation," because it springs out of everlasting love, and is an earnest of everlasting peace.

5. But the Lord sometimes administers everlasting consolation by *a gracious word*; for with the word of a king there is power. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad." (Prov. 12:25.) Thus, when the Lord is pleased to apply a promise, drop in a word of encouragement, speak home an invitation with power, he administers thereby consolation. It comforts the drooping heart; it speaks peace to a guilty conscience. And this consolation is "everlasting" consolation; for it flows from nothing less than such a source, viz., the eternal love of God; and flows onward to an everlasting ocean of infinite delight.

Any intimation, indeed, of an interest in the everlasting love of God is a blessing beyond all price; for the Lord never gives any such intimation but as a certain pledge, earnest, and foretaste of immortal bliss. He can neither disappoint nor deceive. Once blest, blest for ever. We may, indeed, for a long time together cease to enjoy the comfort and even may fall into the greatest depths of darkness and confusion, so as to lose sight of almost all our evidences; but the foundation of God standeth sure: "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The river of eternal love may seem to flow by and not to reach our breast, so high are the banks and hidden out of sight the stream. Still, if ever it has watered our soul it will be one day "waters to swim in" of eternal delight.

ii. But there is another heavenly blessing spoken of in our text. Many dear saints of God seem to come short of "*everlasting consolation*." They want it, beg of the Lord to bestow it upon them, and cannot rest without it. Still the Lord, for gracious reasons and wise purposes, withholds the coveted blessing. But there is one thing he does give them, which the apostle speaks of in our text, and which I have now to open up: "*a good hope*

*through grace.*" Many of the Lord's own family who cannot say they have received that greatest and best of all blessing, "everlasting consolation," can still believe that they enjoy the second next best, "a good hope through grace."

1. Look, then, at the words, and observe first the expression, "*a good hope.*" This by implication means that there is a *bad* hope. And what is a bad hope? A hope founded, like the house of which the Lord speaks in the parable as built by the foolish man—upon the sand. Now if our hope rest upon a sandy foundation, it must needs give way when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it.

But the question may still arise, "What is a hope built upon a sandy foundation?" I will tell you. Any hope based upon self, whatever shape or form self may assume, is a hope that rests upon the sand. Any expectation that God will reward you for your good works; any hope that he will be merciful to you because you have not been so bad as others; any hope that by the exertion of your own strength and wisdom you may some day be in a better position to die than you are now; any hope based upon a mere profession of truth without a feeling experience of its power; any hope that stands upon the good opinion of others, and does not rest upon the testimony of the Spirit of God within; in a word, every hope which is not lodged by the breath of God in the heart, will prove to be a hope built upon the sand; or, to use the strong language of Bildad, the hope of a hypocrite, which shall perish.

2. The hope, then, here spoken of as "a good hope" is set in diametrical opposition to that sandy hope of which I have spoken. It is a *good* hope, because the Lord himself, who is the author of every good gift and every perfect gift, has planted it by his own Spirit in the breast. It is a good hope, because it is "an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast and enters into that within the veil." And especially it is a good hope, because it is "*through grace,*" as flowing through the undeserved favour of God, and not resting upon human merits, or any similar creature basis. Yes; it flows purely and solely out of the same stream of eternal love

which sends down consolation into believing hearts. The two blessings spoken of in our text we may perhaps compare to one mighty river, which parts into two streams of different magnitude, and yet both flow from the same eternal source. The larger and fuller stream runs in "everlasting consolation" into the breasts of some; the scantier, narrower, and shallower stream flows in "a good hope through grace" into the bosom of others. But the fountain is one. The same "Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father which hath loved us," who gives everlasting consolation to some, gives a good hope through grace to others. Let not, then, the dwellers upon the banks of those two streams contemn or judge one another. Both blessings are of sovereign grace. If the Lord has given you "everlasting consolation," do not despise your brother to whom has been given only "a good hope through grace;" and you who have only a good hope through grace, do not judge your more favoured brother to whom has been given everlasting consolation.

But *how* does the Lord give a good hope through grace, where he denies or gives but scantily everlasting consolation? I will mention a few means whereby the God of hope is pleased to communicate this good gift.

1. One way is by giving some *view by faith* of salvation by grace. If ever hope springs up in the breast of a sinner condemned by the law and a guilty conscience, it is when he gets a divine light upon the way of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Many of the dear children of God walk in much darkness for want of a clear view of the way of salvation. Others are held in bondage for years from sitting under a half-and-half gospel, from never being brought under the sound of divine truth, but kept in the dark by legal teachers who knowing nothing themselves of true grace, never give forth from their trumpet either a certain or a joyful sound. Now, when the poor prisoners who have long sat in affliction and iron under this ministry of bondage and death, are brought under the sound of the Gospel in its purity and power, the Lord the Spirit is often pleased to cast a divine light into their mind whereby they see, as with a heavenly ray enlightening the eyes of their understanding, salvation by the free and sovereign

grace of God. As illuminated with this divine light, the Scripture now shines before their eyes with a beauty and lustre of which they had no previous conception; salvation by grace is commended to their conscience as God's own plan of saving sinners; the gospel reaches their heart as a joyful sound; it is embraced with faith and affection; and as this light shines out of the fulness of Christ it kindles a sweet hope in their breast of an interest in him. Usually, the first hope that the Lord is pleased to inspire in the soul arises out of a view by faith of the way of salvation, an embracing of it in love, and an inward testimony by the spirit's witness of some interest in it.

2. But again, a good hope through grace is sometimes raised up in the heart by hearing *your experience traced out by a man of God*. You hear your spiritual feelings described, the work of grace opened up in its various branches, and some clear scriptural account given how the Lord begins and carries on his own secret operations upon the soul, when he calls it out of darkness into his marvellous light. As you listen to these things you find an inward response to them; for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Life and power attend the word to your heart; and you find an inward testimony that God has done something for your soul by his sovereign grace. You can walk in the way described step by step; and thus as you "feed your kids by the shepherds' tents," you find that you are walking "in the footsteps of the flock." (Song. 1:8.) Now this experience raises up in your heart a sweet hope that the God of all grace has had mercy upon you; that you have been and are under the teachings of his Spirit; and that he himself has wrought in you the work of faith with power.

3. But again, there are ever and anon shinings in *of divine light through dark clouds*. It is in grace as in nature. There are days in the experience of God's saints something like the present, quite an April day, when the sun does not shine in full beauty and brightness all the day long; clouds gather over its face; but now and then it breaks through them all, and they flee before him. So in the experience of many who truly fear God, there is much

darkness, many clouds, mists, and fogs that continually gather over the lower grounds of their soul. But rays and beams of mercy and grace every now and then shine through; sometimes in hearing the preached gospel; sometimes in gaining unlooked-for access to God in secret prayer; sometimes by the line of a hymn or a passage of scripture which seems to fall softly and yet weightily upon the heart; sometimes in reading the word and sweet meditation on it without any special application. It is not, then, all darkness and gloom with the child of grace; and even if his sky be for the most part clouded, yet rays and beams of heavenly light break in upon his heart; and as these come from the same Sun of righteousness which shines forth in all his unclouded beauty when he gives everlasting consolation, they kindle within a good hope through grace.

4. But again, as I must not tarry too long here, I will just name several other heavenly blessings which will inspire a good hope. Such are, *marked answers to prayer*; the *coming in of any word of God* with power to the heart; a sweet confidence that where the Lord has begun a good work he will carry it on; a hoping against hope, and a believing against unbelief; a cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart in spite of every difficulty; a view of the way in which the Lord has led us from strength to strength; a retrospective glance at his kind dealings in providence; how he has borne with our crooked manners in the wilderness; how from time to time he has renewed his gracious work upon the soul;—all these marks and evidences of the Lord's favour which cannot be denied or put away, kindle and keep alive a good hope through grace.

We are not to despise any that fear the Lord and have this good hope, even if they cannot rise much beyond it. Is it not called a "*good hope*?" Then who shall despise that which the Lord calls "*good*?" Is it not also "*through grace*?" And what has any one but through the free grace of God? If any now on earth were as much favoured as was Elijah, so as even to be carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, he would only so mount to glory by God's grace. If you had all the gifts and graces and heavenly revelations of Paul,

it would be only by God's grace. To despise, therefore, the weak family of God and ride over them rough-shod because they cannot speak of great consolations or blessed manifestations, is to do what those are so denounced for doing in Ezekiel, as "thrusting with side and with shoulder, and pushing all the diseased with their horns till they have scattered them abroad." God forbid that any servant of Christ, at least, should act the part of those fat cattle who do such deeds of oppression and injustice—those "fat and strong" whom the Lord has promised to "feed with judgment." No; his office is rather to comfort the feeble-minded, to strengthen the weak hands and to confirm the feeble knees, and, according to the Lord's own description of a faithful shepherd, "to seek that which is lost, to bring again that which is driven away, to bind up that which is broken, and to strengthen that which is sick." (Ezek. 34:16.)

III.—But having thus, however feebly, opened up blessings past, yet we hope in a sense still present, I shall pass on to show *the blessings to come*, for which the apostle prayed; and those will be found no less sweet and no less suitable as we journey onward in this vale of tears: "*Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.*" Two blessings are here prayed for from the same eternal source of all grace and glory, viz., that "the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father which hath loved us," that these two persons of the glorious Trinity (not to the exclusion of the blessed Spirit, for he is indeed the Comforter) would condescend to communicate two further blessings to the Church at Thessalonica; and not to it only but to all saints in all ages. This indeed is but a carrying further out, and a richer, ampler, and larger communication of a blessing already given. I shall not, therefore, go over again the same ground, but rather attempt to show the trials and afflictions to which the Lord's own comfort is adapted; for, as I said before, what is comfort except to the afflicted? Both Scripture and daily experience concur to show us that the Lord's people are for the most part "an afflicted and poor people." I have seen at various times and in various places very many of the saints of God, and I believe I can say I never yet saw one manifested to my conscience as such without

seeing or hearing of some trial or affliction in his lot. Indeed, according to God's own testimony, it is "through much tribulation" that we are to enter into the kingdom; and therefore there is no entering into the kingdom of grace here or the kingdom of glory hereafter without it. But let this be ever borne in mind that whatever affliction befall the saints, it is laid upon them by the hand of God, and that for the express purpose of putting them into a situation and making them capable of receiving those comforts which God only can bestow.

Let us then cast a glance at some of the afflictions of the saints of God.

1. Many of them are heavily afflicted in *temporal matters*. God's people for the most part are poor in this world's goods, for he "hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith." None know the heavy burden of poverty but those who have to carry it. What difficulties, perplexities, and heart-rending anxieties in these times especially of such severe competition, of such narrow profits, and such unceasing demands of sums which must be paid, rack and grind the very vitals of many of the Lord's dear family to maintain even an honourable position, and not sink down into the depths of debt and disgrace! There is also a constant dread upon their spirit of a future worse than the present; for an unbelieving heart and a timid mind often conjure up fearful spectres of a terrible scene yet to come. The Lord indeed knoweth how to deliver; but the weight and burden of deep poverty are heavy indeed, and should touch with sympathy the hearts of those who have power to relieve any part of it.

2. Others of the Lord's people who may be spared the pressing burden of poverty or a struggling position in business, have heavy *family trials*, from their children growing up sickly, and thus a constant source of anxiety and expense, or removed from them by the hand of the Almighty in the very bloom of youth; or else, from their waywardness and stubbornness, threatening to be a source of future uneasiness and trouble. None but parents know the weight with which children lie upon the heart; what

anxieties they cause; what fears for their health and success in life; and above all, what painful thoughts as to their eternal state.

3. Others of the Lord's people are more *personally afflicted* by having a suffering body, an earthly tabernacle bowed down by continual pain, or by some inward complaint which depresses alike both body and mind, and seems to quite unfit them for life and its needful struggles.

It is true that all these are but *temporal* afflictions, which will cease when the weary are at rest; and those who only look at them as borne by others may think them light; but the back which has to carry the load knows best the weight of the burden. You may see the collar on another's shoulder, but can you look underneath at how cruelly the withers are wrung, and how the bleeding neck is galled by the heavy yoke. Get the same collar upon your own shoulders, and then you will best know whether the yoke presses heavily upon the neck or not. At any rate, the Lord's family, pressed down by their various temporal sorrows, need comfort from God, if they cannot get sympathy from you; and the Lord, who knows how to comfort the cast down, has abundant consolation to give them. If they are tried with poverty, he can appear conspicuously for them in providence; or if he withhold the providential blessings and delay the promised help, he can amply make it up by the sweet manifestations of his love. The bread which endureth for ever shall be given in the room of the bread which perisheth, and the riches of his grace for the gold and silver of this world's glory. If, as in David's case, their house be not so with God as their fond heart could wish, yet can he give them union with his own dear family, making "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty" nearer to them than their own flesh and blood; and if family troubles mar family happiness, or if death rend asunder earthly ties, he can grant them submission to his holy will, and grace to kiss the rod. If they are afflicted in their tabernacle, the Lord can make bodily sickness a greater blessing than rude health, giant strength or unbroken spirits; for these have been the curse of thousands. Health, that greatest of all temporal blessings, has in thousands of instances added fresh

impetus to every vile lust, and been the means of eternal destruction to legions who have put far away the evil day, and abused God's best gift to sin with greater eagerness and more unchecked impetuosity.

But these temporal griefs and sorrows I am willing to acknowledge are light compared with *spiritual* afflictions; but I can only now briefly name a few. The heavy burden, then, of sin upon a guilty conscience; the harassing workings of a body of corruption, which never seems to cease it, oozings up against the Majesty of heaven; sore temptations from the prince of darkness; doubts and fears as to the soul's present position before the Lord, and whether it will reach in peace the heavenly shore; a most painful sense of repeated and past backslidings which seem at times to cut off free and familiar access in prayer, and to intercept as with it dark cloud the sweet discoveries of the Lord's love—these are but a sample of the many trials and afflictions with which the Lord seems good to exercise many of his people.

But all those trials and afflictions, whether temporal or spiritual, pave the way for what the apostle prays for so earnestly in our text, that the Lord would "*comfort their hearts.*" Observe that he makes no mention of earthly comfort. All such comforts, like the ass and servants of Abraham, must abide at the foot of the mount when sacrifice is to be made, if need be, of an only son and Jehovah-jireh to appear. There is something very emphatic in the apostle's expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself." Observe the word "*himself.*" See how it carries up our eyes and hearts to Jesus *himself* at the right hand of God. O, none but Jesus himself and the Father can comfort a truly afflicted heart. But he can and does from time to time comfort his dear people by a sense of his presence; by a word of power from his gracious lips; by the light of his countenance; by the balm of his atoning blood and dying love; and by the work and witness of the Spirit within. And as they receive this consolation from the mouth of God, their hearts are comforted. Thus they have an interest not only in the prayer of the apostle, "comfort your hearts," but in its answer too, when the Lord speaks comfortably unto them.

ii. But now let us look at the second part of the apostle's prayer: "*And stablish you in every good word and work.*" The living family of God need to be established in the truth, so as not ever to be "children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." It is not sufficient for a building to be reared: it must be established before we can know whether it will stand. The most anxious moment of the builder is to see how it will settle; how the walls will bear the roof, and every part stand firm and good without bulging or slipping. When the centering is taken away from a newly built arch, how the architect looks to see whether it will settle well and the extent of the drop, if there be any. So in grace. It is not merely making a profession that will serve. Many a building stands well as long as the scaffolding remains; many an arch looks firm whilst the centering supports it. So many seem to stand well in early days, when upheld by zeal and earnestness or strengthened by the support of others. But how will the soul stand when these helps be removed? Will it be stablished in the faith, or fall into some error or some gross evil, and, thus like an arch badly built, drop into ruin when the centering is taken away. How we continually see those who once seemed firm in the truth now greedily drinking down some deadly error presented to their lips under the charm of a plausible novelty; and others fall headlong into some open sin, or get entangled in some delusion. O that the Lord would stablish you, me, and all who desire to fear his name firmly and deeply in his precious truth, that we may never fall a pray to evil or error, but may have a religion of his own maintaining; that the work upon our heart may be the genuine work of God first and last; a building of his own raising and his own establishing, that it may stand firm amidst the storms of time, and endure all eternity.

1. But this establishing is twofold. First, in *every good word*.

We read of Naphtali, that he is "a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words." (Gen. 49:21.) That words are of great importance the Lord himself tells us, where he says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt.

12:37.) The Lord's people, therefore, under the influence of his grace, speak good words; and when they have uttered them, they need to be stablished in every good word thus spoken. But what are these "*good words*?"

Have you not sometimes spoken to a friend a good word *for the Lord*? Has he done nothing for your soul for which you can bless and praise his name? Is it all darkness within and unbelief, guilty fear and confusion? Is there nothing you can lay your hand upon that the Lord has ever done for your soul in a way of grace? Under the sweet influence, then, of his Spirit, you can sometimes speak a good word for the Lord. But when you have spoken a good word in this way, you are sometimes tried about it, whether it was spoken aright, or at the proper season, or with a proper motive, or without addition, and solely to the glory of God. Now the Lord alone can stablish you in this good word, by shining again upon your soul and giving you fresh reason to speak well of his name.

So again, when you have spoken to the children of God and told them how the Lord has dealt with you in providence or in grace, it has been a *good word to them* and they have felt it good to hear it; but you want to be stablished in it, that it may be proved to have been a real word for God, and that what you have said was made by God himself a good word to their heart.

But the servant of the Lord especially has to *give good words*. He has to speak well of Jesus Christ, of his blood, and righteousness, and dying love. And he too has deep need to be stablished in every good word thus spoken, by observing the effect produced by it upon the hearts of the hearers, and by seeing how the Lord blesses to them the word of his lips.

2. But there is also a being stablished "*in every good work*;" for believers have good works to perform as well as good words to speak. We are to be a people "zealous of good works." Men must not cast the charge upon us that we neglect or think lightly of them. Let them rather see our good works and glorify our Father

which is in heaven as the author of them.

But as the heart is to be "established by grace and not with meats" (Heb. 13:9), so also must every good word and every good work be similarly established. When, then, the Lord shows us that the words we speak and the works we do in his holy name are wrought in us by his grace, do not come from the flesh, but are of the pure operation of his Spirit, then there is a being established in every good word and work.

O the heavenly blessings thus prayed for by the apostle! O that we might have a manifest interest in them! How good the Lord is of his own free grace to bestow them upon his redeemed family! May he give us much of them! May he, wherever he has bestowed upon any of us everlasting consolation or even a good hope through grace,—may he comfort our hearts as we journey through this vale of tears; may our consolations be neither few nor small, and may he stablish us in every good word and work. Then what we are and have, and what we speak and do by his grace, will prove to be of the operation of the Spirit, and we shall stand, yea stand firmly established upon the Rock of ages, both for time and for eternity.

## **The Everliving Intercessor**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 15, 1866

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

There are two questions which deeply interest every one who is made alive unto God by regenerating grace. The first is, How are his sins to be pardoned—how is he to stand justified before God? This question I answered this morning. I showed you from the word of truth that a sufficient answer to all charges, true or false, made against the elect of God, and a complete reply to every condemning tongue, were given in that comprehensive declaration which I opened up: "It is God that justifieth;" "it is Christ that died." This point, therefore, I need not further dwell upon. But what is the second question which deeply interests, and often painfully exercises every quickened child of God? It is this: How shall the life of God be maintained in his breast? If he is, as he hopes he is, a partaker of the grace of God, how shall that grace be kept in living exercise that he may be brought through every trial, temptation, and affliction, and eventually landed safe in glory? To that question I shall attempt to give an answer this evening, in opening up and laying before you the contents of our text.

You are doubtless aware that the High Priest under the Law had two main offices to perform, and that both of these were clearly and beautifully represented by what he was commanded to do on the tenth day of the seventh month—the great day of atonement. These two offices were first, to offer sacrifice, and secondly, to make intercession, for his own sins and for the sins of the people. The sacrifice for his own sins was offered when he slew the bullock for a sin offering. This was to make atonement for himself, and for his house, as we read, "And Aaron shall offer his

bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house." (Levit. 16:6.) But to make atonement for the sins of the people he had to perform two distinct things, first, to bring the goat (for there were two upon which lots were cast) upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering; and, secondly, to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, or the scape goat as it is usually called, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the live goat, and then to send it away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The other part of his priestly office, that of intercession for his own sins and the sins of the people, he thus accomplished. He took a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small. With this censer he entered into the most holy place, as we read: "And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Levit. 16:13.) Thus, a cloud of perfume filled the most holy place at the same time that he was sprinkling the blood on and before the mercy seat. This was his intercession for his own sins and the sins of the people; and you will observe the beautiful connection between the sacrifice which atoned for sin and the smoking incense which typically interceded for the sinner. It was not common fire by which the incense was lighted, but by live coals taken from off the brazen altar upon which the sacrifices were offered. This established a connection between the sacrifice and the intercession; and the sprinkling of the blood on and before the mercy seat established another. This cloud of incense, then, filling the most holy place with its odoriferous breath, represented the intercession of Christ, which, deriving its virtue, influence, and efficacy from his glorious Person, finished work, meritorious sufferings, and atoning blood, is still ever rising up to fill with its sacred perfume the courts of heaven.

It is clear, then, that the high priest under the law performed two works on the day of atonement—sacrifice and intercession. In both these offices he was a type and representative of the Lord

Jesus Christ. Incense, in imitation of the Romish usage, is being revived in some of our parish churches; but it should be borne in mind that incense implies sacrifice, and is a part of it. He, therefore, who revives incense revives sacrifice; and he who revives sacrifice disannuls and pours contempt upon the one great sacrifice, and denies the efficacy of the atoning blood and present intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be consistent they should restore circumcision and the blood of bullocks and goats; for the smoke of incense has no more part in Christian worship than the Paschal lamb or the daily sacrifice. The first part then of his priestly office our gracious Lord performed upon Calvary. There he offered his holy soul and body, the whole of his pure humanity, upon the altar of his Deity; there he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; there the bleeding victim hung; there the precious blood was shed which cleanseth from all sin; and there the work which the Father gave him to do was completed; for he cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished," and then bowed his sacred head and gave up the ghost. But, in order to carry out the second part of the priestly office, to make intercession for the people, it was needful for him to rise from the dead, to ascend into heaven, and there to enter into the immediate presence of God with the blood and with the incense, that he might perpetually be at the right hand of the Father as the high priest over the house of God. Our text, therefore, says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And so testifies the apostle elsewhere: "Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34.) John also graciously assures us in almost similar language: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and connecting together the two parts of his priestly office, sacrifice and intercession, adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins"—propitiation past by sacrifice once offered, advocacy present by intercession now offering.

In the chapter before us the various qualifications of our great High Priest, chiefly as compared with the Levitical priests, are beautifully and blessedly set forth, such as his being a priest of the order of Melchisedec, of a higher order than that of Levi; his

priesthood not ever passing away and transferred to another, as was the case, in consequence of death, with the priests under the law, for he was made after the power of an endless life; and his being made a priest by virtue of an oath of God, which gave a greater sanction to his priesthood than that of the priests under the law who were made without it. But neither my time nor your attention will allow me to enter at large upon these points, however profitable it might be to consider them, and which you can do for yourselves, if the Lord should lead you into their spiritual meaning, in your private reading at home. I shall therefore at once come to my text, from which I shall endeavour, if the Lord enable, to set before you three courses; and may they be courses of heavenly food. May the Lord spread the table, and put upon it a banquet at which you may bountifully feed, whilst he kindly says to you, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

I.—*First*, I shall describe the character of the man to whom the text chiefly addresses itself: He is spoken of as one who *comes to God by Jesus Christ*.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall show the ability of this blessed High Priest to *save*, and that *to the uttermost*, every such spiritual comer.

III.—*Thirdly*, I shall bring before you the scriptural reason *why* he is thus able to save all such to the uttermost: "Seeing he ever *liveth to make intercession for them*."

I.—There is one point in which I much admire the word of God, and especially that portion of it which falls under the name of the New Testament. Whilst it strongly insists upon repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ; though in almost every page it enforces or assumes that divine change which we call the work of grace upon the heart, it does not set up a rigorous standard as ministers are often disposed to do, squaring and levelling everything to fit exactly in with their own experience. Nothing can be more clear and distinct both in the gospels and epistles than that there are certain strong marks and evidences of grace in the heart, the possession of which is

indispensable to salvation; and yet, if I may use the expression, the word of truth spreads a kindly hand to bring into the bosom of mercy all in whom there are such marks as are in our text, which may not at first sight appear so clear or conspicuous as other evidences of a divine work. Mistake me not. I am not against a standard of experience, but I am against a *rigorous* standard of experience. These two things widely differ. I myself am continually setting up a standard in every sermon which I preach; and so is every minister who preaches the truth from a feeling experience of its power; for every mark of grace which he sets up is so far a standard whereby he measures the family of God, and separates and distinguishes them from those who are still dead in sins, and walking after the course of this world. There must then be some standard set up of a divine work upon the soul, or how are we to know the children of God from the children of the wicked one? How are we to discover the features of grace in the living family, and to point out, both for their encouragement and instruction, and as a word of warning or conviction to others, what are the true marks of divine teaching? Every sent servant of God must have a standard, or he cannot possibly take forth the precious from the vile, and so be as God's mouth. But this need not be a precise, rigid, cast-iron standard, which, like the standard of the army, will not take a man for a soldier unless he be five feet six in height, and so many inches round the chest. Our blessed Lord, for instance, declares, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;" "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Is there not a standard here, and that set up by our blessed Lord of the new birth, of repentance, and faith? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Is there not a standard there? "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Is there no standard there? "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and

daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is there no standard there? "A tree is known by its fruits: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down." Is there no standard there? Thus we see that there is a standard set up in the word of God; but it does not say that you must lie so many weeks, days, or months under the law, that you must sink down into death, hell, and despair before deliverance comes; that you must have faith given you just in a certain way and just at a certain moment. The word of God, I say, does not square and level all Christian experience, or plane and turn every part of it according to precise rule, to make the whole fit as nicely and work as truly as the piston of a locomotive, or the valves of a steam engine. Thus, though the word of God sets up a standard, and a very true, accurate, and trying standard too, yet it does not set up that rigorous, precise, cast-iron standard which some ministers seem inclined to set up, referring everything to, and measuring everything by, their own experience, and cutting every thing and every body to pieces that do not exactly agree with it. But to recur to what I started from in this little digression, I said I admired much this feature in the word of God—the way in which it stretches forth a kindly hand to those in whom the Holy Ghost has begun and is carrying on a certain work, of which the end and intention may be much hidden from the very persons who are passing under his hands, and which might not appear very plain to others. Last Lord's day, for instance, I endeavoured to show you that God had furnished strong consolation to all who had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. There all who had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them were spoken of as heirs of promise, as those for whom God had designed strong consolation, and on whose behalf he had pledged both his word and his oath. Now take a corresponding mark and evidence from our text this evening: "He is able to save them to the uttermost who *come unto God by him.*" That is the evidence we have this evening; that is the sheep-mark, the broad stamp of grace which he has impressed by his divine hand upon every living soul, upon every gracious heart. Look at it again; see the handwriting of God; observe the man on whom he has set his mark. He is one who comes unto

God by Jesus Christ. But you will say, "Why, this is simple enough, so simple indeed, and may I not add so weak and feeble, that I can scarcely receive it as sufficient to make and manifest a man to be a Christian. Do you mean to say that all that is required for a man to be saved is to come unto God by Jesus Christ?" Yes, I do; and if I say that, I have God's word upon my side. But perhaps you and I when we come to examine matters a little more closely, might not exactly agree upon this point—what it is to come to God by Jesus Christ. You might view it in one light and I might view it in another. You might think it meant one thing and I might think it meant another. Now let me lay it down in my light, as I see it, as I feel it, as I know it, as I have experienced it, for I claim a right to do so, as standing up in the name of the Lord to preach his truth; and then do you look at it in your light, in your judgment, in your knowledge of divine things, according to the experience of your soul, and see whether you and I this evening can travel together in any harmonious concord. I hope never to attempt to impose my views upon any man's faith or conscience simply because they are my views. It is true that they were not taken up hastily, but are the result of the power of God's word upon my heart and conscience, and have stood the test of many years' experience of temptation and trial. But all I ask is, let them be compared with the teaching of the word without and the teaching of the Holy Spirit within; the testimony of God in the Scriptures and the testimony of God in the soul.

Let us then begin at the beginning; and first let us settle what is meant by the expression to come unto God by Jesus Christ. The phrase often occurs in the Scriptures, and has, for the most part, two meanings, being expressive sometimes of faith and sometimes of worship. Thus our Lord says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There it means faith, for we come to Christ when we believe in him. He therefore said to the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have me;" that is, "Ye will not believe in me, or come to me by faith." We see this connection also in the words, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) Here we find coming to Christ

and believing on him to mean the same thing. So also in the passage: "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learnt of the Father cometh unto me." Bunyan, in his Pilgrim's Progress, puts the same thing very nicely in the mouth of Hopeful, where he says to Christian, "Then I saw from that saying, 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst,' that believing and coming was all one, and that he that came, that is, ran out in his heart and affections after salvation by Christ, he indeed believeth in Christ." But sometimes to come unto God signifies access to him in spiritual worship, which is often expressed in the Old Testament, by "drawing nigh unto God," as James also speaks. "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you." This spiritual worship of God is a drawing near to him with a true heart, having, as the apostle speaks, "access by one Spirit unto the Father." I shall view the words in both of these senses; and to make the whole subject more plain, shall go back to the very beginning of the work of God upon the soul.

1. One thing is very evident, that no man comes to God of his own free will. Look at ourselves: for a man's own case will decide the matter for him better than a thousand arguments. What were we in times past before the Lord was pleased to touch our heart with the finger of his Spirit? Did we come to God by Jesus Christ? Did you come to God by Jesus Christ? Did I come to God by Jesus Christ? I did not; you must answer for yourselves whether you did. I did not want to come to God by Jesus Christ. I neither knew God nor Jesus Christ, and I did not want to know them; for I was very sure that anything like the spiritual religion which I saw in others would cut to pieces all my worldly plans and all my worldly pleasures; and with these dearly beloved idols I felt I could not and would not part. I had no objection to a religion which left me their enjoyment; but to give up everything for Christ and his gospel lay neither in my will nor power. And is not this the experience of all? For is not this the language of the carnal mind? "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." There is something in coming to God, except in a formal way, which fills the mind with awe and apprehension, where there is

any measure of tenderness in the natural conscience. Coming to God, when once we begin to see what it really means, seems to cut off and cut up all that we want naturally to enjoy; seems to bring us face to face with religion when we don't want to have anything to do with religion; to call us out of the world when we want to live in the world; to give up the lusts of the flesh when we delight in the lusts of the flesh; and abandon everything that nature loves for a God that we don't love, nor know, nor believe in, nor care for. I can only speak for myself, for I never could settle down in that formal, Pharisaical, self-righteous, ceremonial religion which I saw everywhere around me, and in which some of my friends very quietly ensconced themselves. I knew there was such a thing as true religion, very distinct from this dead round of Pharisaic formality and lip service. Then surely if we ever came to God by Jesus Christ something must have been done for us and in us quite distinct from all will and power of our own; something in which we had no hand, and yet was not done without our heart. Now we who know anything of divine things by divine teaching can look back to a memorable period in our lives when a mighty revolution took place, whereby we came unto God who had never come unto God before. Can you not look back upon such a marked epoch in your life, or some such change, if not sudden, more or less gradual in the experience of your soul? It is true that you did not there and then come to God by Jesus Christ, because you did not know Jesus Christ nor the way of salvation by his blood and righteousness; yet there was a coming to God, and after a time, as the way of salvation was opened up to your heart, there was a coming to him by Jesus Christ. Did I not explain that by coming unto God the Scriptures sometimes meant believing in him? "He that cometh unto God," says the apostle, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But to believe in God is to believe the testimony of his word, for we only know God through his word, and can only believe in him as he reveals himself in it to our conscience. This is beautifully expressed by the apostle: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when we received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which

effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2:13.) The way in which the Lord works is this: he applies his word with power to the conscience. It is then received, not as the word of men, but as the word of God; and as thus received "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," it effectually worketh in them that believe; that is, it produces certain marked effects in them. Now what is one of the first effects of this divine work? What says the Scriptures? "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." This is the way I came; that is the way you came. Sin charged upon the conscience, divine realities presented to view, the things of eternity weighing with solemn power upon the mind, so as much to absorb the thoughts, occupy the attention, and exercise the soul, combined, it might be, with other sources of anxiety and trouble, worked together to produce a mighty change within, and to bring us to seek relief from God and God alone. We could not stay away from him who alone could give us needed help: for these were the drawings of God, as the Lord speaks: "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And be well assured that when God draws we must come; when he pours out the Spirit of grace and of supplication we must pray; and when he breaks the heart we must weep. When he gives repentance the stony heart will melt and the dry eye-balls flow down with tears. O it is a weeping time when God begins his work of grace upon the soul. How tender the conscience is, how soft the heart, how broken the spirit, how humble the mind, how prayerful the soul, how teachable, how willing to give up anything and give up everything to be right at the last. This is coming unto God. We did not know there was a God before, nor did we believe his word, either its threatenings or its promises; for we knew neither God in his mercy nor God in his wrath. But now we knew that there is a God, a holy God, a just God, a righteous God, a heart-searching God; and we came to this God because we could not, because we durst not, because we must not stay away from him. If we did stay away, he soon made us come again; for his Spirit gave us neither rest nor peace till we came unto him again and again with confessions of sin, with cries for mercy, with pleas for pardon, and with beggings for grace. And yet we knew little it

may be of Jesus Christ all this time. Your mind was not, at least my mind was not, enlightened as it has been since. We came to the law to see what that could do for us. We tried our own righteousness, fleshly holiness, creature resolutions, promises, and it may be, even went so far as to bind ourselves with vows to do better and be better; yet found that all were broken through; guilt still increasing, conscience more heavily loaded, sin stronger, and power to resist it weaker. But by and by, in his own time and way the same God who convinced of sin by his Spirit let down into the soul a ray of divine light, in which light we saw the Son of God as the way, the truth, and the life, the Mediator between God and man; we caught a glimpse of his glorious Person, saw the efficacy of his atoning blood, beheld the blessedness of his finished work; and the heart began to leap and dance for joy at the very thought and prospect of being saved by free, sovereign grace. As soon then as Christ is thus made known, it takes the veil off the heart, and we get glimpses, glances, little breakings in, not perhaps very clear or bright, and yet enough to draw out faith and hope and love toward him: not a full revelation, not a bright manifestation, not a glorious discovery and breaking in of the Son of Righteousness in all the blessedness of his divine Person, but beams and rays, glancings in of his presence and power, just enough to draw our hearts unto him and show us there is no salvation but in him and by him. Now as this is wrought with a divine power in the soul, there is a coming unto God by Jesus Christ. We see there is no coming unto God in a broken law, in the strength of the creature, in our own righteousness. A holy law with a tremendous curse attached to it cuts off all hope and all confidence in the flesh; but as the Son of God beams in upon the soul in his Person, blood, and work, beauty, blessedness and divine suitability, there is such a laying hold of him by the hand of faith. such a looking unto him, believing in him, cleaving to him, that there is a coming unto God by him.

2. I before observed that another meaning of coming unto God was, access to him by spiritual worship. Now until we came to him by Jesus Christ we had no access unto God, for it is by faith

in Christ that "we have access into this grace wherein we stand;" and our Lord has positively declared that no man cometh unto the Father but by him. When, then, we came to God by Jesus Christ, we found no repulse. When we came to God in ourselves, in our own righteousness, we found nothing but frowns, anger, threatenings, wrath, guilt and bondage; but when we came by Jesus Christ, no repulse, no angry look, no forbidding frown, no terrible law, no awful curse drove us back, for God allows himself to be approached unto, believed in, worshipped, adored, and loved in the face of his dear Son. Now this is coming unto God by Jesus Christ, both in faith and worship; for he is the way, and there is no other, of either true faith or acceptable service. He has given this as a special mark of his people, a special mark of divine teaching: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45.) Nay, he himself has opened wide his gracious arms in those tender words which have dropped the sweetest consolation into thousands of burdened hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Nay, he kindly chides us: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." As his arms upon the cross were extended wide, so in his word he is extending his arms to receive every coming sinner. And do we not often find the benefit and blessing of this? In coming to God by Jesus Christ, we see by the eye of faith a living way, a door of mercy open in his bleeding hands and feet and side; and however desperate may seem his case, or forlorn his state, we have the testimony of his own word that God never has rejected and never will reject any sensible sinner who comes to him by Jesus Christ.

II.-But this leads me to my second point, which is, that he is *able to save them to the uttermost that* come unto God by him.

i. I shall have several things to notice from these words; and, first, let us direct our attention to the expression, "*able*." "He is able to save them." What ability is this? Is it his absolute ability, as the eternal Son of God, God over all, blessed for ever, or his office ability, that is, his power as the great High Priest over the

house of God? It is the latter, for that is the power on which faith has to fix its eyes. Not but what he has absolute power; not but what his power as High Priest mainly rests upon his power as the Son of God. But the apostle does not direct our faith so much to his absolute power as able to save or destroy, as to his office power as priest to fulfil that office with all the greatness and glory of his mediatorial character. He is able, then, to save them in the present exercise of his priestly office. It is a part of his present work to save them—what he is ever living to do for them, and in which he ever displays the greatness of his love and the fulness of his power. As he thoroughly and completely finished the work which God gave him to do upon earth by his sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death; so now he lives to make that work thoroughly and completely effectual in heaven.

ii. But now look at the expression, "*to the uttermost.*" What made the Holy Ghost pen such a word as this? Why did he put down such a wonderful, I might almost say extraordinary, out-of-the-way expression as "to the uttermost?" Because he who reads all hearts and knows all persons, things, and circumstances, well knew what the secret feelings and exercises of the blood-bought family would be, as they travel onward and homeward through their various paths of trial and temptation. He kindly, therefore, put in this word for their comfort and relief; and O what a word it has been to thousands of weary hearts and way-worn pilgrims—"to the uttermost." And as it has distilled its choice consolation into their breast, how they have blessed God for it, and laid hold of it as a golden cord let down from heaven into their hearts. Let us see, then, whether we can enter a little into this blessed word which the Holy Ghost has so kindly put in here.

The term, "to the uttermost," seems, first, to express something as regards ourselves; and, secondly, something as regards the blessed Lord.

1. First, as regards *ourselves*. Sooner or later, every one who comes to God by Jesus Christ will find in his own experience the need and the blessedness of the expression, "to the uttermost." I

say sooner or later, for it is not often at the first that we either need or can drink out of this cup of consolation. When, for instance, we are indulged with access to God in early days, in the day of our espousals when we go after him into a land not sown, and leave all for his name's sake, esteeming, with Moses, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," we do not know the meaning of the word "to the uttermost." We may have felt the hard and heavy bondage of the law, and despaired of all hope and help from the works of the flesh, but we did not know our desperate case and state then, as we have seen and felt it since; nor what we should have to learn as we travel through the wilderness. We knew but little then of trials, temptations, afflictions, exercises, slips, falls, backslidings, and all that host of inward evil and all that array of terrible perils that we have had to struggle though, and are still struggling with, before we reach the heavenly shore. We did not see in those days that salvation is such a wonderful thing as it really is. Salvation without, by his blood and righteousness, seemed an easier work for Christ to have done for us, and salvation within, by his operations and grace, an easier thing for the Holy Ghost to do in us, than we afterwards have found to be the case. But as we journey on we begin first to meet with heavy *trials*, for "the Lord trieth the righteous." The gold he bids us purchase is "gold tried in the fire." It is "the trial of our faith which is more precious than of gold that perisheth." We shall not journey then far before we come upon a scene of trials, and it may be very heavy and painful ones. Trial ground will soon be the ground on which our feet will have to stand. Now when we get over the pleasant fields and get upon trial ground, *that* stirs up the corruptions of our nature; that works upon the evils of our heart, and brings to light a host of undiscovered sins and corruptions which before lay slumbering in the dark; nestling like little chickens under the wing of the mother hen. But by and by, these secret and hitherto unperceived evils begin to manifest themselves; unbelief, infidelity, rebellion, murmuring, fretfulness, begin to work; and by and by, there comes upon the back of these despondency, and it may be almost a sinking into a state of despair. Then we begin to find that salvation is not such a light thing, such an easy thing,

such a common-place thing, if I may use such an expression, as men speak about, when they are inviting everybody to come to Christ and be saved, just as if it were as easy to come to Christ and obtain salvation as to take a walk, or go home to dinner. We begin to find there is some meaning now in the word "to the uttermost," and that salvation is not a thing thrown down like a handful of corn for any and every bird to pick up, just as, when, and where it likes. The children of Israel found it no easy matter to get out of Egypt. It needed, so to speak, all the power of God, what the Scripture calls, "his mighty hand and his outstretched arm," to bring them out of the house of bondage. Pharaoh would not easily let them go; nor would the Red Sea easily let them cross it. And when they got into the wilderness, what a "great and terrible wilderness" they found it, to use God's own description of it—how waste, how howling, how beset with fiery flying serpents, how barren and desolate, how parched up with drought and heat. And is not their wilderness journey a standing scriptural figure of the way which the redeemed now tread, and whereby they learn what is in their heart, and what is meant by salvation to the uttermost?

But as we get a further acquaintance with the evils of our heart, we begin to know something also about the *temptations* of Satan, his accusations, his fiery darts, his hellish suggestions, and how he sets on fire all the combustible material of our carnal mind. And this opens our eyes a little more clearly still to see the beauty, suitability, and blessedness of the words "to the uttermost." We find there is something in us, as well as in the text, which is an uttermost; and if we are ever allowed to slip, fall, and backslide—and all do so inwardly even if kept from it outwardly, and thereby bring great guilt upon our conscience and great bondage upon our spirit, this will effectually teach us the meaning of "to the uttermost." We shall then find the word not a bit too big a word, not too large an expression; but O how sweetly suitable and blessedly comprehensive! How it seems to take, and as if accompany us to the very end of the tether. Go to the uttermost of despondency to which a child of God may sink; go to the uttermost of trial; go to the uttermost of temptation; go

to the uttermost of a knowledge of your heart; go to the uttermost as experimentally feeling that you are one of the most difficult persons to be saved of all God's people; and that if ever there were a case which seemed to exceed all others in extreme necessity and desperate circumstances, it is yours—go, I say, to the end of the tether, and see then and learn there what is meant by "the uttermost." But O what a mercy it is that God holds the end of the tether fast and firm in one hand, though you hang faint and trembling at the other; that his arm is long enough and strong enough to pull you out even of hell itself, I mean, of course, in soul feeling; that were you in the belly of the whale with Jonah, or in the belly of hell with the same prophet, his arm is long enough and strong enough to pull you out of the whale's belly and out of the belly of hell itself. Now it is only those who have passed through trials, exercises, and temptations in some measure, such as I have described, that can enter into the meaning of "to the uttermost;" who will cling to it, embrace it, hang upon it, and blessedly realise it. It is not a word for light-hearted, lightheaded, light-heeled, light-tongued professors of religion, who never felt the solemn weight of eternity, the heavy burden of sin, the galling yoke of bondage, the daily load of the evils of their own heart. A light, easy, smooth, and pliable religion suits them—a salvation for anybody and a salvation for everybody, a salvation without guilt, fear, or bondage, a path without trial or temptation, distress or exercise, a Laodicean profession which they can slip on or slip off like a morning gown or an easy shoe. "Uttermost" was never meant for them. But O what an encouraging word for God's poor and needy family, those of them who feel that they have sinned to the uttermost, disbelieved to the uttermost, rebelled to the uttermost, murmured to the uttermost, and offended to the uttermost: who have been indeed as if miraculously held up and kept by the hand of God, but still in their feelings have gone to the uttermost to which any vessel of mercy could ever have sunk.

2. But now look at the words as they apply to *our gracious Lord*. He has an uttermost as well as we. And what is *his* uttermost? The uttermost of Godhead—can you measure that? The uttermost

of grace—can you limit that? The uttermost of love—can you fathom that? The uttermost of power—can you define that? View him as the God-Man; see the work which he finished at Calvary; view him in his present glory at the right hand of the Father, and then say what is the uttermost of the risen Christ, the Immanuel, God with us. Put these two things together, for they fit in like mortice and tenon: your uttermost which is the uttermost of badness, and Christ's uttermost which is the uttermost of goodness; your uttermost the uttermost of helplessness, his uttermost the uttermost of help, for God has laid help upon one that is mighty; your uttermost the uttermost of misery and wretchedness, want, and woe, and his uttermost the uttermost of pity, mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassion. And when you have put together man's uttermost and God's uttermost, a poor sinner's uttermost and the Saviour's uttermost, then as you embrace this in your understanding, in your conscience, and in your affections, you will rise up to some spiritual knowledge of what it is for Christ to be able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. And depend upon it if you are a living soul, you will have to know some day, if you don't know it now, what it is for Christ to save to the uttermost. You may not have gone at present into much trial, temptation, soul-desolation, painful exercises, or desperate circumstances. But you have got to die, and who can tell what you may have to experience upon your bed of languishing? Who can tell what sins, backslidings, slips, and falls may then stare you in the face? Who can tell what accusations may be then brought against you by a guilty conscience, or an accusing devil? Who can tell what hidings of God's face there may be then for you to endure, and what dreadful sinking of your desponding soul in consequence? We hope it may be otherwise; and if we have passed through scenes of heavy trial, and got the blessing already beforehand, God does not usually lay on his heavy hand at the last. But we must have at some time or other, I believe, in soul experience in life or before death, a sufficient knowledge of what sin is, and of our evil case as sinners to prove what salvation is from sin, and that the salvation of a sinner is the salvation of him to the uttermost.

iii. But the words may admit also of another meaning, which we find intimated in the margin, and of which it may be as well to take notice, though I believe it is much inferior in meaning, and not so agreeable to the original as the rendering of the text. The words may be rendered "for ever more." They thus may signify not only the perfection of the work, but its duration, in other words, that it is a durable, perpetual, and eternal salvation, as we read in the prophet: "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. 45:17); and similarly: "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." It is blessed to see that this salvation is an eternal salvation; and not only eternal in its nature and end, but perpetual in its communication, reaching down from age to age as a successive crop of believers are raised up. In this sense the Lord says, "My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." This salvation, as thus perpetual, saved our believing fathers, saves us their believing sons, and will save our believing children until the last vessel of mercy is gathered in. How full, how glorious is a salvation like this—complete as to all parts, full as to all causes, perpetual in all succession, and eternal in all duration.

III.—But this brings us to our third point: "Seeing he *ever liveth to make intercession for us.*" That was the last step of the climax of which I spoke this morning. I told you then that there was in the text from which I was preaching a climax, which means a ladder, and there were four steps to it, of which the first was on earth and the last in heaven. Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's being at the right hand of the Father, and Christ's interceding for us—these were the four steps of this ladder of which his death, like Jacob's ladder, was set upon earth, but his intercession, its top, entered into the very heavens. I deferred the consideration of the last step this morning, because I intimated I might this evening have occasion to speak upon it, as I now hope and intend to do from the latter portion of our text: "Seeing he *ever liveth to make intercession for us.*"

But this thought might occur to your mind, because we have a

reasoning mind, some of us at least, I have, for one, and cannot always bring the things of God to square with it as I would, though I have learnt to subject my reasoning mind to revelation, and bow to what God has spoken in his word, as Lord over my heart and conscience. But this thought might occur to your mind: "If Christ put away all our sins by his sacrifice and blood shedding, and if by virtue of his death all are blotted out and forgiven, what need is there that he should in heaven make intercession for us? If the work is done, it is done, and what need we any more? Is it not almost implying some imperfection in his finished work, that it is not finished as we are taught to believe, but that something remains to be done by him to render it complete in heaven now?" This is carnal reasoning, chopping logic, and arguing as men argue who know nothing and are convinced of nothing except what they learn by reason. I shall therefore endeavour to answer this objection, and to show, if not the absolute necessity, yet the blessedness of having an Intercessor and an Advocate at the right hand of the Father.

Bear then this in mind, that though God has forgiven all our sins for Christ's sake, and though his work is a finished work and his precious blood cleanseth from all sin, yet that he is a just God still, a holy God still, and a sin-hating God still; and as being such, our sins, though put away by the blood of Christ, are highly provoking to him. Do you think that God was not highly displeased with David's sin? The Scriptures tell us that "the thing that David did displeased the Lord." And yet upon confession Nathan said to him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Thus our sins, backslidings, slips, falls, and transgressions are put away, if we belong to Jesus, by his precious blood; but still God is highly displeased at them, as they spring up in our hearts or manifest themselves by our words and actions. They provoke the eyes of his glory. He must hate sin from the holiness of his nature, and be highly displeased with it wherever and in whomsoever he sees or finds it. Now he has provided a High Priest at his right hand to make intercession for his poor, erring, wandering, backsliding, sinning people, that this everliving Mediator and Intercessor might be ever presenting

before the eyes of his glory the virtue of the precious blood which he shed upon earth, the value of the obedience which he rendered to a holy law, and be thus ever perfuming heaven with the incense of his prevalent and availing intercession. We are therefore assured in the word of truth that "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." How blessed the truth, how full the grace, how sweet the thought, how comforting the experience that we have in Jesus Christ, not only a propitiation for our sins, but a present High Priest at the right hand of God ever interceding for us who are in the body. It is this which gives such strength to the words, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Observe the words, "*he ever liveth.*" It is a living Saviour whom we have to deal with, to come unto, to believe in, to look unto, to trust in, to hang upon, to cleave unto, to hope in, and to love. He is a living rock, which made David say, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Our sins are greater than we have any idea of. We know little of the holiness of God; we know little of the desperate nature of sin. God therefore, so to speak, needs ever before his eyes his dear Son in our nature, in his pure and sacred humanity in conjunction with his Deity as our all-availing Intercessor. And do we not need a Mediator, who can ever plead our cause before him, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may ever have the propitiation that Jesus wrought out before his eyes, and look upon us through him, the Son of his love?

But let me open this subject a little further. Two points need here some little consideration: 1, The nature of the life which Christ now lives; 2, the nature of the intercession which he now makes.

1. We may say of the life which the Lord Jesus lives in the courts of heavenly bliss that it is a threefold life. There is, first, his *eternal* life, by which, I mean, the eternal life of God in his divine nature. This he lives in himself; for "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself."

(John 5:26.) He is hereby "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." And this life is the foundation of all his acts of mediation, as being God over all, blessed for ever.

But there is a life which he lives for himself, viz.: a life of inconceivable glory in his *human nature*. This is the life which he laid down that he might take it again. This life is the cause of, and is attended with all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself, his reward, and the glory and honour with which he is crowned; as the Psalmist says: "Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." (Psa. 21:3, 4.)

But there is another life which he lives: a *Mediatorial life*, a life for us. Thus we read, that "he was made a priest after the power of an endless life;" and he says of himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death." (Rev. 1:18.) Now this life does not differ essentially from the second life, of which I have spoken, the life of glory in the human nature; but it differs in this point, that when the work of mediation is accomplished, he will cease to live a mediatorial life; for he will then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (1 Cor. 15:24.)

Now this is the life spoken of in our text: "he ever liveth." This is his mediatorial life; and he lives it as Prophet, in ever sending the Holy Spirit down to testify of himself; he lives it as King, to subdue all our enemies under his feet; and he lives it as Priest, for it is in the discharge of his priestly office that he makes intercession for us.

2. I must speak, therefore, a few words more about this intercession. I have before said that intercession was a part of the priestly office. The intercession of Christ was typified under the Old Testament in three ways: first, by the living fire ever burning upon the altar, which represented his intercession upon

earth when "he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears:" secondly, by the daily sacrifice of morning and evening: and, thirdly, by the incense which I explained before as burnt in the most holy place. This, then, may give us some idea of the nature of Christ's present intercession. It consists, then, first, in his continual appearance for us in the presence of God—the presentation of his person before the throne on our behalf; secondly, in the representation of his death and sacrifice, as John saw "a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne;" and, thirdly, in actual prayer or intercession. Of this we have a beautiful representation in John 17, which may, perhaps, give us some idea of the mode of his present intercession for us.

These points I grant are difficult and mysterious, nor need we necessarily believe that oral intercession is needful, though there seems no reason why in the holy communion which subsists between the Father and the Son there may not be a vocal utterance of his desires and breathings on behalf of his redeemed people.

But let me now apply it experimentally to our own case. If the gracious Lord did not live to make intercession for us, he could hardly be said to save us to the uttermost. But as he ever lives at God's right hand and is ever interceding, ever presenting the perfume of his acceptable mediation, this gives us a certain pledge of his love, his pity, and his power. Is not this very encouraging to all who come unto God by him? and may we not say, "Such are we, O Lord; we do come, we daily come to thee by Jesus Christ." And do we not need all the encouragement that God may give us out of it? for we often sink very low through temptation and trial and the manifold afflictions of the way. How blessed then it is if you can only trace this mark of grace in your soul when others seem almost lost out of sight. I do setup a standard and hope ever to do so, but not a rigorous one, a cast-iron one; but I say this in the name of God to all you who have already come and are ever coming to God by Jesus Christ: Christ is able to save you to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for you. You must deal with your own conscience to determine for yourself whether you are the

character. I can only preach the truth: God must apply it. I wish to speak to your conscience: let conscience listen, let conscience register the approving or condemning verdict. If you know anything of internal work, you know this—whether you have come, whether you are coming to God by Jesus Christ. It is very simple, yet very expressive. Have you come as an outcast? Have you come as ready to perish? for these are expressly spoken of as coming in that day when the great trumpet is blown, the great and glorious trumpet of the gospel, for its jubilee notes are sounded specially for them. Have you come in faith? have you come in hope? have you come in love? and have you found any measure of acceptance and approbation in your own bosom? "Yes," say some, "with all my doubts, fears, and questioning, I can answer your question with an honest heart and a firm front, that I have come to God by Jesus Christ, and have felt the blessedness of so doing." Then you have known something or will know something about the uttermost; and the more you know about the uttermost the more you will prize salvation by grace, the more you will cleave to the Son of God, the more you will hang upon his finished work, and the more you will look unto him who has so kindly said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

## THE EVERLIVING INTERCESSOR

Preached in the Baptist Chapel, Bedworth, on Wednesday Evening, April 1, 1846

"Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

We have reason to bless God for the Epistle to the Hebrews, for it so unfolds the Levitical dispensation, and casts such a divine light on all the types, figures, rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the Old Testament.

What is the main subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is this: to set forth the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to show how much this High Priesthood excels in virtue and efficacy all those sacrifices of the Old Testament which were but figures of it. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, being the High Priest of His people, we may divide His priestly office into two distinct periods; one period comprehends all that Jesus Christ **once** did on earth, and the other period comprehends all that Jesus Christ **now** does in heaven.

There were two things chiefly that the high priest had to do under the Old Testament dispensation; one was to offer sacrifices, the other to make intercession for the people. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, performed on earth the first part of the priest's office, being both the Sacrificer and the Victim. And now, being ascended, He performs the second part, in making intercession for the people of God, and presenting before the Most High His blood and righteousness in behalf of His people. It is this second part of His priestly office that the text chiefly speaks of: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

In looking at these words I shall endeavour to consider them under three distinct heads:

First, the **characters** described in the text: Those that come unto God by Jesus Christ.

Secondly, **how** He is able to save these to the uttermost; and

Lastly, **the reason** why He is able to save them to the uttermost, because "he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

I. The people of God are described in the word of truth under various characters. It seems as if the Holy Ghost had taken His pen of inspiration, and traced out the characters of God's people, that they, by seeing and feeling in their own hearts a correspondence to the characters described in the word of truth, might have sweet encouragement to believe that indeed they are the people of the living God. For instance, sometimes they are described as hungering and thirsting after righteousness; sometimes, as poor and needy; sometimes, as groaning under a body of sin and death; sometimes, as the flock of slaughter; sometimes as wandering through a waste, howling wilderness; and sometimes as afflicted, tried, and tempted.

When the people of God, then, feel in their own consciences that they have those marks that the Holy Ghost has described, and when the blessed Spirit is pleased to seal this persuasion upon their hearts, it raises them up to a living hope that they are God's people, because they have such marks, and are such characters as the word of inspiration has traced out.

In the text we have a description of the people of God in whose hearts the Spirit of God has begun, and is carrying on a gracious work. They are described as **coming unto God by Jesus Christ**: "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost **that come unto God by him.**" This is their character; this is the description that the Holy Ghost has given them—that **they come unto God by Jesus Christ.** Now, if you have never come to God by Jesus

Christ, you have no manifested interest in the text; but if God the Spirit has quickened your soul into spiritual life, if He has begun, and is carrying on a work of grace in your conscience, depend upon it, you will find your character here traced out. What is man by nature? The Holy Ghost has given this description of him: that he is "dead in trespasses and sins:" that he is "alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" that he is "an enemy to God by wicked works." that he is utterly unable to bring his soul near to God. and to do anything acceptable in His sight. Now, if this be the case, that man is dead in trespasses and sins. far from God by wicked works, alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart, if the carnal mind is nothing but implacable enmity to God and godliness, how can he come near to God? He may come in a form or in the mere exercise of his natural faculties—but a holy and just God cannot accept such a coming as this. True worshippers come in spirit, as Jesus declared to the woman of Samaria. "The hour cometh, and now is. when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And all worship, except spiritual worship, and all coming, except spiritual coming, is only a stench in God's nostrils. Here, then, is one that is as unable to come to God by living faith as Lazarus was to come forth from the tomb, till the voice of the Saviour spake with power, "Lazarus, come forth." But no sooner does the blessed Spirit speak to the conscience, no sooner does His sovereign voice reach the soul, than there is a doing spiritually what Lazarus did naturally,—a coming forth. No sooner did the voice of the Lord, that is full of Majesty, that breaketh the cedars, and maketh the hinds to calve,—no sooner did this Almighty voice break into the ears of Lazarus, than he came forth. And no sooner does the Lord begin to speak to the soul by the blessed Spirit, than it comes; it is moved, it rises out of the grave of death, and comes unto God. So that every soul whom God has quickened to fear His great name, has a manifested interest in this text,—in that **he cometh unto God.** Here, then, we see a grand distinction, a distinction ever to be made, between those natural convictions of sin that a man may

have in the flesh, and those spiritual convictions that are produced by a work of grace on the heart.

What is the effect and tendency of natural convictions? it is to drive the soul from God. Was it not so with Cain? What was his language? "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" and "he went out from the presence of the Lord." What was the effect of natural conviction in the bosom of Adam, our first parent? He hid himself among the trees of the garden. And what do we read is the feeling of the carnal mind? "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." A man may have deep convictions of sin by the workings of natural conscience; but they will only drive him from God. But when the blessed Spirit, by opening up God's law in the conscience, convinces a vessel of mercy, there is at the same time put into his soul by the same Spirit that crying, that groaning, that begging, that entreating, in a word, that "coming," whereby he answers the description in the text, that he "comes unto God."

The same apostle tells us **Heb 11:6** what is necessary in a sinner that comes to God. Does he not say, "that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him?" **Faith** then is needful; so that he that comes spiritually and acceptably to God comes **in faith**. This is it which brings a sinner near unto God. The blessed Spirit raises up the grace of faith, whereby he apprehends the character, and feels the power of God; whereby he bows down before the Majesty on high; whereby God's presence is solemnly realized, that he sees into the secret recesses of his bosom, and knows all the thoughts of his heart as they lie "naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

He comes also **in the cries, and sighs, and groans of his soul**. We may have prayed much before the Lord was pleased to quicken our souls; we may have said many prayers; we may have used long prayers, prayed in the morning, prayed at noon, and prayed at night; and yet not a single breath of true prayer was there in our hearts until God was pleased to quicken our

souls into life. But I believe from experience, that one of the first marks of divine life is for God to raise up a spirit of supplication enabling us to breathe out our soul before God. It was so with me, and it is so with every quickened soul. "Behold, he prayeth," was said of Paul when first arrested by the hand of God.

He comes, then, to God in prayer, in sighs, in breathings, in longings, and pantings; and yet all the time there is a heavy burden of guilt upon his conscience. Sin often lies with a heavy weight upon his soul; the sins of his past life awfully rise up to his view; the corruptions of his nature are laid open; and yet, though he feels he deserves a thousand hells, and were God to banish him from His presence he could not but say, that in hell he should justify Him for all: yet there are those cries that he cannot stop if he would. He does not pray because it is his duty to pray, neither does he pray because six o'clock is come, or because nine o'clock is come, but he prays because he must, and groans, and cries, and sighs because he cannot help it. It is like water that must have a vent. It is like a stream that must gush forth; and therefore he prays because he cannot help but pray.

He comes with breathings toward God that He would show mercy upon him; that He would manifest Himself unto him; that He would pardon his sins, break in upon his soul, make Jesus known, reveal love and blood in his heart, and sprinkle his conscience with the blood of sprinkling; for you perceive the text says they "come to God **by Jesus Christ.**"

Now, after the soul has thus been well plagued, well exercised, and well stripped, brought down, and its mouth put in the dust, there is a discovery made to it of the way of salvation through a crucified Immanuel. There is a discovery to the heart by faith, through the teachings and applyings of God the Spirit, of the glory of Christ's Person, of the fulness of Christ's righteousness, and Jesus is revealed as set forth in the Scriptures. And when the blessed Spirit takes of these things of Christ and unfolds them to the soul, and gives it a glimpse of what Jesus is to the poor and needy, at the same time and in the same way He imparts living

faith toward the blessed Redeemer; and thus He enables him "to come to God by Jesus Christ." He sees now there is a Mediator; he now knows that blood has been shed, that a propitiation has been made, that everlasting righteousness has been wrought out and brought in, and that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And, when the blessed Spirit is pleased to reveal these things with power in his soul, and to give blessed faith whereby they are laid hold upon in the conscience, then is there a coming to God by Jesus Christ, and a beseeching Him to apply the blood of atonement to his guilty conscience, and to reveal His dying love to the soul.

It may be asked, what is it that makes him come? Why, is it not a sense of felt necessity? It is guilt that makes him long for pardon. It is condemnation that makes him long for justification. It is helplessness that makes him long for help, it is blindness that makes him long for light. It is ignorance that makes him long for the teaching of the blessed Spirit, it is worthlessness that makes him long for Jesus' righteousness as a justifying robe to cover his nakedness, in which to appear before the throne of the Most High. Necessity, felt necessity, lies at the root of coming unto God. If we have no wants, we can do very well without Jesus Christ. But, if we are full of wants, if we are poor, and needy, sinful, filthy, and guilty, helpless, hopeless, and undone, and then see by the eye of faith what a rich provision there is in the gospel; that "there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared"—when these things are experienced in the soul, then they draw forth feelings that are better known than described.

These, then, are the characters that Jesus Christ saves,—who "come unto God by him." All others think they can save themselves. But, if I can work out my own righteousness, I want not Christ. If I can please God with my own performances, I want none of Immanuel's. If I can purge myself from my sins, I want not the blood of Jesus. If I can please God with my own works, I do not want to be accepted in the Beloved. But on the other hand, if I feel full of guilt and shame, and have not a rag to cover myself with, but a life stained with sin, and my nature horrible in

the sight of a holy God; if, then, I see by faith the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, His tender mercy, and the superaboundings of His grace over all the aboundings of my sin,—**this** draws me to His feet.

When He says "Look unto me, for I am God, and there is none else," and a sense of my wants and His fulness, my guilt and shame, and His righteousness—when these two things meet together in a sinner's heart, then only do we come as God would have us to come, in faith and feeling, in poverty and emptiness, in beggary and bankruptcy; and then only is our soul ever filled out of His fulness who filleth all in all. "He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing."

There is no other coming but this; all other coming may be moving our body, but there is no moving of our soul. It may be a moving of our lips, but not of our heart. It is "the bodily exercise which profiteth little," not that spiritual exercise which is "profitable unto godliness."

II. Now of these characters it is said, "He is able to save them to the uttermost." There is something to my mind very sweet and expressive in the words, "**to the uttermost.**" It seems to my mind to convey two things. It seems **first**, to convey the **desperate condition** of those whom He saves; and it seems **also** to convey the **all-sufficiency and omnipotency** of that almighty arm that can pluck a poor sinner out of the very depths of hell.

Now, first, see whom the Lord is able to save to the uttermost.

The Lord Jesus Christ had a mighty work to do. Would God have sent His only begotten Son into the world to do a little work? Would God and man have been united in one glorious Person to do a little work? Would an everlasting covenant have been entered into between the three Persons in the Trinity to do a little work? And would the only-begotten Son of God have come out of His Father's bosom, where He dwelt from everlasting, to do a

little work? Does not the very act of the Lord Jesus Christ, in taking our nature into union with His own divine and glorious Person, clearly show what a mighty thing salvation must be, when such an act was needful to accomplish it? And do we not see by it how desperately sunk man must be to require such a sacrifice,—that nothing would do but God's co-equal and co-eternal Son; that He who was from everlasting to everlasting, should stoop so low as to bleed and die to save us from the Fall, and go into the depths into which we were sunk, and into which our first ancestor plunged himself and all his race.

When God the blessed Spirit, then, is pleased to open up in their hearts the depths of the fall, depend upon it they want every word of the text—One who is able to "save to the uttermost." They want that "uttermost" to be revealed to their hearts' experience.

For instance, some of those who are coming to God by Jesus Christ, are **full of doubts and fears**. Is the work genuine? Do my feelings spring from the work of God on my heart? Is my religion such as will stand in the last day? Is it the mere hypocrisy of my fleshly heart or the teaching of God the Spirit?

Others of the Lord's people are **passing through grievous temptations**; temptations to infidelity, temptations to blasphemy, temptations to suicide, temptations to curse God, temptations too base, too black even to be hinted at. And when their poor souls are groaning and labouring beneath these temptations, can a **little** Saviour do for them? No; they want just such a Saviour as Jesus is, one who is able to save to the uttermost; if I may use the expression, one who has an arm long enough, and one who has an arm strong enough, to reach to the ends of the earth; aye, and in some cases to reach to the very gates of hell.

Others are **passing through deep convictions**; they see the length, and breadth, and spirituality of God's law; that God requires a righteousness perfect in all respects; and they have

proved that they sin in all they think, say, and do. They see they must have the righteousness of God, and be clothed in it, that they may stand before God without spot, or blemish, or any such thing.

Others are **mourning and sighing under a sense of their helplessness**, that they cannot raise up one gracious feeling, that they cannot move nor melt their own souls, nor utter one single breath of prayer; nor can they create in their own hearts any faith, hope, or love. Others are mourning and sighing on account of the deep depravity and desperate corruption of their nature, that all manner of wickedness is lurking and working in their carnal mind, and that do what they can, sin works in them, and that continually. Others can get no answers to their prayers; they have cried, and the Lord has not heard; and they have begged and prayed, but fear they shall never come forth into the light, life, and liberty of the gospel.

Now all these want a Saviour that can **save them to the uttermost**; not a one-half Saviour, not a nine-tenths Saviour, but a Saviour that can save them to the uttermost, that can look down from the heights of the sanctuary into their soul, that can apply His blood to their conscience, that can sweetly whisper to their heart, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee;" that can bless their souls with the sweet enjoyment of this love, lift them up into His bosom, and assure them that when they die they shall be with Him in glory.

The very exercises and afflictions, and the sore temptations through which God's family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them. They thus learn salvation is of grace, not of works, that Jesus alone must save, that nothing but His blood can pardon sin, nothing but His righteousness can justify. And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost." There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind, the temptations you will meet with will be such, that nothing short of a Saviour that is able to save

to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless.

This a great point to come to. All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings that do not end here are valueless, because they lead the soul away from God. But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot—that we have nothing, and can do nothing, but the Lord alone must do it all, these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us.

The text declares, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost." But has He not **already** saved them? Do we not read, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling?" Salvation is a past act. The elect were saved in the purposes of God, when their names were written in the Book of Life; and they were saved actually, when the Saviour died on the tree. But they are saved in their consciences, when there is a manifestation of salvation of their souls. And this all the people of God have experienced, or are longing to experience; and not a single soul thus longing will go out of the world before he has received a manifestation of this salvation in a greater or less degree. This salvation is manifested when the Lord of life and glory is pleased to make Himself known to the soul. And when the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the conscience, then and there salvation is brought into the heart. Thus all the living family will sooner or later experience what it is for the Lord Jesus Christ to save them to the uttermost.

III. We pass on to the last consideration, and that is, **why** He is able to save them to the uttermost. This is the reason: "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The high priest under the law had two offices to perform. If you read carefully **Le 16**, you will find them pointed out. One office was to sacrifice the victim, and make an atonement for his own sins, and for the sins of the people. This was a type and a figure of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, by the eye of faith, we view the bleeding Lamb of God. But the high priest was also to take a censer, and

put coals therein from off the altar, and put incense thereon, that so the cloud of the incense, when he went into the most holy place, might rise up and cover the mercy seat. This was typical of the intercession that the Son of God makes at God's right hand. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he **ever liveth to make intercession for them.**"

Some may say, "How does the Lord Jesus Christ make intercession? Does he pray for His people in words?" Not so; but He intercedes by virtue of His sacrifice upon earth. Do you not see, in what I have just quoted, how the incense was fired from the altar? And was not the morning and evening sacrifice typical of the sacrifice of the Son of God? It was the coals off the altar that kindled the incense, and caused it to mount up before the mercy seat. So it is with the Son of God now within the veil. It was the sacrifice on earth, and the blood that was shed that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And from His body that He has taken for that purpose rises a perpetual odour of intercession for the people of God, for whom He pleads at the right hand of the Most High. This is what the apostle holds forth. Thus the priesthood of Christ excels the priesthood of Aaron. That passed from father to son; but this man hath an unchangeable priesthood. There He is at God's right hand in majesty and glory; there He is with all his tenderness and sympathy, the Lamb slain before the throne, with pierced hands and wounded side; and by virtue of His meritorious sacrifice and obedience, making intercession before the throne of the Most High. If I may be allowed to use the expression, the whole court of heaven is filled with His intercession for His people, just as on earth the temple was filled with the cloud of incense ascending before the mercy seat.

Now, how sweetly encouraging to souls that come to God by Jesus Christ, when felt by faith, is it to know that they have a Mediator at God's right hand; one who has put all things under His feet, and "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." And when by the eye of faith, we are enabled to view atoning blood and dying love, and all this ascending before

the throne, how it encourages us! how it draws forth our desires to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; and how it seems to raise up living faith in the soul that He is able to save to the uttermost!

We know naturally what it is to make use of an intercessor. Here is a child; it has offended its father; it runs to its mother; the mother must be the intercessor. You are a servant, and you have displeased your master; you speak to the foreman for him to intercede. Or you have a friend, and have quarrelled with him, and wish to be reconciled. A mutual friend brings about the reconciliation. Now carry these out. Jehovah is just, and you are a wicked transgressor; the holiness, majesty, and authority of God flows forth against your sin. You are a sinner; you have broken God's law morning, noon, and night. How are you to be saved? how is the forgiveness of sin to be experienced, a guilty conscience to be purged, and your soul brought near to God? Here is the answer, and such an answer as God has revealed in His word and in your soul. There is a Mediator, an Intercessor—there is a Jesus.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!

There is a Jesus! Look at Him! Did He ever pass by a case unnoticed? Did He turn a deaf ear to any cry? Did the blind call upon Him, and He not give him sight? Did He not unstop the deaf ears? The lepers cried, and did not the Lord make them clean? Were not the hungry fed, and the dead raised? Was there ever a poor needy object that came and fell down at the feet of Christ when upon earth, whom that blessed Man of Sorrows sent away unheeded? Not one! And has He not now the same tender feelings, and are not these all united with infinite power, mercy, grace, and love? Thus He is able to save to the uttermost. He is always at God's right hand. Thus when His poor and needy family see and feel that He ever liveth to make intercession for them, how this enables them to believe in God, and to cast themselves as poor and needy at His footstool!

Now are you these characters? Has God traced out your experience in this text? Look at it, and look at the words, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him." Ask your conscience, are you one of those that come unto God by Jesus Christ? that come sometimes by night, and sometimes by day; sometimes on your bed, and sometimes at your work; sometimes by your fireside, and sometimes in company. Only as there is a secret groaning and mourning under all your sins, trials, and temptations, is there a coming unto God by Jesus Christ. By faith you view Jesus. You view Him as a blessed Mediator, looking to His precious blood, casting yourself upon His righteousness, and feeling how able He is to save to the uttermost. Do you come with hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, and that He will bless your soul with that blessing that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it? Is it necessity that presses the cry out of your hearts? Are you like Hannah, of a sorrowful spirit? Is your heart full, and do you pour it out in sighs before the Lord? Then **you** are the characters, whether John, or Thomas, or Sarah, or Mary, or Elizabeth, as much as if you could see your names in the Book of Life; and just as clearly so as though a voice from heaven had spoken to you, you John, you Thomas, you Mary, you Sarah, you Elizabeth. The text does not give our names, it gives our characters; and though we cannot take the comfort of it until God seals the same upon our soul, yet if written in the word of God below, our names are in the book of God above. If you find your experience traced here, then you are the characters. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

"But," some may say, "I have such a wicked nature, such a hard heart, and feel such obscenity and filthiness within." He does not say in the text that you are to get a little better, a little wiser, or a little holier, and then He will save you. No, but we are in brokenness, in humility, feeling a sense of our wants, crying and sighing, groaning, praying, begging, and pleading, when He saves us. And these things are the effects of the work of God going on in our soul.

Now the text says, "He is able to save to the uttermost." However desperate the circumstances of the case may be, the Lord's arm is long enough and strong enough to pluck His child out of the depths of the Fall. Why? Because He ever liveth to make intercession for them; because the steam of His incense ever fills the court of heaven above. By sitting at God's right hand in glory, majesty, and power, "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

Shall not this be more or less our experience to the end of our days? Shall we ever get beyond this coming to God by Jesus Christ, and being saved experimentally by His blood and righteousness.'? No, there will be a daily coming to the Lord through Jesus Christ,—coming as poor and needy, having nothing and being nothing, and looking up to Him to supply all our wants out of His fulness, seeing we are destitute and have nothing but rags, and ruin, and misery in ourselves. It is thus we get comfort, and crown Him Lord of all. And what a precious thing it is for a poor sinner who is come to the Lord, though it may be from the ends of the earth, to know that He is a God that cannot lie! He hath said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

## **Every Man's Work to be Tried with Fire**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 21, 1867

"Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."  
1 Cor. 3:12, 13

What a deadly foe is Satan to the truth of God, and what an ally has he in the human heart. Indeed, without this alliance he would be utterly powerless. If we could say what the Lord said, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me," we should have no reason to fear any of Satan's devices. But alas! he finds everything in us. This gives him his standing ground; here is the fulcrum for his long lever; this is the weak place in the fortress against which he shoots, often too effectually, his infernal artillery. In fact, all the errors which have well nigh deluged the church in all ages from without, and all the evils which have broken in upon it from all quarters within; all the long and dreary catalogue of personal, individual sins which have tarnished men's lives, ruined their characters, broken up their homes, injured their families and brought them down to the grave before they had lived half the usual term of human life, have all sprung from the inward corruption of our nature as wrought upon by the foe of God and man. The Scripture is very plain and express here. Addressing himself to the saints of God at Ephesus, the apostle thus reminds them of their former state by nature and practice: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" (Eph. 2:1, 2.) How plainly do we see from this testimony that those who "walk according to the course of this world" are under the influence of Satan, here called "the prince of the power of the air," and declared to be "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Similarly, speaking of those that

oppose themselves, that is to God's truth when plainly set before them, the apostle says: "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. 2:25, 26.) And would he assign a reason why the gospel is hid, and why it is hid to them that are lost, he says: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4.) We see then from these testimonies of the word of truth, and there are many others of similar import, that the power and influence of Satan on the minds of men, though hidden from view, are fearfully energetic and extensive.

This power and this influence have a connection with the words of our text, which in a few simple words I will endeavour now to trace.

In the exercise of his ministry, the Lord having especially sent him to the Gentiles, Paul comes to Corinth, where he finds Christian brethren in Aquila and Priscilla. At first, as was his wont, he preached in the synagogue; but when the unbelieving Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." This ministry among the Gentiles the Lord abundantly blessed; for "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptised." The Lord also most graciously encouraged him in the work by speaking to him in the night by a vision: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." Referring, then, to his labours amongst them, in his first Epistle to this church, he says: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation." (1 Cor. 3:10.) Though he continued amongst them a year and six months, yet he was not the permanent pastor of the church, but an apostle, whose work and office it was to go from place to place. Having then laid the foundation, which, as he tells us, was Jesus Christ

and he alone, for that is the only foundation which God himself has laid in Zion, and the only foundation therefore which a servant of his can ministerially lay, he left to other labourers to rear the superstructure. Now, here came in the subtlety of Satan. When he had left Corinth, and the supervision of his eye was withdrawn, false teachers sprang up, some of whom were under the instigation and influence of Satan, as he testifies in his second Epistle: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. 11:13, 14, 15.) Now I will not say that all the teachers who built upon Paul's foundation were ungodly men, or under the influence of Satan, for he himself in the words following our text says: "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:14, 15.) The words of the apostle, "But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire," would certainly imply that some of these builders were good men, and as such, would be saved; but all their rubbish with which they had built up the superstructure, as well as a good part of their own religion, would be so burnt up that they would have to escape out of the conflagration like a man from a house in flames with the loss of all his goods, and his very life saved as if by miracle at the last gasp.

In opening up the words of our text this evening, I shall,

I.—*First*, direct your thoughts to the *foundation*: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

II.—*Secondly*, to the *superstructure*, which may consist either of valuable or of worthless materials: "Gold, silver, precious stones," or "wood, hay, and stubble."

III.—*Thirdly, how every man's work shall be made manifest; for "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."*

I.—God himself has laid the foundation on which the church of Christ is built. His own words are, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. 28:16.) This foundation is his dear Son. No other foundation was sufficiently strong or stable to bear the weight of the church. According to the eternal purposes of infinite grace, wisdom, and truth, a glorious building was to be erected, in which God himself should dwell; a holy temple, which should shine through all ages, illuminated with the glory of God. The apostle, therefore, addressing himself to the saints of God at Ephesus, says: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple of the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19, 20, 21, 22.) He therefore specially urges this point upon the Corinthians as involving the necessity of separation from all idolatry: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) This temple or heavenly building consists of elect saints, a multitude which no man can number, gathered from all quarters, and yet compacted by the wisdom and skill of the divine Architect together, so as to form one glorious, harmonious temple.

Now consider what an enormous weight, so to speak, must rest upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion. If we merely view them as forming a number exceeding the stars in the sky or the sand by the seashore, we must consider that they would require a strong and ample foundation to bear them up; for we know that in a literal building the foundation must be strong in proportion to the size and weight of the superstructure. But when we bear in

mind that the saints of God, though redeemed by precious blood and sanctified by the operation and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are in themselves fallen sinners, and that though saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, they still continue such in themselves to their dying day, what an additional weight seems to rest upon the foundation, and how strong it must be to bear the superstructure up so as not to sink under its weight. Take for instance the sins in thought, word, and deed which one man commits in his lifetime, and multiply them by the whole number of the redeemed so as to form a universal aggregate. Now view those sins resting like so many huge mountains, with all their crushing weight, upon the heads of this vast multitude. Next view them as all heaped upon the head of one Person able to bear them without sinking under their load; for all those sins must be taken off the actual transgressors and transferred to one who can support their crushing weight if their guilt and punishment are not to be visited upon the actual committers of them. Who could bear the crushing load of his own sins and transgressions if they were visited upon him with all that penal wrath which is their due? What shall we say then of all those sins, each deserving eternal wrath and condemnation, when we view them in all their ponderous mass, in all their accumulated weight? If ever you have felt the weight and burden, I will not say of *all* your sins, but of any one particular sin which has been laid with distressing guilt upon your conscience, you may well imagine what a load all the sins of God's people, with all their dreadful aggravations, must have been when laid upon the head of their great Surety. What a need, then, there is for a strong and solid foundation to bear up under this crushing burden. It is when we get a view by faith of the Person and work of the glorious Son of God that we see what a foundation God has laid in Zion. It is this which draws forth and encourages the hope and expectation of every coming sinner; as Peter speaks: "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also are built up." Let us look round to any and to every quarter for help and hope when sin burdens and distresses our conscience. Where can we find any foundation on which to rest the weight of our weary, burdened soul but this? If the Lord has indeed quickened us into

spiritual life, made us to see and feel what we are by nature and practice, rooted us up from our old foundation of sin or self-righteousness, and planted in our breast that godly fear of his great name, which is the beginning of wisdom, what we want is something to stand upon in life and death, time and eternity; something from which we can never be moved; something which will bear up our souls in every trying hour, will not leave us at the last to despair, but support us on a dying bed, and eventually land us before the throne of God, to dwell for ever in his blissful presence. If really and deeply penetrated with a sense of what ruin and misery must befall us if left to stand upon our own performances, good or bad, we look round for a foundation on which to build our hopes, and the more we look round to find it in ourselves or others the less we see anything able to bear us up. For it is not man that we have to deal with but God. If it were a mere matter between man and man, mere natural or temporal concern which simply affected the body, or the family, or the property, or the various duties and relationships of this life, we might soon find or fancy a sufficient remedy. But when we have to do with God who searches the heart, with him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity, then the matter is completely altered; then it is not what we think but what God has spoken; and by his decision and by his judgment we must abide and not our own. What a vast amount of ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness is rolled away from the mind of a convinced sinner when the justice and holiness, heart-searching presence, and terrible Majesty of God are revealed to his conscience; and what a preparation it is for him to hear the words of the gospel that he may believe in the Son of God, and that believing he might have life through his name.

Now God has laid a foundation in Zion, on which such a poor guilty sinner, as I have attempted to describe, may rest his hope, his soul, his all. And what a foundation is this when we view it simply and believingly as God has revealed it in the word of his grace; when the clouds of error, darkness, ignorance, and confusion which gather over this foundation by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive are

dispersed, and we can see light in God's light. How blessed it then is under the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, for the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened and to have a view given us by faith of the foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Then it is that we see and believe in the glorious Sonship and eternal Deity of our blessed Redeemer. Then we behold his pure and spotless humanity in connection with his Deity, and see what he is as Immanuel, God with us. It is then that we see what he has done and suffered in the flesh; how he has borne our sins in his own body on the tree, made a full atonement for our transgressions, reconciled us to God by his precious blood, harmonised every apparently jarring attribute of Jehovah, for ever pleased God and for ever saved man. There is no other foundation on which to build for eternity but this; and when we have a view by faith of it, how suitable it is to every want of our soul; for I may observe that the very first thing we see in it is its *suitability*. We want blood to purge away our sins, and cleanse our conscience; we want righteousness to justify our needy, naked soul; we want acceptance with God, and a testimony of our personal salvation. Look where we will, we see those deep and pressing wants met and satisfied by One and One only: the Son of God and the Son of man in one glorious Immanuel.

Now, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to bring this foundation which God has thus laid in Zion before the eyes of our enlightened understanding, to reveal the Son of God in us, and draw forth faith thus to embrace him, hope thus to hang upon him, and love thus to cling round him, there is a getting upon the foundation. Under the drawing influences and secret though powerful operations of the blessed Spirit upon the heart, there is a bringing off of the soul from the old foundation of self on which it once stood and a placing it upon the foundation which God himself has laid. This is coming to Jesus under the drawing of the Father, as our Lord graciously said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6: 45.) And how blessedly has the Lord promised, "All that

the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) How sure then is this foundation, and how sure it is that the soul that stands here, stands safe for eternity. How simple all this is; how glorifying to God, how suitable to man, how in perfect harmony with every type, figure, and sacrifice given in the Old Testament, and how consistent with the revelation which God has given in both the moral and ceremonial law.

But ungodly men and erroneous characters in all ages have sought to dig up and destroy, or darken when they could not overthrow it, this only foundation of all a sinner's hopes; they have brought their pickaxes and spades, seeking, if they can, to dig up this blessed Rock. Some have quarrelled with his Deity, some with his true and proper Sonship, some with his pure humanity. Thus they are trying to dig up the foundation, introducing all manners of errors to confuse the judgment, to perplex the mind, and harass the conscience. Satan too is continually darkening the judgment, filling us with thousands of groundless apprehensions, instilling into our minds carnal suggestions, and breathing, it may be, a cloud of unbelief and infidelity to darken the foundation and obscure our view of it. Yet how blessed it is, when those clouds are dispersed by a beam of the Sun of Righteousness, or wafted away by a gale of free grace from the everlasting mountains, to see once more the foundation, and that all the errors and heresies of ungodly men leave it unarmed. God has laid it in Zion, and all man's attempts for ages to remove it have been as ineffectual as if he had tried to move the earth from its place. We find it at times good standing ground. And O, how thousands of God's saints, on a sick bed, or when the cold sweats of death have been trickling down their forehead and eternity has been in view, have found this foundation good, blessed God for a precious Christ, and a manifestation of his love and blood and grace to their souls, and died in sweet peace. What a host of undeniable witnesses have again and again proved that God himself has laid this foundation on which a poor sinner may build for eternity, and stand upon it without fear or doubt or shame.

II.—But I pass on from an examination of the foundation to consider the *superstructure*.

Now, it seems obvious at the very first sight that this superstructure should be suitable to and worthy of the foundation. What a glorious foundation it is. Nothing less than the eternal Son of God; nothing less than God's co-equal, co-eternal Son in our nature, Immanuel God with us. Could the heart of men or angels have ever conceived such a foundation as this had not God specially revealed it first in the open manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and secondly in the sacred record of his inspired word? If, then, such be the foundation, the superstructure ought beyond all doubt or controversy to correspond to it. But is it so as a matter of general observation when the various buildings around us are scanned with a discerning eye? Have the builders, even the most of those who consider themselves master builders, brought materials for the superstructure such as the foundation merited and required? Alas! No. Through ignorance, unbelief, prejudice, self-righteousness, and even from baser motives in all ages, even those who have not sought to dig up or darken the foundation, have endeavoured to rear upon it a superstructure incompatible with, and unsuitable to its glorious and unspeakable worth.

i. They have brought materials—I shall handle this part of the subject first—which the apostle designates as "*wood, hay, stubble*;" meaning thereby materials not only comparatively *worthless*, and thus unsuitable to the foundation, but of that *combustible* nature which the fire of God's indignation will, when effectually roused, utterly destroy.

But let us look a little closer at these worthless and combustible materials. How unseemly it would be, if a foundation had been laid for some noble structure of the strongest and most admirable materials, to place upon it a pile of wood, fill up the gaps with a stuffing of hay, and thatch the whole with a covering of rough stubble. Such a building would be ridiculous in the eyes of men,

and draw down universal indignation and contempt. The deeper, the wider, the stronger, the more beautiful the foundation, the more would appear the discrepancy between it and the superstructure; and the more would men point their finger with scorn at a building so nobly begun and so ignobly finished. If the Queen, for instance, were with great pomp and splendour, attended by her ministers and a large assemblage of nobility, to lay the foundation of some noble building, say that magnificent structure which is to be reared as a memorial of her lamented husband, the Prince Consort, and upon the foundation thus laid a superstructure were erected partly of wood, partly of hay, and partly of stubble, what an outcry there would be, even were it a mere temporary provision; and if such a building were to take fire and be burnt to the ground it would be rather a matter of universal rejoicing than of lamentation. So in grace: to bring materials which are inharmonious and discordant with the foundation which God has laid in Zion is not merely an anomaly, a soleism, an inconsistency, but an error of the first magnitude, a mistake, if such a term may be applied to it, involving the most important consequences. In the solemn matters of God's truth, where his honour and glory and the salvation of immortal souls are concerned, such an inconsistency is not a mere matter of such scorn and ridicule as we might bestow upon an earthly building so constructed, but a matter for the anger of God, the scorn of angels, and the reprobation as well as the contempt of all godly men.

But let me now direct your thoughts to this wood, hay, and stubble, that we may gather up its spiritual meaning. What is the general idea conveyed by the expression? The first thought is its *want of value* as compared with solid stone and rock, especially when viewed as materials brought together to form a building. We have seen that the foundation is a stone or rock, beautifully called by the prophet the "Rock of ages," (Isaiah 26:4, *margin*); and this rock being the Lord himself, we may say of every other foundation, in the language of Moses, "their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges" (Deut.32:31); for none of them would presume to say that God himself is their

rock any more than the heathen of old claimed the God of Israel to be their God. Wood, hay, and stubble suit their foundation, for their foundation is self; and as a hovel in a field is not built upon a rock but stands on the bare earth, foundation and superstructure well according with each other, so it is with the wood, hay, and stubble brought by Babel builders.

1. But the expression takes a wide range. *Wood* is almost of an unlimited variety; and some species are more valuable and scarce than others. Elm, oak, ash, deal, beech, these we apply to common purposes; mahogany, rosewood, sandal wood, ebony are used for works of ornament and beauty. Thus you have a vast variety of wood, for I have named but a few; and of these some are naturally more beautiful than others, or take a higher polish. But observe how they all unite in two points, *destructibility* and *combustibility*. The builders who bring the wood to build a temple of God may select with much care wood that may seem to them alike durable and valuable; as the idol maker in Isaiah took care to choose "a tree that would not rot;" but choose what wood they may, they cannot make it proof against decay or against fire. We know that just now there is a wonderful ambition to build churches of beautiful architecture without, and adorned with all the refinements of art and skill within. Even those who boast of being descendants of the Puritans are rearing chapels, or as they are now called churches, very different from the quiet buildings in which their fathers were content to worship; and we may soon see them following the example of the Ritualists, with their painted windows, decorated altars, priestly vestments, and other borrowings, such as our plain spoken fathers used to call with much truth if not much reverence, "the rags of Popery." Wood in all its natural roughness; the gnarled oak, coarse grained elm, mean looking deal, twisted yew, soft poplar, bending willow, and such coarse and common wood would not suit the refined and expensive taste of the Ritualists. Under the pleasing and plausible idea that nothing is too costly or beautiful for the house of God, they are bringing us back to those Athenian superstitions which the apostle so beautifully exposed: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth,

dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing that he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24, 25.) Just see what, under this specious pretence, these Ritualists are fast introducing into this land, and taking possession of so many churches. Look at their bowings, their genuflexions, their vestments, their crucifixes, their banners and processions, their surpliced choristers, and intoning priests, and their paltry imitation of popish rites and ceremonies, under cover of which they are secretly introducing Popery itself with all its craft and cruelty, with all its errors and abominations, with all its proud pretensions, to be, perhaps, one day carried out into positive acts. But apart from this, may we not justly call the whole of their system wood, hay, stubble? See how they would lead poor, guilty man, with all the weight of his sins, to rest his soul for eternity upon a bow, a genuflexion, a sprinkling of holy water, a piece of bread and a drop of wine. See also how the putting of this wood, hay, and stubble upon the foundation hides, obscures, and darkens it. They admit the great verities of our most holy faith, such as the Deity, Sonship, incarnation, and sacrifice of Christ; but they confuse them all by representing the Lord's supper as a sacrifice of little inferior efficacy to the sacrifice offered on Calvary, and that they as offering it are actual priests. But are we much behind them who profess to hold a purer creed and to protest against both the doctrines and practices of the church of Rome and the church of England? Look at the errors of the present day held and advocated by leading advocates of the great dissenting body. Do not some, if they do not actually deny the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, yet attempt as far as they can to throw doubt upon it by qualifying it with a variety of reservations and explanations? Do not others deny the everlasting punishment of the wicked, making it to consist in a sort of annihilation and a death which is not everlasting punishment, but destruction of body and soul from the presence of the Almighty; thus emboldening sinners to continue in their sins and hardening men's consciences against the fears of hell? What a whole heap too of legality and self-righteousness, free will and creature strength, are men, who call themselves builders,

introducing as a superstructure upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion. O this wood! Carved into a variety of forms, gilded and decorated with every degree of skill and art, nicely veneered and beautifully polished, it may look pleasing to the eyes of men; but what will it be in the day of the Lord's appearing? Or even before that great and terrible day, how will it stand when God sends his fire in the various dispensations of his providence and his grace to try of what sort it is?

2. The next material named by the apostle as employed by these false and vain builders, who would fain rear a superstructure of their own upon the foundation laid in Zion, is *hay*. This seems a more unsuitable building material than wood. Good for horses, well suited to build up the frame and clothe with flesh and fat the bones of the stalled ox, nothing can well be less suited for a building material. It can only, at best be used to stuff into the unfinished doors and windows to keep out the wet.

But there is something, perhaps, symbolical in the word distinct from the idea of worthlessness and combustibility. Hay was once tender, juicy grass; but laid low by the scythe of the mower, and exposed to the heat of the sun, it has become dry and withered. So circumcision, sacrifice, the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, were green and tender when revealed from Mount Sinai, and suitable to an elementary dispensation, and so far beautiful, as is the grass of the field, when typically representing the blessings of the new Covenant. But when the old Covenant passed away, when, as the apostle speaks, it "decayed and waxed old," and became a matter of mere "beggarly elements," it resembled hay as dead and withered grass. When, then, the builders, as in the case of the Galatian teachers, sought to "build again the things which were destroyed," to reintroduce the works of the law, and build them up upon Christ the foundation, it was using hay as a superstructure. Similarly dry and dead forms of prayer, dry and dead rites and ceremonies, dry and dead rounds of legal service, are all but hay, withered, and without juice, sap or moisture. "Our bed," says the Bride in the Canticles, "is green." "He maketh me," said David, "to lie down in green pastures." There is a freshness

and a verdure even now in the ordinances of God's house; but dry forms, dry ceremonies, and we may add, dry doctrines, are but withered hay! Yet how many builders are now seeking to build up the church of God, some upon dead and dry forms, others upon dead and dry doctrines.

3. But I pass on to the last material mentioned by the apostle as used by these false builders—*stubble*. This, which is raked up from the harvest field when the crop is gathered off, may serve as the coarse covering of a hayrick, to thatch a hovel in a field, to enclose a sheep-yard, or to be thrown out to make manure for a dunghill, but is utterly unsuited for a building. And yet we see men take the very sweepings of the field, and with this coarse material seek to thatch souls against the thunderbolts of the Almighty. But as the forked lightning, if it fall upon it, will set a stack on fire and burn up the stubble, so will the fire of the last day burn up this coarse stubble with which men would fain thatch the temple of God, and leave the whole superstructure a heap of ashes.

ii. But now look at a superstructure of a different character; called by the apostle, "*gold, silver, precious stones.*" Here is a superstructure worthy of the foundation. What a beautiful superstructure it must be as viewed from far, or seen nigh at hand, all bright and glistening with the sheen of gold and silver, and decked here and there with precious stones. Of course this is a figure, as was that of wood, hay, and stubble; for gold, silver, and precious stones are as little suitable literally on the one hand for a building as wood, hay, and stubble are on the other. They are meant both of them to convey to our mind clear and vivid ideas, one denoting worthlessness, destructibility, and combustibility, and the other materials highly valuable, intrinsically precious, and such as fire cannot consume or destroy.

But what may we understand by gold, silver, and precious stones spiritually viewed, taking a general view of them collectively? Without trying to force the passage, I take them to symbolise generally the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, in all its

various branches and divine fruits. But let me endeavour to open this, and thus to show the suitability of those materials as a superstructure upon Christ the foundation, by dwelling upon them individually and particularly.

There is a beautiful harmony between the work of Christ upon the cross and the work of the Holy Ghost upon the soul. Both are the work of an omnipotent Person; both spring from omnipotent power; and both are holy—the one as being the work of the holy Son of God, and the other as the work of the Holy Ghost. This spiritual and heavenly harmony gives a beautiful consistency between the superstructure wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost and the foundation laid in Zion in the Person and work of the Son of God. But now view these materials separately.

1. Take gold as representing that *faith* which is of the operation of the Holy Spirit, for we know that faith is compared to gold in the word of God. "I counsel thee," said the Lord to the Laodicean church, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18); and Peter tells us that "the trial of our faith is much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." As being of God's giving, as the special portion of the elect, as communicated and maintained by the Lord himself, who is called "the Author and Finisher of our faith," it is a grace of the Spirit, fitted to be a superstructure for the foundation that God has laid in Zion. For the faith of God's elect is as much the work of God the Holy Ghost, as the work of Christ upon the cross is the work of God the Son. There is, therefore, a suitability, a harmony between the faith of God's elect and the foundation that God has laid in Zion. Jude speaks of "building ourselves up on our most holy faith." As then "by grace we are saved through faith;" as it is that whereby Christ himself dwells in the heart, and is formed there the hope of glory; as it is the means whereby every blessing is received and brought into personal, experimental enjoyment, it is a blessed material for a builder to handle and use in seeking to edify the church of God. By faith as a building material we may also understand every heavenly doctrine, every holy instruction, every sweet promise, and every gracious precept

by which the Church is built up; for these are means of her edification, so as to be a habitation of God through the Spirit.

2. Following the same analogy of faith, and viewing hope as occupying the second place, may we not call it the silvery grace of *hope*? Hope does not occupy the first place in graces, as silver does not occupy the first place in metals. It is not so weighty, so solid, so valuable, so enduring, or admitting so bright a polish as golden faith; but a good hope through grace, communicated and maintained by the power of God, is inferior in worth, solidity, polish, and indestructibility only to gold tried in the fire. This good hope through grace, has a harmony with the foundation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. There is therefore a consistency between it and the foundation on which it rests; and every builder such as God approves of will bring in hope as a fitting material for the superstructure of the temple of the Lord.

3. But what are "precious stones?" You will observe they are spoken of in the plural, and therefore are more than one. What, then, shall we say of *love*, for as I have named faith and hope as building materials, must I leave out love, the greatest of the three graces? No! I will call it a precious stone. How precious is Christ to those that love him; and what a precious stone it is to have the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But every thing which raises up and draws forth this love may be called a precious stone also. Therefore the visitations of God's presence, the smiles of his countenance, the droppings in of his favour, the blessed whispers of his goodness and mercy; O what precious stones are these. What are diamonds, pearls, sapphires, and emeralds, compared with one blessed visit from the King of kings, one manifestation of his love, one token of his presence, or one word dropped from his gracious lips! How ladies of wealth and grandeur value and admire their diamond necklaces, emerald rings, bracelets of sapphire and amethyst. What pride they take in adorning themselves with all their jewellery, and how in their ballroom and assemblies their diamonds shine before the eyes of the spectators, raising admiration in some and envy in others. But their diamond necklaces will not lie upon their necks in the

coffin; their shroud will not be clasped with emerald bracelets, nor their fingers be adorned with sapphires. Compare with these brilliant ornaments which their fair wearers must soon part with, the precious visits bestowed upon the children of God. The proudest peeress would not wear her diamond necklace upon a dying bed. All its beauty and value to her are gone. But then it is that the precious stones of a child of God are worn more closely, shine most brightly, and are most valued and valuable. Nor will they leave him at death to be transferred to another possessor; but will deck and adorn his soul after death; and especially when the bridegroom comes forth to claim his Bride in the day of his appearing.

Or even now look at the child of God with his ornaments on. Look at our daughters of Zion, having on the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. The adorning of the wives and daughters of godly men, and especially if themselves professing godliness, is not "the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on apparel, but the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible." And what is this "hidden man of the heart" but that humility and meekness, that quietness and gentleness, that brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, humility of mind, and tenderness of conscience, which become the saints, whether male or female? A meek and quiet spirit is a woman's best ornament. As to other gay and unbecoming ornaments, let those wear them who wish to serve and to enjoy "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Let the daughters of Zion manifest they have other ornaments than what the world admires and approves. Let them covet the teachings of God, the smiles of his love, the whispers of his favour; and the more they have of this the less will they care for the adornments which the daughters of Canaan run so madly after; by which too they often impoverish themselves, and by opening a way for admiration too often open a way for seduction and ruin.

But let me pass on to consider how this servant of God should build this superstructure so as to correspond with the foundation.

Ministerially, he lays the one and builds up the other; and therefore should be equally clear in both. First, he must lay the foundation broad and plain by setting forth the Deity and humanity, blood and righteousness of the Son of God; and then when he has laid the foundation broad and clear he must go on to raise up a superstructure agreeable thereto; allowing of no religion but the religion of the Holy Ghost, no faith but the faith of God's elect, no hope but a good hope through grace, no repentance but that which Christ was exalted to give, no humility but what is produced by the Spirit, nor any love but that which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; no, nor any fruits of righteousness, or any good words or works but those which are wrought by the power of God and spring out of his grace. Here is harmony; here is consistency; here is a religion approved of by God, and commended to the conscience of his people. View the child of grace, both as regards the foundation and the superstructure; see him standing upon Christ, as the foundation of his hope; see him adorned and decorated with every grace of the Spirit. View his faith, see his hope, mark his love, observe his repentance, his humility, his brokenness, his contrition, his separation from the world; hear him speak of the secret visitations of God's presence, the gracious whispers of his mercy; and as you hear the pure language of Canaan drop from his lips, take special notice of the jewels with which the Lord the Spirit has enriched his cabinet and adorned his soul. These are the true ornaments of the soul, for they are what Solomon calls "an ornament of grace" which is preparatory to "a crown of glory." (Proverbs 4:9.)

Here you have clear work; but if a minister lay a foundation which has no standing in the word of God, and no standing in the hearts of God's people; and if the superstructure which he raises up upon it is to build men up in rites, forms and ceremonies, legality and self-righteousness, what will be the end of these things? What that end will be the fire will manifest. But this brings me to our last point.

III.—The *manifestation* of the nature of this superstructure.

It is to be made manifest. The apostle says: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3:13.) Thus there is a day which will bring all to the test; there is a fire which will try every man's work, of what sort it is, whether as a man or as a minister. Now, "wood, hay, and stubble" will never stand the fire; they are too combustible to endure the flame. They are, therefore, at once burned up. This fire we may consider under two different points of view.

1. There is the fire of God's *penal wrath*. When God displays his wrath against a guilty world, brings his terrible justice to bear upon men's souls, all this wood, hay, and stubble will be burnt up. One glance from his holy eye, one lightning word of his terrible lips, one frown from his indignant countenance, will burn up and consume all the wood, hay, and stubble that men have brought to gain his favour. Holy water, bowings and genuflections, crosses and crucifixes, and all the trumpery that men are now employing to build up souls for eternity, will be burnt in a moment before the flash of God's indignant eye; and with it all false faith, all creature hope, all vain expectations, and all mere natural love, with all that passionate devotion and idolatrous affection which often take the form of godliness,—all will disappear before the flashes of God's indignant justice; and if the foundation be as faulty as the superstructure, they and the builders will all perish together.

But I draw a distinction between such as these and those of whom the apostle seems specially to speak. There may be some who are right as far as regards the foundation, but wrong as regards the superstructure. These, therefore, will lose the superstructure, but will themselves be saved by fire. We hope there are among general churches living souls who are right as regards the foundation, but have been built up with a wrong superstructure. These will lose everything combustible; all their wood, hay, and stubble; but as their foundation is good, they

themselves will stand and be saved, but it will be in such a way as just to escape with their life.

2. But the fire which is to prove every man's work of what sort it is, is not merely God's wrath as manifested at the last day; but his fire as significative of the *fiery trial* which takes place in this life, and which God mercifully brings upon his people to burn up their wood, hay, and stubble. Now it is an inestimable mercy to have all this combustible material burnt up before we come to a death bed. Fiery trials, such as God sends through afflictions, temptations, distressing feelings, and painful soul exercises, will burn up the wood, hay, and stubble, which any of his saints may have gathered up as a superstructure. Guilt pressing upon a man's conscience, the terrors of the Almighty in a fiery law, his arrows deeply fixed in the breast and drying up the spirit, fears of death, hell, and judgment, and the terrible consequences of dying under the wrath of God, all these are a part of the fiery trial which burns up the wood, hay, and stubble, heaped by Babel builders on the foundation. All sink into black ashes before this fire, which proves what they are, and what a vain refuge they afford in the day of trouble.

So also powerful temptations, fiery darts and all the artillery of hell, the blasts of Satan as a storm against the wall, his injections and diabolical insinuations,—how can wood, hay, and stubble stand before this furnace in which the Lord has chosen his Zion? Dismal apprehensions of not being right at heart; strong fears of all our religion being hypocrisy, all empty profession, and a name to live; a sense of the value of our immortal soul, and a sight of the dreadful, damnable evil of sin, with little manifestation of the pardoning love of God, all which things produce gloomy and distressing thoughts how it may be with us on the bed of death— if such exercises press heavily on the conscience, how they burn up all the combustible material of a faulty superstructure. False faith, deceitful hopes, creature love, feigned humility, legal repentance, an outside profession, the good opinion of men, rites, ceremonies and observances,—all are too weak to stand before this flame. They are burnt up and reduced to ashes. What then

stands the fiery trial? God's work upon the soul, the faith that he implants by his own Spirit. It may be weak; it may be, it must be tried; it may seem at times scarcely to exist; and yet being of God, it stands every storm, and lives at last. A good hope through grace, a hope of God's own communicating and maintaining, like a well tried anchor, this will stand the storm; like gold and silver, this will bear the hottest furnace; lose its dross, but not lose the pure material, but be refined, purified, and manifested all the more as genuine metal. So too these "precious stones," these heavenly visits, sweet manifestations, blessed promises, comforting discoveries, and gracious revelations of the Son of God, with the whispers of his dying, bleeding love,—these heavenly jewels can never be lost and never be burnt up. They may be tried, and that keenly and sharply, but being of God's gift and operation, they are essentially indestructible.

I would appeal to the experience here of any or all of God's exercised family. How tried you have been sometimes about your religion, whether it would stand; whether you have a right faith; whether your hope is a good hope through grace; whether the love you have to the Lord and his people is real. You are tried often as to your interest in the blood and righteousness of Christ. You lose sight of what the Lord has done for your soul in times past. His gracious visits, manifestations, and blessed discoveries, have faded from view; and when they fade from view, you can scarcely believe they were real. Yet when the fire has passed over them, it leaves them untouched. As when the three children were cast into the furnace, the very smell of fire had not passed upon their garments, so it is with this gold, silver, and precious stones. When the fiery trial is over, when the temptation is passed and the affliction has done its work, faith lifts up its head, hope's anchor is found firm and good within the vail, love is still in the heart, and every grace of the Spirit where it was before. What has disappeared? what has been lost? what has been burnt up in the flame? False faith, false hope, and false love, legality, self-righteousness, pride and self-conceit. These could not abide the touch of the flame; they disappeared and left behind them nothing but ashes.

How careful, then, and anxious we should be to have these two points well secured in our hearts. First, to be right as concerns the foundation. "Do I believe in the Son of God? Have I clear views of the Sonship, the Deity, and the pure humanity of the Christ of God? Have I drunk in no secret error? Am I hiding in my bosom no corrupt doctrine? Is my creed sound? Is the word of God received by me, as God has revealed it, into a believing heart?" How many are wrong as to the foundation itself. Then comes, "Am I upon the foundation? Did God himself put me there? Did I see its suitability to my lost and undone soul? Did the blessed Spirit take of the things of Christ and reveal them to me in the hour of need? Was the Son of God made precious to my soul by an act of faith? Am I looking to him, cleaving to him, longing for him, hanging upon him, and trusting wholly to his Person and work? How stands the foundation? Am I on it?"

The next important question is, "How stands the superstructure? Has the Holy Ghost wrought anything with a divine power in my soul? The faith I profess, is it of God? The hope I enjoy, do I believe it came from the Lord himself to support my soul in the trying storm? My repentance, is it genuine? My profession, is it sincere? My walk, is it consistent? My conscience, is it tender? My desires, are they spiritual? My prayers, are they fervent? My heart, is it honest? My soul, is it right before God? What am I looking to as the foundation, and what am I looking to as the superstructure? Do I hang all my hopes upon Christ as the rock, and all my religion upon the work of the Holy Ghost in my heart?"

If you can answer these questions as in the sight of God, "Yes, yes, ten times yes;" then you are right, you are right. If you stand upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion, you are right; you are right if God the Spirit has wrought a living faith in your heart. But you are wrong, you are wrong if you stand not upon God's foundation; you are wrong, you are wrong, and that for eternity, unless the Holy Ghost is at work upon your conscience.

Look, then, to these two things, and look at them well. Examine them nicely, and scan them closely, to see what the foundation is and if you are standing on it; then to see what is the superstructure, and whether God the Holy Ghost is the author of it in your soul. I add no more. I have spoken enough if God be pleased to bless it.

## Evidences Sealed and Open

Preached at Providence Chapel, Croydon, on Lord's Day Morning, June 6, 1869

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days." Jeremiah 32:14

As it will be my aim and object, with God's help and blessing, to lay before you this morning the spiritual meaning of these words, I must first call your attention to their literal and historical connection and signification; for these two modes of interpretation are always based upon, and coincide and harmonise with each other. A few scriptural instances will abundantly shew this. Thus, when our Lord gave a spiritual and experimental interpretation to the manna which fell from heaven, to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, to Jonah being three days and three nights in the whale's belly, we should find, upon examination, that all these spiritual explanations were based upon, and coincided with the literal signification of these Old Testament types. So when Paul spiritualises, as the term is, the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac,—the one as the seed of the bond woman, the other the child of promise; his two wives, Sarah and Hagar, as representing the two covenants; and the passage through the Red Sea as prefiguring spiritual baptism; in all these instances he bases the spiritual meaning upon the literal; so that the two harmonise and coincide with each other. So, also, when he applies to our Lord such passages as: "I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son," to prove his divine Sonship (Heb. 1:5); "I will put my trust in him," to shew his sacred humanity (Heb. 2:13); "He hath put all things under his feet," to prove his present power and glory,—all these spiritual interpretations of passages in the Old Testament strictly coincide with their literal meaning and historical connection. We are not, therefore, at liberty to take any passage of the Old Testament,

and what is called spiritualise it as our wisdom and fancy may suggest. Ignorant and presumptuous men have often taken deep and obscure passages of the Old Testament, and spiritualised them after their own fancy, to display their lofty wisdom or their profound knowledge of divine mysteries; and what has often been the result but to please shallow, light-minded professors, and make themselves justly, and the Scriptures unjustly, the laughingstock of fools? The Holy Ghost does not lead men into such wild vagaries; for God gives to his saints and servants by his grace not only "the Spirit of power, and of love *but of a sound mind*" (2 Tim. 1:7), which keeps them from carrying their carnal wisdom into his word of truth and turning that into a showplace for their real or fancied abilities.

I shall now, therefore, call your attention to the historical and literal connection of our text; for on that I hope to build a spiritual and experimental interpretation.

The words were spoken by Jeremiah to Baruch, in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, when the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem, and about a year before its final capture. He was at this time shut up in the court of the prison in the king of Judah's house; and the cause of his imprisonment was his faithfulness in prophesying to Zedekiah, that the Lord would give the city into the hand of the king of Babylon, that he should take it, and that the king himself should not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, who should speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes should behold his eyes. Now, when thus shut up in prison, the word of the Lord came unto him to forewarn him of a certain circumstance which was about to take place, that thus he might he assured that it was of the Lord, and be prepared to act accordingly. "Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it." Now, according to the Jewish law, if this land were sold to any casual purchaser, Jeremiah, as the next of kin, was at liberty, if not actually required, to redeem it, by paying the amount of its

profits calculated to the year of jubilee, when it would return to the family. The Lord, therefore, apprised Jeremiah beforehand that his cousin, who was in possession of the land and who wished to sell the property, would come to him in the prison and bid him buy what we call the reversion, so as to prevent his having to redeem the land at another time from the purchaser. Now this was rather a subtle trick on the part of his first cousin, because the land at that time was perfectly valueless. It was in possession of the Chaldeans, Anathoth, where it was situated, being about three miles from Jerusalem; it, therefore, was of no value to any body, being devastated by the invading army; and thus Isaiah calls it, foreseeing, in the spirit of prophecy, its ruined state, "O poor Anathoth." (Isaiah 10:30.) But, besides this, Jeremiah knew well from prophecy that the land was to go into captivity for seventy years, and, therefore, that he would have to pay money down for what he never would enjoy. But God had a secret purpose in all this. He intended thereby, as I shall presently shew, to give a certain pledge that the land of Canaan which he had given to Abraham and his seed for a perpetual possession, though it might go into captivity for many years, should not be ever desolate, and thus his oath be broken and his promise made void.

According, therefore, to the forewarning word of the Lord to the prophet, Hanameel came to Jeremiah in the court of the prison, and said to him, "Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself." "Then," says the prophet, "I knew that this was the word of the Lord;" because it came to pass just as God had told him. What, then, does he do? "I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver"—not very much for a piece of land, about two guineas. But most probably it was but a small piece of land, a little garden or orchard in the suburbs of the city, which had come from some relative, for the land and houses within the walls of the priestly cities, of which Anathoth was one, were not to be sold, and therefore, were not redeemable. (Levit. 25:34.) Besides

which, it was at the time perfectly valueless, and seventeen shekels of silver, which you may call, if you like, seventeen half-crowns, for that is about the value of the shekel, were quite enough to pay for it; especially as Jeremiah was to buy, not what is called the fee simple of the land, but the anticipated profits calculated according to the nearness of the jubilee. I have said before, that it was a deep trick in Hanameel, for most probably there was no real purchaser who wanted to buy the land, yet he made Jeremiah pay the same sum as if there were. But in this, as in other instances, God overruled the craft and covetousness of man to establish upon it his own counsels of grace and truth.

But though the land and the price were equally small, yet, as in similar cases with us, the law paid no regard to the size of the estate or the money payment, and, therefore, it could not be legally conveyed to Jeremiah without going through certain formalities; for the Jewish law was very strict upon this point, not only because land was almost the only property then known, but because the whole was apportioned to the tribes in such a way that each family knew almost to a yard its own possession. We therefore read: "And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open." Now it would seem that what we call the title deeds of an estate, according to the Jewish law, were of two different kinds, one of these deeds being a sealed, and the other an open deed; and that they were both necessary to convey an estate or establish a title. If the sealed deed were not duly drawn up and properly sealed, or if it were wanting, the sale was invalid, and the title to the estate could not be established; and so, in a similar way, if the open deed were not duly signed or wanting, the sale and title were also invalid. To make, therefore, all secure, there was to be a sealed deed and an open deed; called here a "sealed evidence" and an "open evidence." Now when all these formalities had been observed, according to the law and custom, Jeremiah gave these evidences of the purchase unto Baruch in the sight of the vendor, Hanameel, and in the presence of the witnesses that had signed

the writings, and before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison who had seen these deeds executed; and then he charged Baruch before them all, in the words of our text: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days." (Jer. 32:14.)

Having thus given you the historical connection and the literal signification of the passage before us, I shall now, with God's blessing, endeavour to open up its spiritual and experimental meaning; and in so doing, I shall—

I.—*First*, attempt to explain and describe the *two kinds of evidence, sealed and open*, according to the words, "Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open."

II.—*Secondly*, the peculiar *place of deposit*, in which these evidences were to be lodged: "Put them in an earthen vessel."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *reason why* they were to be thus safely stored: "that they might continue many days."

I.—You will observe that these evidences were evidences of redemption, effected by means of actual purchase, and that without these evidences Jeremiah could not substantiate his claim to the land, were it ever called in question. If ever then a dispute should arise as to the lawful possession of the property, and he or his heirs should come forward and say, "This piece of ground is mine," the first question would be, on the part of his opponent, "Where are the deeds? Produce the writings; show your title to this estate." But if he had no writings to show, no title deeds to produce, he would be like a man who should offer an estate for sale at the Auction Mart, and when called upon to produce the writings to prove his title, had not a scrap of parchment to show. Now none but a knave or a fool could play such a part in the affairs of this life, however foolishly or deceitfully men may act in

an analogous way as regards the life to come.

But as I said I would endeavour to show how the spiritual interpretation is based upon, and coincides with the literal, I shall now point out how what I have thus explained holds in grace. Redemption of land by a payment, under the Old Testament, was a typical representation of the redemption of the Church by the blood of Christ. He is the true Goel, the next of kin, the one who has right to redeem. And he has redeemed his people by nothing less than his own blood-shedding and death, according to that song of the Church: "Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Rev. 5:9.) That this was an actual purchase is clear from the words of the Apostle, "Ye are bought with a price." If then we are among the number of "the redeemed (or as it is in the margin, according to the original, the "bought,") from among men, the first fruits unto God and the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4), we shall have certain evidences in order to prove our title good, according to God's divine law and custom, as Jeremiah had to prove his title good, according to the Jewish law and custom; and they will be of a similar or analogous nature. I may profess to have an interest in this wondrous redemption, to be one of those for whom that precious blood was shed. But may I not be justly asked here or hereafter, "Where are your evidences? You speak of redemption, and being interested in that precious blood by which it was accomplished. Where are your evidences of this interest? Show your title; produce your deeds. Where are the writings? Let us look at them and examine if they are such as are required to substantiate your title, and are properly drawn up and executed."

Now it is in redemption spiritual as in redemption literal: there must be two kinds of evidences—sealed and open, to make the title good; so that if either of these be deficient, improperly drawn, or wrongly executed, the claim is invalid, and we have at present no manifested interest in that precious blood through which there is the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. How important then it is for every one who desires to be right before God for time and eternity, to know whether he

has any or all of these evidences. And as these matters often lie with very great weight and power upon the heart and conscience of those who can neither trifle with God nor their own immortal souls, and cause many anxious thoughts and inquiries by night and by day, those of you whose minds are exercised upon this important point, will listen to me this morning very anxiously, I doubt not, to see if you can find that you do possess any or all of these evidences. I must, therefore, be very careful what I bring forward, and how I describe them; for they must be in harmony with the word of God and the experience of God's living family, if I am to be mouth for God. How narrowly and carefully, when an estate is to be sold, is the title examined by the intended purchaser. How his lawyer will examine every deed to see if any important paper be wanting, or any link in the chain of the title defective; and how many a fine estate can meet with no purchaser because the vendor cannot make his title good. But how much more important it is that you should well examine your title for eternity, and that I who, so to speak, am your lawyer to examine your title for you, as well as my own, should bring my utmost care and attention to see whether our title stands good. It won't do, either for you or me, to make mistakes in these matters, for here are immortal souls before me, and mine own amongst them, whose eternal destinies are hanging in the balance.

i. I shall first then attempt to explain and describe the evidences which are called here "sealed." Now by the expression "sealed," we may understand, according to scriptural language, two things. The word "sealed" here, as elsewhere, implies first, *secret*; and I will especially shew you why it means so in this particular instance. The deed, after it was fairly written, the names of the vendor and purchaser inserted, the boundaries of the land clearly described, and the title as derived by genealogy to the owner correctly stated, was folded over, the two ends being brought together, and a seal put upon them by one or both of the attesting parties; the consequence of which was, that the inside could not be read. We find this to have been the case in other writings also, by referring to a passage in Isaiah (29:22, 12),

where the prophet says, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book"—or writing, as the word means—"that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned"—in the original, one who can read writing—"saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot:" not from not being able to read, but I cannot read this particular writing, "for it is sealed." The two ends being brought together, the whole writing was closed by the seal, and therefore he could not read the interior. That was the case of the man who could read writing, but not in that particular instance; whilst the unlearned, that is, the man who, according to a common expression, was "no scholar," when the book was delivered to him, saying, "Read this, I pray thee," answered, "I am not learned," that is, "I cannot read writing at all." From this we gather that a "sealed book," or writing, means one so closed by the seal or seals that its contents cannot be read. In a similar way, we read in the Revelation, of "a book (or scroll), written within, and on the back side sealed with seven seals," and none was found worthy to open and read the book until the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed. So the bride is spoken of in the Canticles as "a spring shut up, a fountain *sealed*," it being the custom to roll a large stone, as we find in Genesis (29:2, 3) to the mouth of the well to keep the water from being stolen or evaporated by the heat; and this was sometimes sealed, as was also the stone rolled to the Lord's sepulchre (Matt. 22:66), that it might be known whether it had been rolled away or not. In a similar sense the word is used in the charge given to Daniel, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and *sealed* till the time of the end." (Dan. 22:9); that is, they cannot be read or understood, as being secret till the time of the end shall disclose their meaning. It is evident, therefore, that we may, spiritually and experimentally, explain a sealed evidence to signify, in the first instance, a secret evidence—an evidence that lies hidden from the eyes of men, and is only between God and a man's own soul, corresponding to the words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." (Psalm 25:14.)

I shall have, then, now to unfold some of these secret evidences

of an interest in the love and blood of Christ; and we may observe that, though secret, they are "sealed," as bearing God's own stamp and attestation.

1. Now what is the first of these sealed or secret evidences? *The possession of divine life.* "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "The Son quickeneth whom he will." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Until divine life is communicated to the soul out of the fulness of Christ, there is not, there cannot, be any evidence of interest in his precious blood. Whatever be the secret purposes of God, it is impossible that either he who is dead in sin, or dead in a profession, can have any evidence of an interest in atoning blood, or that any one could so judge of him who is possessed of any discernment of what grace really is. This, therefore, is the reason why I have laid it down as the *first* sealed or secret evidence: for until divine life is communicated there is no evidence. But no sooner is divine life implanted in the soul, than it begins to bubble and spring up and thus to manifest its existence. The Lord, therefore, 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." When divine life is communicated, it immediately begins to manifest itself; for it is like a spring in a field, or out of a hillside, which breaks forth, as it were of itself, and cannot be kept back or pent up by putting your foot upon it. It is surprising what a change is created in the soul by the communication to it of divine life. It is truly, as the prophet speaks, that "in the wilderness waters break out," the wilderness heart of man, "and streams in the desert," that parched ground of the soul, that dry and thirsty land in which there is neither food nor water, that habitation of dragons where each serpent lies coiled up in his den. But even there, at the voice of the Lord, which is upon many waters, "the wilderness is made a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." How soft, how tender, how simple and sincere, how full of life and feeling, how earnestly bent after God, how thoroughly changed from its former carnality and worldliness, is the soul made alive unto God by regenerating grace. It is impossible to describe it, and yet without

having known and felt it, all our religion is vain, for it never had a real beginning, it never came as the pure gift of God; and a profession built upon it will only end in eternal sorrow. Now though this evidence, as being a sealed or secret evidence, is hidden from the eyes of others, it is not hidden from its favoured possessor; for it is, so to speak, like a spring in a field, its own evidence. I do not mean to assert that it is always known as such in its first communication, for at that time there is usually little judgment or discernment of the work of God in the soul; but that a change has been wrought within, and that this change manifests itself by a springing up of a hitherto unknown life, and a flow of new and peculiar feeling in the soul, is to my mind beyond all question.

2. But we will now take another of these sealed or secret evidences of an interest in redeeming blood; and that shall be *the fear of God*. This, though not the first evidence, is the first covenant blessing and a pledge of all the rest. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) But now observe how this evidence is connected with that which I have just described. It is declared to be "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. 14:27.) Do you not see the connection here between the fear of God and the implantation and possession of divine life? For it is "a fountain of life," and, therefore, there is divine life in it as its foundation and substance. We also read that "by it men depart from evil." (Prov. 16:6.) And we know very well that till a man departs from evil there is no evidence of his possessing the life of God. Now this fear of the Lord makes a man's conscience sore and tender. It therefore opens a way for the law to come into the conscience with its piercing convictions; for till the heart is made alive unto God by quickening grace, and the conscience made tender and sore by the implantation of godly fear, a man has no ear to hear, so as to fear any threatening, as he has no ear to hear, so as to believe any promises. It therefore makes a way, so to speak, for the law to come into his conscience as a convicting word from the Lord to bring him in guilty before God. And though this fear, as coming from God, as a new covenant grace and gift, is a filial fear, is

clean and enduring for ever, coexists with every other grace, and stands in abiding union with faith, hope, and love; yet as through the condemning sentence of the law and the accusing verdict of a guilty conscience, there is almost invariably mixed with it a great deal of servile fear which hath torment, it is hard to distinguish at times whether we are in possession of the fear of the Lord, which is our treasure, and a fountain of life, or merely under the influence of that fear which worketh death, and is ever attended with guilt and bondage. But sooner or later the matter is made clear to those who possess it, that they have the fear of the Lord as a new covenant grace; for in due time the love of God shed abroad in their heart, which casts out the fear which hath torment, strengthens that godly fear which is a fountain of life and the beginning of wisdom, and which those of old possessed in such ample measure when "they walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:31.) This fear is to be most tenderly cherished, and never brow-beaten, despised, or resisted; for if we are to serve God acceptably, it must be with reverence and godly fear. We are also bidden to pass the time of our sojourning here in its exercise, and are exhorted to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (Heb. 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Cor. 7:1.)

3. But what shall I say is another of these sealed or secret evidences? *A Spirit of prayer.* Wherever the Lord begins a work of grace upon the soul by quickening it into divine life, planting his fear deep in the heart, and making the conscience alive and tender, he pours out, according to his promise by the prophet Zechariah (12:10), the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Now this spirit of prayer thus poured out upon the soul distinguishes the convictions which are spiritual and in God's saints from the convictions which are merely natural, and which may be found in the very worst of God's enemies. It is a great mistake to think that none have convictions of sin but those who are called by God's grace. I have known myself several instances, and have heard of more, in which there were the deepest convictions of sin that never issued in manifested salvation, but either ended in

despair, or gradually wore off until the subjects of them went back into the world. But those who were thus convinced of sin never had the spirit of prayer given to them; for the spirit of prayer enables the soul under these convictions to pour itself out before God. And though the sin burdened child of God may not, and probably will not, get sensible relief for some time, yet still there is so far a measure of relief communicated to him by the very power that is given him to pour out his soul before God by God's own Spirit, that it lightens a good deal the weight of his convictions, and supports him under them. We do not find it anywhere recorded in the word that Cain, or Saul, or Ahithophel, or Judas prayed. And yet these men had very sharp convictions, enough to drive one to despair, and the others to suicide. God had not poured out upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications; and therefore, when convictions fell upon their conscience, they had nothing before them but hell and wrath, terror and despair, and thus they perished in their sins. But the Lord pours out upon his people the spirit of grace and of supplications for the very purpose of counteracting this despair, and enabling them to pour out their heart before him as a God who heareth and answereth prayer. If God has blessed you with this praying spirit, you have a sealed evidence, and this will one day, if not now, prove your title good.

4. Another secret evidence is *a bending of the soul toward truth*. You will find in persons under great natural convictions an enmity to God's truth, rather than any falling under it, or bending toward it. When their presumption and hypocrisy are detected, so far from falling under the power of the word that speaks of judgment, or any bending of their mind toward it, as testifying of mercy, they hate God's truth with mortal hatred, and manifest the enmity of the carnal mind against it. The sovereignty of God, the doctrines of election and predestination to eternal life, the thorough helplessness of the creature, the depth of the fall, and that nothing short of free, distinguishing, and superabounding grace can save the soul, are fought against by them with deadly enmity, though they may have the curse of the law and the terrors of the Almighty as a burning fire in their conscience. Thus

they rebel against the light, and by doing so, prove themselves children of darkness. But how different is the case with those who are under spiritual convictions. In them the Lord secretly, by applying his word with sweetness and power to their believing heart, raises up a bending toward truth. Being children of light they bend toward the light. You may see this naturally in a plant. Look at a geranium in a window or a greenhouse. You will see that it always bends toward the light. To preserve, therefore, the plant in any degree of shape and symmetry, the gardener is obliged to keep continually turning it round, so as to bring every part to the light. So it is in grace: there is a bending of the soul toward the light, and for the same reason spiritually as with the plant naturally. Without light the plant cannot thrive. It therefore instinctively loves the light, seeks it, and bends toward it. So the living soul loves the light, comes to it, seeks it, and bends toward it in faith and affection. In a new-born soul there is, as in an infant left in the dark, a crying after light. To illustrate this, I cannot help quoting a few simple lines by a great modern poet, which have often struck me as containing much spiritual truth, though it is to be feared that he who wrote them had no such meaning or intention:—

"And what am *I*?  
An infant crying in the night;  
An infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry." *Tennyson*.

How true this is in grace. As an infant in the night cries for the light, as afraid of the darkness and loving light, so a child of grace cannot bear to be left in the dark, and is therefore ever crying out for light, and bending toward it, eager to catch the least glimmering ray. Now, it is this bending of the soul toward truth, the secret movements of the mind toward the word of God, seeking instruction, encouragement, and consolation from it, receiving it as from God's mouth, and embracing it in faith and hope, which distinguish the living child from the dead professor, and prove its birth of God.

5. Another sealed evidence is a *secret love to God's people*, an esteeming of them as the excellent of the earth, a feeling unworthy of being even in their company, and yet a great desire to hear their conversation, to resort where they resort, and be with them in life and death. We see this beautifully exemplified in Ruth's cleaving to Naomi when Orpah left her: "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16.) We trace this feature, also, all through the Acts of the Apostles, that no sooner were any called by grace, than they joined themselves to the Lord's people, and abode with them in spite of the heaviest persecution. And does not John give this as a blessed evidence of divine life? "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

Now these are sealed evidences in the sense of being *secret*, because they lie between God and the soul. And yet, though in this sense they are sealed, they still retain the original meaning of a seal; for they are God's own stamp, if not a full attestation to his own work, and thus carry with them an internal evidence of a possession of, if not an assured interest in, the life and grace of God.

ii. But the word "sealed" has another meaning, which I shall now attempt to open. Sealing was with the Jews, as with us, a means of *attesting* a deed. It was with their law as with ours. It was not sufficient to sign a deed; it was necessary also to attach to it a seal, and most probably the seal of both parties, both of the vendor and the purchaser. We may, therefore, explain a sealed evidence as one that bears upon it the express and peculiar *stamp* of God, as giving an assurance of salvation. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) And again, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:22.) In this sense a sealed evidence is God's *full* attestation of his own work, the stamp of the Spirit of God which he puts upon his own divine operations. It is true, indeed, that these sealed evidences

are not enjoyed by all the family of God, or only enjoyed in a small measure: but it will ever be found, that the want of them in clear manifestation leaves an aching void, and that without them there is no full satisfaction of an interest in Christ. I shall now, therefore, name a few of them.

1. The first of these sealed evidences which I shall mention is, a *revelation of Christ* to the soul, a spiritual and inward manifestation of the Son of God, a bringing nigh of his Person and work, of his blood and righteousness, so that though not seen with the bodily eye, he is seen by the eye of faith, and as such is laid hold of, embraced, and brought into the heart by a divine power. Thus we find the apostle speaking of his own experience in this matter: "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.*" (Gal. 1:15, 16.) How plainly does the apostle speak here of an inward revelation of Christ to his soul; and he seems to intimate the same thing when he elsewhere testifies: "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.) Indeed, there is no other way of truly knowing Christ except in the light of his own manifestation, for it is with the Son as with the Father: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27.) Whatever desires the soul may have after Christ, or whatever hopes it may entertain of an interest in him, it can never be really or fully satisfied without a personal manifestation of him, so as to see by faith his blessed face, and to hear by faith his heavenly voice.

2. Another sealed evidence is the *witness of the Holy Spirit* to our spirit that we are God's children. (Rom. 8:16.) This, indeed, is the especial sealing whereby the soul is sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30.) It is indeed the special work of the Holy Ghost to bring this attesting seal, according to the words I before quoted, "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise;" for as a seal attests a deed, so the Spirit's inward witness attests the

work of God upon the soul, and is the evidence of sonship. We find in various other passages of Scripture the same meaning attached to the words, "seal" and "sealed." Thus the Bride says, "Set me as a seal on thy heart, as a seal on thine arm." (Song 8:6.) Here she expresses her desire so to be sealed inwardly upon the heart, and so to be worn outwardly as a seal upon the arm of her Beloved that she might have his attesting assurance of her interest both in his love and in his power. So John the Baptist says of the believer who receives God's testimony concerning his dear Son, that he thereby "sets to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33); that is, he is able to attest from his own experience the truth of God's testimony of Jesus, as having an inward witness of it in his own soul. So the apostle says to the Corinthians, "The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:2); that is, "Ye are, both to me and to others, an attestation, an assuring, confirming evidence that I am an apostle of God by the blessing which my word has been made to you."

3. *Forgiveness of sin* as made known to the soul by the power of God, is another sealed evidence. All indeed do not enjoy in equal measure this sense of special and personal forgiveness: but they have the substance of it when Christ is revealed to their soul, and they have the sealing testimony of the Spirit in their heart. Their guilt is then sensibly removed, their doubts and fears dispelled, liberty proclaimed, and peace with God enjoyed; and what can all this spring from but the forgiveness of their sins through the blood of Christ?

4. The last sealed evidence which I shall mention is, *the love of God shed abroad* in the heart by the Holy Ghost. This evidence the Apostle gives in connection with being justified by faith, and so having peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1-5.) As long as we are looking to ourselves or to the law for justification, we can never have peace with God; but when faith comes so as to make and manifest us "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:25, 25), then the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; for now there is no barrier between him and us. Justification being complete through the putting away of sin

and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there is a reconciliation to God; and when this reconciliation is known and felt, then the love of God comes as an attesting seal to bear witness that his anger is for ever put away.

iii. But I shall pass on now to consider the *open* evidences, because there were to be open as well as sealed, according to the law and custom; so that if either of these were wanting, the evidence of the title or of the purchase was incomplete. Suppose, for instance, the title were disputed: and the vendor were to say to the purchaser, "Here is the evidence of my title." "Well let me look at it," he would reply. "It appears to be all right. The seal seems to be quite correct, and so does the signature, and I can find no fault with either. But where is the other deed? This sealed evidence is not enough. There must be an open evidence also. Where is that?" "Oh I have not got that; I have lost it; or I never had it." "Then," he would answer, "you have not made your title good. I admit the truth and authenticity of the sealed deed; but unless you can produce and show the open evidence as well, you cannot prove your title good."

Now apply this. To make it manifest that we have an interest in redemption by the blood of Christ, we must have open evidences as well as sealed ones. The sealed evidences, as I have explained, could not be read because the ends of the deed were brought together, and therefore the interior was hidden from view. But the open evidence was left unsealed, for the very purpose that the inside might not be hidden. It was, indeed, signed by the witnesses to attest its authenticity; but it was purposely left open that its contents might be read. How, then, shall we interpret this spiritually? Let me show yet. Wherever there is an interest in redeeming blood, there always are such open evidences as can be seen and read by others. This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle, when he said to the Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us." (2 Cor. 3:2, 3.) There is a generation, and I fear a large and increasing one, of light, loose, inconsistent

professors, whose lives are as much a disgrace to themselves as a reproach to the cause of God and truth. It is, therefore, all the more necessary for faithful ministers to bring forward and insist upon these open evidences as a solemn warning to them, and a salutary caution for all.

1. Now what shall I say is the first *open* evidence? Evidently the *visible change* that takes place in a man's whole life and conduct when regenerating grace visits his soul. To illustrate this point, I shall here mention a little about myself. In the autumn of the year 1825, I was residing at Oxford, earning a comfortable livelihood by taking pupils, and looking forward to obtaining a still higher grade in my college. But quite unexpectedly, just at this time, a very eligible offer was made to me, and a high salary held out as an inducement to go to Ireland for a short time for the purpose of educating, for the University, two sons of a gentleman of wealth and high position, whose country seat was not far from Dublin. Now, it was not to my interest to accept such an offer, as I was in good circumstances, and it was rather breaking my connection with my college, and so far somewhat interfering with my future prospects to leave the University even for a short period; but no doubt the hand of God was in it, though I saw it not; for his thoughts were not my thoughts, nor his ways my ways. But I was tempted by the large salary, and went to Ireland in 1826, where I spent that year very happily and comfortably, for I had everything that money could buy or heart could wish. But all this time I knew nothing experimentally of the things of God; for though highly moral, as far as regards man, and having a great respect for religion, the grace of God had not then touched my heart. But in the beginning of 1827, in the early spring, the Lord was pleased to bring upon me a very great trial and affliction, which I cannot name, but it was one of the greatest sorrows I ever passed through in my life, and it was in and under that affliction that the Lord was pleased, I have every reason to believe, to begin his work of grace upon my soul, and to do for me the things I have spoken of, in giving me the light of life, planting his fear in my heart, pouring out upon me the Spirit of prayer, and communicating those other sealed evidences of the

first kind which I have laid before you; for though not without a hope in God's mercy, I was not favoured, until some years after, with any special manifestation of Christ. Now when I came back to Oxford in the autumn of 1827, the change in my character, life, and conduct was so marked that every one took notice of it. I did not perceive myself, so distinctly, this outward change, though I well knew the inward; but it was very soon observed by others, and especially at my own College, and, in fact, very soon brought upon me a heavy storm of persecution, which, with other concurring causes, eventually drove me from the University. I have no wish to put myself forward, and the only reason why I have mentioned these circumstances is to show that wherever there is any real work of grace upon a man's heart, it will be made openly manifest; that others can see as well as he can feel that something has been wrought in his soul, by a divine power, which has made him a different man from what he was before. It might, perhaps, have been easy for you and cost you little sacrifice to make a profession of religion, but it was not so with me. As fellow of a college and looking forward to the honourable and advantageous office of public tutor, it was no small cross for me to break off old friendships, and incur the dislike and contempt of the ruling authorities, and thus with my own hands pull down all my prospects of preferment and emolument for life. But there was a power resting on me in those days which made religion with me as everything, and the world as nothing. Thus I must testify, from my own experience, that if we lack this open evidence of a change having been wrought in us, we certainly are deficient in a very main particular.

2. But what is the next evidence? *Separation from the world.* "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," is God's own command; and it is one which by his grace will be always obeyed by his living family. The want of this separation, then, is the want of an open evidence to make our title good. If we are still in the world, hand and glove, in heart and spirit with it, not separated from it, its society, its amusements, its pursuits, its pleasures, its delights, its men, its maxims, we certainly lack an evidence, an open evidence, of a

divine change having been wrought in our soul; for I am well satisfied that as Christ hath no concord with Belial, and the temple of God no agreement with idols, so the people of God in whom he dwells and walks can have no fellowship with the world. John is plain upon this point: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if the love of the Father be in us, neither shall we love the world nor will the world love us.

3. *Joining the people of God*, taking up the cross, denying ourselves, submitting to all the mortification, disappointment, and often crushed, or at least broken prospects which are entailed upon uniting ourselves to God's despised family, is another open evidence. Moses had it when he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. Paul had it when, as soon as he was called by the grace of God, he joined the disciples at Damascus. And all through the Acts of the Apostles you will find invariably, when any were wrought upon by a divine power and brought to faith in Christ and a knowledge of the truth, the first evidence they gave of it was by joining themselves to his manifested people.

4. *Honesty and uprightness* in all acts of business, simplicity, sincerity, and trust-worthiness in word and deed, carrying out our profession according to our various stations in life, and manifesting there is a power given to us to make us good husbands, good wives, good children, good servants, good masters—these are all so many open evidences, and the last which I shall have time to mention, of an interest in redeeming blood. A tyrannical husband, a fretful discontented wife, an unkind father, a rebellious son, a harsh master, a fraudulent servant, what right have these to call themselves saints of God? What right indeed have any persons who walk inconsistently, and by their words and actions bring a reproach upon the truth of God, to claim an experimental knowledge of the work of Grace, or to believe they are interested in the precious blood of the Lamb? Has not our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them?" How otherwise can men judge of the truth and power of religion unless they see the fruits of a godly life attend it? See then that you

have open evidences as well as sealed, for both are equally needed to prove your title good.

II.—But I pass on now to our second point, which is *the place* in which, according to the word of the Lord, these *evidences were to be deposited*. "*Put them in an earthen vessel.*"

It was not to be a gold vessel, or a silver vessel; for either of these two metals would be too expensive. And if buried in the ground, as most likely the earthen vessel was, they might be dug up and carried away. Nor was it a copper vessel, which verdigris might destroy; nor an iron vessel that would breed rust and either ruin the deeds altogether, or make the writing illegible. But they were to be deposited in an "earthen vessel." There were several reasons for this kind of vessel being selected, and amongst them, I might name both its cleanness and its duration; for if it was well baked and carefully fitted with a close lid, it might in that warm climate and dry sandy soil last for centuries. Some of you may perhaps have seen in the British Museum the large and beautiful collection of Etruscan vases. Now these Etruscan vases have been all dug up from the tombs of Etruria in Italy, and are at the least two thousand five hundred, or two thousand six hundred years old; and yet they are in perfect preservation, and every line of the figures depicted on them as distinct as the first day on which they were drawn. As, then, these sealed and open evidences were intended to be carefully preserved for future reference, there was a wisdom in putting them into an earthen vessel to be kept clean and uninjured; for this vessel was to be kept in some place of safe deposit, or most probably, to be interred in the earth in the very field of which it contained the title deeds. Thus, at the end of the seventy years' captivity, Jeremiah's collateral descendant—for he had no lineal ones, not being married—might dig it up, find in it these writings uninjured, and then might say, in the face of all claimants, "This land is mine; here is my title; for these deeds have been preserved in this earthen vessel, and here they are as fresh this day as when they were first deposited there." I shall, by and by, show how this bears a spiritual meaning; but I shall first

endeavour to explain what seems spiritually intimated by the earthen vessel in which these evidences were deposited. It represents spiritually the poor frail body in which God has lodged the evidences sealed and open of an interest in redeeming blood, for we have a key to these words in the expression of the Apostle, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." (2 Cor. 6:7.)

But why is this poor frail tabernacle called "an earthen vessel?" 1. Look first at its base *original*. See how man was created out of the dust of the earth; his body, therefore, will always bear marks of that clayey origin. Some vessels may indeed be larger than others, made almost, as it would appear, of better, or at least more carefully wrought and tempered clay, and, like the Etruscan vases, may be more beautiful in shape, more decorated and adorned, and put to more honourable uses; for comparing man with man, as the world views them, one may be but a flower-pot hardly worth a penny, and another, an Etruscan vase, worth a thousand pounds. And yet each at the best is but of the earth, earthy. So rank and titles, honours and dignities, wealth, learning, and education, may adorn some, and ignorance, poverty, and rags debase others; yet all are taken out of the same pit of clay, all are moulded on the same potter's wheel, all baked in the same furnace, and all eventually come to the same end.

2. But again, how *frail* an earthen vessel is. One of these beautiful vases might have been struck by the spade of the excavator, and all its beauty and value destroyed in a moment. So how frail these bodies of ours are. How by a falling tile, a railway accident, an attack of sickness, a stroke of paralysis, in a moment our earthen vessel may be broken to pieces, and be but a piece of lifeless clay.

3. And yet it *securely* keeps the evidences. As in the natural figure, the earthen vessel kept the evidences untarnished, though surrounded with the clods of the valley, amongst which it was

buried, so if God has planted his fear in your heart, his faith in your soul, and his divine life in your breast, they may be surrounded with all that is evil, but are not tarnished thereby, nor their original purity destroyed. The earthen vessel in which Baruch, according to Jeremiah's command, put these sealed and open evidences, most probably was buried in the soil in some corner of the field at Anathoth. All the dust and dirt of the ground might surround it, but they could never reach the interior, nor dirty the evidences, nor stain the writings. So when God puts his fear, his faith, and his divine life in the heart, though they may be and are surrounded by all manner of sin, they are not injured or tarnished thereby, but are still as pure as when God planted them, and will one day come out as bright.

III.—And this leads me to my last point, *the main reason* why these evidences were put into the earthen vessel. "*To continue many days.*"

God had a special reason for thus dealing with Jeremiah. It was to show him, and to the elect remnant through him, that the captivity was not to be perpetual, but that there would be a return to the land of Canaan, which he had given to their fathers for an everlasting possession. The buying, then, of this field was to be a pledge that the land should be again in their possession. We find, therefore, the Lord thus speaking at the end of the chapter, "And fields shall be bought in this land whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah." (Jer. 32:43, 44.) Those who were not destroyed by sword and famine were going into captivity, and the land was to be desolate seventy years. Thus for all that appeared, God was not faithful to his promise to Abraham, for he had given the holy land to him and his children for a perpetual possession, and now they were to pass from it and never to return. God, therefore, when he said to Jeremiah, "Buy the field; take the evidences; put them into an earthen vessel to continue many days," gave him thereby

a pledge of a return of his family to Anathoth, for, as I have intimated, they were to be deposited in a safe spot, and most probably buried in the very ground which was bought. At the end, then, of the seventy years, the heir of the property returning from Babylon, would come to the field, and having been told, as a family secret, or in some family record, the exact spot where the earthen vessel was, would dig it up, open it, produce the sealed and open evidences contained in it, and, if his title were disputed by any claimant, would be able to say, "This land is mine; here is my title; here are my deeds."

But now let me apply this. In a sense, a man's evidences of an interest in Christ, both sealed and open, are buried with him. When you go to the cemetery to attend the funeral of some dear saint of God, after the coffin has been lodged in the earth you look down upon it with tearful eyes; and it is as if there he lay with all his evidences buried with him. You believe that that coffin contains the body of a child of God. Why do you believe it? Because of his evidences—the sealed and the open, that, so to speak, go into the ground with him, are put into his coffin, and there lie side by side with his interred body. The evidences of Jeremiah's purchase were "to continue many days." So in the case of the buried saint, these evidences will continue till the resurrection morn, as Jeremiah's evidences continued till the return from the captivity. Now, when the resurrection morn comes, all these sleeping bodies of the saints, these earthen vessels which have been deposited in the ground, and their title deeds with them, will rise at the sounding of the great trumpet, will stand before the great white throne, and each will have, so to speak, his evidences in his hands. He will hold in one hand his sealed evidences; he will hold in the other his open evidences, and God will acknowledge both of them. Is not this manifested in that striking parable of the sheep and the goats? Did not the Lord bring forth, in that parable, the evidences that the sheep had to distinguish them from the goats, such as their feeding, clothing, and visiting him in his people? Thus, so to speak, the saints of God will all rise with their evidences in their hands.

And then what of the others? They will rise too; but what of their evidences? Alas! they have none. When the angels come to divide the sheep from the goats, to gather the wheat into the garner and to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, they will look for the evidences, and if any be bold enough to say, as some will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wondrous works?" What will the answer be; "Depart from me; I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." Where are your evidences? Where was the life of God in your soul? where the fear of God in your heart? where the Spirit of grace and of supplications? where the departing from evil? where any revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ? where any application of his atoning blood in the forgiveness of sin? where any shedding abroad of the love of God in the soul? where any separation from the world, any living to the honour and glory of God, any taking up of the cross and denying yourselves, any doing the will of God and obeying the precepts as well as professing to believe the promises? Where are your evidences? They will be dumb. Like the man who was found without a wedding garment, they will be speechless; and all for want of these evidences, for "the wicked shall be silent in darkness." But the righteous will be able to produce their evidences, their sealed and their open; and these evidences will be acknowledged, as giving them a title to their eternal inheritance, a manifested interest in redeeming blood; and thus they will have an entrance for ever into the joy of their Lord.

## **AN EXALTED HEAD AND A FITLY COMPACTED BODY**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 3rd, 1856

"Which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:15, 16

The Church of Christ has an eternal, substantial, indefectible union with the Son of God, her glorious covenant Head. This union is not only the source of all her salvation, but is the wellspring of all her hope, of all her strength, and of all her joy. But, in order to become all this to any individual soul in vital manifestation, it must be personally and experimentally felt, realised and known under the teachings and influences of the blessed Spirit. The Church's union with Christ is, indeed, blessed as a doctrine, as a vital truth, as a firm bulwark against error and self-righteousness; but the power and sweetness of it can only be known by a living experience of it in the soul, as revealed there by the work and witness of the Spirit of God Himself.

We were attempting to show this morning what it was to grow up into Christ in all things out of that childish state, during which we are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

This evening we shall endeavour, with God's blessing, to carry on the subject from the point where we then left off, and to show from the words before us,

I. How the Lord Jesus Christ is *the Head of the Church*.

II. How the whole body is united to Him, and at the same time *fitly joined together in itself*.

III. How it is *compacted together by that which every joint supplieth*, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.

IV. How the result is that there is *an increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love*.

I. That the Lord Jesus Christ should have a people, in whom He should be eternally glorified, was the original promise made by the Father to the Son. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2:8). This was "the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). This was "the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14); "the travail of His soul" (Isa. 53:11); and the reward of His humiliation and sufferings (Phil. 2:9, 10). This people form the members of His mystical body, all of which were written in His book, the book of life, when as yet, as regards their actual existence, there was none of them (Psa. 139:16). All these were given to Him in eternity, when He was constituted their covenant Head in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. They thus became, in prospect of His incarnation, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." How touchingly did the blessed Redeemer remind His Father of these covenant transactions, when He said in His memorable prayer, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." Being thus given to Christ, and constituted members of His mystical body, they can no more perish than Christ Himself. He is their Head, and as He is possessed of all power, full of all love, filled with all wisdom, and replete with all mercy, grace, and truth, how can He, how will He, suffer any of His members to fall out of His body, and be lost to Him as well as to themselves? Will any man willingly suffer his eye, or his hand, or his foot, or even the tip of his little finger, to be taken out or cut off? If any member of our body perish, if we lose an arm or a leg, it is because we have not power to prevent it. But all power belongs to Christ, in heaven and in earth; and

therefore no one member of His mystical body can perish for want of power in Him to save it. But, however truly blessed this doctrine is, it is only when we are quickened and made alive unto God by a spiritual birth that we savingly and experimentally know and realise it; and we are, for the most part, led into it thus. We are first made to feel our need of Christ as a Saviour from the wrath to come, from the fear of death, the curse of the law, and the accusations of a guilty conscience. When enabled, by the blessed Spirit's operations, to receive Him into our heart, by faith, as the Christ of God, and to realise in some measure an interest in Him, we are then taught to feel our need of continual supplies of grace and strength out of His fulness. For we have to learn something of the depths of the Fall, of the evils of our heart, of the temptations of Satan, of the strength of sin, of our own weakness and worthlessness; and as every fresh discovery of our helplessness and wretchedness makes a way for looking to and hanging upon Him, we become more and more dependent on Him as of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

There is a striking and beautiful, though necessarily imperfect, analogy between the natural and spiritual body in their relation each to its head. What part thinks for the whole of the body, provides for all its wants, guides all its movements, foresees all its dangers, obtains for it food, rest, and raiment, preserves it from its enemies, and is, so to speak, responsible for its well-being? Its head. Where are our eyes, our ears, our smell, our taste, our speech? Where the main seat of life and intelligence, and of well-nigh everything that distinguishes us from the brutes? Is it not the head? So with the Church and Christ. He sees for her, hears for her, has tasted for her the bitterness of God's wrath, pleads for her at the right hand of the Father, guides her and keeps her, is the seat of all her wisdom, and the spring of all her life. And as without the head the natural body would not be complete, so without the body the natural head would have neither place, name, nor influence. Each is necessary to the other; each an integral part of the other. As then the natural head is needful to the life of the natural body, so is the spiritual

body needful to the glory of its spiritual Head. So that the "Head" itself "cannot say to the feet," the least and lowest of its members, "I have no need of you."

II. But I pass on to show how the whole body is *united* to the Head, and at the same time *fitly joined together in itself*. "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."

The body of Christ is at present scattered, and, if I may so speak, fragmentary. Of the members of His mystical body some are now before the throne, "spirits of just men made perfect." Others are still in the wilderness; others are yet in the world, dead in trespasses and sins, uncalled by grace, destitute of the Spirit; others at present are unborn, still hidden in the womb of time. But earth is the stage whereon all the members are from time to time brought into a vital, manifestive union with their living Head.

When I was a boy at school, in London, Waterloo Bridge was building, and I and my playmates used to go sometimes to what was then called, "The Stone Field," on the other side of the water, where the stones that now make up Waterloo Bridge were being squared and chiselled. Every vestige of that field, I have no doubt, is gone, and the place covered with buildings; but there stands Waterloo Bridge, and those stones that I used to play upon as a boy now form part of that beautiful structure which Canova, the great Italian sculptor, said it was worth coming to London only to see. Take the idea into spiritual things. The body of Christ is compared in Scripture to a building. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord." Of this building believers are "living stones," and many of them are at present in "the Stone Field," where they are being hammered and hacked, squared and chiselled by the hand of the great Architect. During this state, like the stones of Solomon's temple, which were hewn and squared at a distance, that "neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron might be heard in the house

while it was in building," so are these living stones prepared for their future glory. The mallet and the chisel are at work upon them now day by day, that in due time they may fill their designed position in the spiritual building. I remember well that all the stones which were strewn over the field were marked and numbered, and these figures no doubt denoted their intended position. Every stone so marked was in due time individually transferred to, and now occupies, the exact position that the architect designed for it. So every living stone was marked and numbered in eternity, is hewed and squared in time, and will, in future glory, be placed by the hand of the divine Architect in that place of the spiritual building originally designed for it.

But, to revert to the figure before us, we cannot suppose that the members of Christ's mystical body place themselves in it, or that one thrusts itself in here and another in there, as if by accident, or by some act of free-will, independent of divine arrangements. What a maimed or superfluous, what a hideous, mis-shapen and monstrous body would that be where there was no pre-arrangement or harmonious fitting in of members. How is it in natural creation? Did any creature make itself what it is? Did we make our own body? If beauty and harmony are so visibly and undeniably stamped upon the natural body, the food of worms, and whose foundation is in the dust, can we think that less skill and wisdom, beauty, harmony and precision are stamped upon that glorious body of which Christ is the Head, and each member of which is to shine as the stars for ever and ever? As, then, every limb in my natural body occupies the exact place which God appointed, and performs the offices that He assigned to it, so in the mystical body of Christ every member occupies the place that the Lord designed for it, and sustains the functions which infinite wisdom predetermined. The Apostle, therefore, beautifully says, "From whom the whole body, fitly joined together." Even upon earth, in our present dislocated and imperfect condition, we see at times how beautifully the Lord has put the members of the mystical body together. We see how different members have their different gifts, various ministers their various abilities, each doing a work which they only can do. In a gospel church some

are strong, others weak; some leaders, others willing to be led; some possessed of great gifts in prayer and conversation, others hardly able to say a word to or for God; some able and willing to give, others from necessity willing to receive; some in liberty, others in bondage; some active and zealous, others feeble in health or depressed in spirit; some abounding in every good word and work, others mourning every day their barrenness and unfruitfulness. But still all are in their right place, all helping one another, call contributing something to the well-being of the body. Put it to the test. Assuming that all the members of a gospel church are living members of Christ, can you spare any one of them? Are they not missed when their seat is empty at public worship, when absent from the ordinance, and especially when removed by death? Is not every humble, gracious, God-fearing member of a gospel church missed when absent from his place in life, and lamented when removed from the church below by death? Are they not then "fitly joined together"? And as we would not change our own arm for another man's, though perhaps stronger than our own, so we would not change the members of our own church for the members of other churches. We know and love them, and they know and love us. As in the natural body, we are used to them, and they to us; and if not so comely or so showy as others, they are still parts of ourselves. There was an express command given by God to Moses respecting the person of the high priest under the law (Lev. 21:17-21). He was to have no blemish; to be neither blind nor lame; neither broken handed nor broken-footed; neither crooked-backed nor a dwarf; to have nothing deficient, and nothing superfluous. Any defective or any supernumerary member incapacitated him, *ipso facto*, from being a high priest. So not only is the great High Priest over the house of God Himself "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19); but His mystical body, the Church, has nothing deficient or superfluous in it. It is a harmonious body, complete in every part, "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). Planned by infinite wisdom, and constructed by infinite power, it is "fitly joined together," harmony and beauty being stamped on the whole.

III. But the apostle beautifully adds, "And compacted by that which every joint supplieth." He still pursues the comparison of the human body; for as in that every joint supplies strength and motion to the whole, so in the mystical body of Christ every spiritual joint supplies its allotted portion of strength and activity to the rest. This fitting in of every joint is, or should be, exemplified in a gospel church, where love and union reign. The Lord the Spirit gives to each member that measure of grace which is sufficient not only for his own salvation and consolation, but that which contributes something to the welfare of the whole. Thus, some contribute their prayers, having little else to bestow, for the good of their brethren; others, whom the Lord has blessed with a measure of this world's good, of their substance to those poor members to whom their liberality is often a timely help; others supply the church with a good example, setting before their eyes a godly life, a self-denying, upright, consistent walk and conduct; others are free to speak, possess a pleasing gift in conversation and prayer, and out of the fulness of a believing heart can testify what God has done for their souls in humble, simple, yet savoury language. Others are patterns of humility, holding forth a broken heart and a contrite spirit; others manifest much tenderness of conscience, great circumspection of conduct, and exercise of much godly fear. Some are possessed of a great spirit of love and affection; others of much zeal and boldness for the truth; others of a sound judgment and keen discernment of spirits; others manifest much patience under suffering, or meekness under persecution, or great spirituality of mind. Some have a deep acquaintance with trials and temptations, and much knowledge of the wiles of Satan, and the deceitfulness and depravity of the human heart. Thus, in one way or another, every spiritual joint supplies something to the well-being of the body. However poor or weak a member may feel itself to be in a church, still it is as much an integral part of the body as the strongest. My little finger is as much an integral part of my body as my hand or arm; to part with it would give me pain, and I suffer if the least injury is done to it. So the weakest and feeblest member of the body of Christ is as much a member, has as much

fitness in the body, is as much honoured by the Spirit for what he does, under His gracious influences, as the strongest in faith, hope, and love. The whole body is "compacted by that which every joint supplieth." Every joint, whether large or small, adds something to the welfare of the whole body; so that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). The body is thus "compacted," or, as it were, welded together into one united mass of firmness and strength, the indwelling Spirit working effectually in every joint and limb, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon it.

IV. But I pass on to show how, the whole body, being thus "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, *maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" The whole body is to grow together. How blessed to see a gospel church grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; to see the pastor, the deacons and the various members all advancing more and more in the life of God, growing out of the childish state of which we spoke this morning, when they are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." It is blessed to know and realise something of this spiritual growth in ourselves; to have larger views of the Lord Jesus Christ; more believing apprehensions of His Person and work; to feel more of the influences and operations of the Spirit of God; to get more weaned from the world; to find sin more subdued, and the evils of our wicked nature more overcome. And, as it is a blessed thing to be growing in the things of God, so without it there is nothing but barrenness, bondage and death; for there is no standing still in the life of God. Not to grow is to decline; not to advance is to backslide. Now, the members of a church help each other, or should do so, in this growth; for the body grows by that which every joint supplieth. Many think very lightly of the privilege of being a member of a gospel church. Do not ye be so minded. It is a very great privilege and blessing to be united in church fellowship with the saints of God; to sit down with them at the Lord's table; to have an interest in their

prayers; to feel a spirit of affection toward them, and they to us; to sympathise with each other in sorrow and joy; and to be helped forward in our burdens and troubles by the affectionate kindness of those who are knit to us in the same mystical body. In bearing persecution, in contending for the truth, in struggles with sickness and poverty, much help is thus afforded. From this intimate union of the members, church censures are felt so deeply by those who lie under them, and have any tenderness of conscience. It was so with the Corinthian, who was in hazard of being "swallowed up with over much sorrow." Church censures, therefore, should not be administered except upon very good grounds, for they are most painful to those who are the subjects of them. But the very pain inflicted, and the suffering produced by separation from a gospel church, show the privilege and blessedness of belonging to one. If to-morrow morning an operation were necessary to remove my little finger, I should feel by the pain which the cutting off gave me that it was a part of my body. So the pain of separation is felt in proportion to the value that is put upon the privilege of being a member of a gospel church.

But when I speak of the privileges of a gospel church, I would not drop one word to disparage or pain those who are not members of gospel churches. I have had some dear friends who never could see baptism, who never were members of any church; one especially, who is now bathing his ransomed soul in eternal bliss. I am not, then, one of those who say, "I cannot do with you unless you are members of a church." No such thing. I love many out of the church, some in my own congregation, as much as those who are in. Still, I cannot overlook the solemn truth that a gospel church is of the Lord's institution, and that it is a privilege to belong to one. When the apostle is speaking here of the body "being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," he means, no doubt, a gospel church, as the visible representation of the mystical body of Christ. Now, there is a making increase of the body by the individual growth of every member; for every such member has a certain measure of grace

and experience bestowed on him; and this is God's measure, not his. It may in some cases be a very small measure; still it is God's gift, and is to be prized as such. A crumb of mercy, a drop of love, a grain of grace, from God is most blessed. Why? Because, be the measure ever so small, it is a pledge of His eternal favour. Sometimes the sky is overcast and cloudy, but suddenly there breaks out a solitary ray of sunshine, and we hail it with gladness; for it is as much a proof that the sun is still in the sky, as though the whole orb burst forth with all the effulgence we this day have witnessed. So it is in grace. One ray of God's favour shining upon the soul, one mark of interest in the Son of His love, one promise applied with power, one drop of atoning blood falling upon the conscience, one sight of the Redeemer in His sufferings or in His exaltation, one witness of the Spirit to our adoption into the family of God, one token for good even less than these, is to be hailed, prized and valued, because the least as well as the greatest shows the source from which it comes. If, then, you have but a grain, a drop, a crumb, the feeblest mark of being a child of God, you are as much interested in the finished work of Christ, and are as sure of heaven at last, as if God had blessed your soul even to overwhelming, as if He had favoured you with such manifestations that you could scarcely live under them. You are as safe, though not so sound; as secure, but not so happy, as the saints in heavenly bliss. We prize the little finger as a member of the body as much as the arm or leg. So we say the least measure of grace, the least token for good, the least work of the Spirit upon the heart, if it be but the first pang of conviction, the first cry or sigh for mercy, is as much from God as the most overwhelming manifestation of Christ to the soul. When the poor publican went up to the temple under the burden of sin and guilt, the Holy Ghost came upon him as the Spirit of grace and supplication, and he, in the distress of his mind, poured forth one solitary prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." What next do we read? "This man went down to his house justified." There and then justification was sealed on his heart. He was manifestly accepted in the Beloved, and went down to his house with a message of peace and mercy in his conscience. So some of you may only just have strength to utter

the publican's cry, only just have faith to use the publican's prayer, only able to beg of God to have mercy upon your soul. But if the Holy Ghost is the author of that pang of conviction, the source of that pleading cry, you are as much justified in the sight of God as the publican was when he went down to his house with the blood of Christ in his conscience and the robe of Christ upon his soul. You may not feel it, nor do you feel it; but in the sight of God it is so. We have only the measure of grace that the Lord gives. This, to my mind, is a most sweet reflection, for it sets the whole family of God upon a level. Here are some, we will say, highly favoured. Who gave them these favours? Shall he who hath gathered much boast over him who hath gathered little, or he who hath gathered little envy him who hath gathered much? No. He who hath gathered little hath no lack, and he who hath gathered much hath nothing over. He is what he is by the grace of God. So with the servants of God. You hear various servants of God in this pulpit. Each has his gift, his capability of opening up the Word of God, of speaking of the soul's experience, of handling the truth "as a workman who needeth not to be ashamed." You must esteem them according to the measure of grace bestowed on them, not setting one above another from carnal considerations. Each does his work, each fills his own place; and if God bless him to your souls, give God the praise. So with members of your church. Some enjoy sweet liberty, while others are in doubt and fear. Some are tempted and tried, exercised and distressed beyond measure, while others are not so deeply acquainted with the evils of their heart, enjoy more peace of mind, and are less exposed to conflict, less thrust into the forefront of the battle. Now, but for the restraint of grace, the strong will cut off the weak, the weak will judge the strong. The tempted one will think, "That man has no grace, otherwise he would be tempted and tried as I am." The one who is not tempted says, "That man has been doing something wrong, indulging in some sin, and therefore God has left him." But when we remember that every child of God, as well as every servant of the Most High, is only just what God makes him, and has only what God gives him, neither less nor more, this sets all the family of God upon a level. I have seen and felt this many years, and it has been a good

lesson to me. For I have been made to see that it is God's grace that makes a man what he is. I have had advantages, so called, which other men may not have had—education, study, and much reading—but that does not give me any real superiority over those servants of God who have not been similarly privileged. I can only minister to you according to the ability that God may give me; and they do the same. God may bless me, and He may bless them. Whom He blesses you are to honour. This, as I have said, sets all the family of God upon a level. I have felt it for many years, for it was one of the first lessons written upon my heart. I love grace wherever I find it, for I see such beauty and blessedness in it. When we can see this, there is no despising any of the children of God, no setting of one above another. What is this man? What the Lord has made him. What is this minister, this writer, this preacher? What the Lord has made him. And as the Lord has furnished him with gifts and abilities, he is responsible to Him for their use. You have an establishment with clerks and servants; each man has his post; one does one part of the work, and another the other; the clerk does not do the work of the servant, nor the servant the work of the clerk. But the porter that sweeps the office, or the boy that takes down the shutters, is as much in his place as the head clerk. So in the Church of Christ, in the great establishment of grace, in God's house here below. God has His servants and His clerks, each filling his appointed place, each doing his Master's work, each having his Master's glory at heart, and his Master's testimony in his conscience, if he serve Him faithfully. So is it also with the members of the mystical body of Christ. By their mutual co-operation there is an increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love. But how contrary to all this is a spirit of contention and strife! Should I not act as a madman were I to beat my head with my fist, or dash my two hands against each other till they bled, or if I wounded or maimed one member by another? So, what an unseemly sight to see two members of Christ's mystical body fighting with each other, like two drunken men in a fair! To see two servants of the same Master, who preach the same gospel, beating each other, and trying to push the other down, that the conqueror may stand upon the prostrate body of his rival, is a

more unseemly sight to a spiritual eye than any of those pugilistic contests that have ever disgraced our country. Laying aside all such strife and contention, we should rather seek to sympathise with and comfort each other, bear one another's burdens, weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice, helping each other forward by our prayers, our example, our affection, and our tenderness. Where this is the case, where the members of the mystical body of Christ are thus supplying each other's wants, "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," then the whole body maketh increase of itself, "to the edifying or building up of itself in love." To revert to my figure. Here is an establishment in which all the clerks are quarrelling, hardly speaking to each other, no man knowing what his office is, no co-operation between employer and employed. How can it flourish? It is a house divided against itself. Bankruptcy and ruin must ensue. A divided church, a quarrelsome people, a contentious minister, what must their end be? In the mystical body of Christ, in the house of God, there must be union, communion, love, affection, sympathy, and tenderness. Then all moves on harmoniously, and the whole body grows up into a holy temple of the Lord. Nothing so hinders growth in grace as strife and contention; nothing so fills the soul with bondage; and nothing sooner brings a church to beggary and ruin; an object of grief to those who fear and love God, and of scorn and contempt to the world.

Instead of thus pulling itself down, and scattering itself to the winds, the Church of Christ is to edify itself, that is, to build itself up in love. Not that we can do anything for our own edification or that of others; for we only have that which God gives us, and are only what God makes us. But the body is spoken of here as a living body, and therefore as such builds itself up by the aid of its members. The prayers and supplications, the Christian conversation, the godly example, the liberal aid, the affectionate sympathy, and the varied experience of the different members, all tend to the edifying of the body, and building it up on its most holy faith; and this "in love"; for the more love we have for God's truth, servants, word, and people, the more we manifest a

growth in grace. Love is the cement of the spiritual building, the life-blood of the mystical body. The more we love truth, the more we shall be established in the truth; the more we love the saints of God, the more shall we do for their spiritual welfare, and they for ours; the more we shall bear their burdens and walk with them in tenderness and affection. Thus the mystical body of Christ edifies itself by the exercise of that mutual love and affection of which God is the author. As by strife it pulls itself down, so by love it builds itself up. It is a beautiful sight, though unhappily a rare one, to see the body of Christ thus edifying itself in the exercise of mutual love and affection, and growing up into a holy temple of the Lord.

But, ever bear in mind that the members can only do this as they derive supplies of grace from their exalted Covenant Head. As my body derives supplies out of my natural head, and is maintained in existence by it, so the mystical body of Christ derives all its supplies out of the fulness of its spiritual Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Every living member feels its dependence on Him—a growing, increasing dependence. "Without Me," says Jesus, "ye can do nothing." "No, nothing!" feels and answers the soul. "Abide in Me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me." Our trials and temptations, sorrows and afflictions, wants and woes, all teach us the same lesson. All say, "Look to and hang upon the Lord Jesus." Nor will He disappoint any that truly do so. He watches over every one of His living members by night and by day; He is ever supplying their need, ever waiting to do them good, as He Himself says: "In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. 27:2, 3). He will take care of you that fear His Name. He will bless you and surround you with His mercy on every side. He will take you through all the snares and storms of life. He will not suffer a hair of your head to perish. He will keep you as the apple of His eye, and will land you safe in the realms of heavenly bliss. If any of you that love His Name were absent, a member would be absent from His body, and He would be so far a defective Christ, nor

could He say to His Father at the last day, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me;" "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." And if any should be present who do not belong to His mystical body, then would there be a member superfluous, and He would be a blemished High Priest. All the election of grace will be there. And when He shall come in the glory of His power, to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, then will His mystical body be made perfect in eternal bliss and blessedness; and He, the glorious Head of the Church, and they the glorified members, will outshine the sun in his meridian height, and fill heaven with a blaze of eternal glory. Nor will glory alone be their portion, but holiness and happiness and joy inexpressible, where there are rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for evermore. This is reserved for you, ye suffering saints and children of God, for you that fear His Name, and believe in the Son of His love. As in Egypt, "not a hoof shall be left behind." The sleeping dust of His departed saints will be raised, and those who are "alive at His coming shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." Amen.

## The Exercise and Profit of Godliness

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 21, 1850

"Exercise thyself unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4:7, 8

Man has been called, and perhaps with some truth, a religious animal. Religion of some kind, at any rate, seems almost indispensable to his very existence; for from the most civilized nation to the most barbarous tribe upon the face of the earth, we find some form of religion practised. Whether this be engrained into the very constitution of man, or whether it be received by custom or tradition, I will not pretend to decide; but that some kind of religion is almost universally prevalent, is a fact that cannot be denied.

But is there not *true* religion as well as *false*? If the great bulk of mankind are wrapped up in a false religion, is there not a "remnant according to the election of grace," that possesses the true? Has that promise failed in its accomplishment, "A seed shall serve him?" (Psa. 22:30.) Does not the Lord Jesus Christ still reign at God's right hand, full of gifts and grace? And has he not promised to be with his church and people even to the end of the world? Thus, though it is perfectly true that the great bulk of mankind follow after shadows, yet there are a few whose souls are really intent upon substance. If there are those who are given up to believe a lie, there are those that love the truth; and if there are those who worship they know not what, there is still "the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

I think that we find these two kinds of religion, false and true, earthly and heavenly, fleshly and spiritual, natural and supernatural, discriminated in the words before us. For it seems as though the Apostle calls false religion "bodily exercise," and

tells Timothy that this bodily exercise "profiteth little;" and by way of contradistinction to this false religion, this bodily exercise that "profiteth little," he exhorts him to "exercise himself rather unto godliness," assuring him, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Our text, then, divides itself into two branches.

I.—"*Bodily exercise,*" that "*profiteth little.*" And,

II.—"*Godliness,*" which is "*profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*"

I.—But why should the Apostle affix the term "*bodily exercise*" to false religion? What is there in the expression that seems descriptive of its nature? Let us examine it, probe it to the bottom, and see whether it be not descriptive of a religion of which God is not the origin nor end. By "*bodily exercise,*" then, I understand the employment of our mere natural faculties in the service and worship of God. And if you look at false religion in its various shapes and shades, you will see how much there is in it of this mere "*bodily exercise.*" Look, for instance, at Baal's priests, cutting themselves with lancets, crying from morning to evening, "O Baal, hear us!" and leaping upon the altar they had made. What was this but "*bodily exercise?*" Look at the Pharisees in the New Testament, praying at the corners of the streets, making broad their phylacteries, dropping with ostentation their gifts into the treasury, going up to the temple at certain hours, fasting on certain days, and scrupulously giving tithes of mint, anise, and cummin. What was that but "*bodily exercise?*" Look at all the forms and ceremonies of Popery—the bowings, adorations, genuflections, changes of apparel, fastings, and macerating of the body. What is it all but "*bodily exercise?*" Look at Puseyism, that twin sister of Popery. Certain days, hours, vestments, postures of the body, chantings and intonings, mutterings and mumblings—mere outward movements of bodily organs, and all deriving their supposed virtue from the consecrating touch, the "*bodily*

exercise," of a bishop's hand. Is not all this mere "bodily exercise?"—nothing in it being spiritual, heavenly, or divine? And not only these, but the great bulk of professors generally, who dissent from establishments, and follow a more scriptural worship, is not their religion often made up of "bodily exercise." They exercise their feet in walking to chapel; they exercise their voice in singing; they exercise their ears in hearing; they exercise their tongue in talking; they exercise their knees in kneeling; they exercise their eyes in reading the hymns, or their elbows in nudging the drowsy; they exercise their hands perhaps in giving: but, with all, it is only "bodily exercise." All this maybe done and is done by thousands, without one grain of the grace of God in their souls.

But "bodily exercise" may also be understood to comprise the exercise of *mental* faculties, as well as corporeal. Thus there is the exercise of the intellect in understanding the word of God; the exercise of the judgment upon the gifts or abilities of the preacher; the exercise of the memory in recollecting texts and sermons; the exercise of the affections in receiving the word with joy; the exercise of the conscience, as we read of those who were "convicted by their own conscience;" and of the heathen, "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." (Rom. 2:15.) And yet, all this mere mental, intellectual exercise. Men are not necessarily partakers of grace though they exercise their bodies in coming to a place of truth, or exercise their minds in listening to what is delivered from the pulpit.

The Apostle says of this "bodily exercise" (by which I understand the exercise of the body and mind together, as something distinct and apart from the grace of God in the soul) "it profiteth little;" or, as it is in the margin, "it profiteth for a little time." "It profiteth *little*;" it only profits whilst it lasts. It profits the body, but it does not profit the soul. It may profit the intellect, but it does not profit the heart. It profits for time, but not for eternity. It profits for momentary impressions, but not for everlasting salvation. It profits for an hour or a day; but it will not profit for

the bed of death, at the bar of judgment, or in a never ending eternity. It may profit to stave back convictions, to harden the heart, to sear the conscience, to deaden the feelings, to wrap up the soul in a graceless profession. It may profit thus far (if the word "profit" may here be used consistently with the meaning of the term), but "profits little," and it profits for a little time, for the "end of these things is death."

Now, when you look at your religion, scrutinize it, analyze it, weigh it, and consider it—cannot you find much of this "bodily exercise" inherent in it, and combined with it? And here in fact lies one thing that often perplexes the mind and conscience of a real partaker of grace, that though he has vital godliness, he has so much of this "bodily exercise" with it. In fact, all religion which is not wrought in his soul from time to time, by the mighty power of God is but "bodily exercise." As then we have a great deal of religion which is not of God, and therefore nothing but "bodily exercise," (and the conscience of a child of God can only receive that religion which is wrought in his heart by a divine power) it comes to pass, that when we weigh our religion in the scales of the sanctuary, we are compelled to write "Tekel" perhaps upon nine-tenths of it. Now this perplexes the judgment, exercises the mind, and tries the soul of many of God's people; for they, having light to see, life to feel, judgment to understand, affections to embrace, and a conscience to receive nothing but what is of God, their minds are perplexed by the strange intermixture of "bodily exercise" with vital, spiritual godliness. But there is this distinction betwixt the child of God and the one wrapped up altogether in "bodily exercise," that a man who has nothing but "bodily exercise" is satisfied with it; he has no craving for anything better, heavenly or divine; whereas a child of God counts all his righteousness as filthy rags, tramples under foot all his false religion as well as his own doings, and is satisfied with nothing but what the hand of God lodges in his heart, and the mouth of God speaks to his soul.

II.—But we pass on to our *second* point, which is, to consider *that* "godliness" which is so eternally distinct from the "bodily

exercise" which profiteth little; and of which the Apostle says, it is "profitable unto all things."

But what is "godliness?" We must distinguish between "godliness," and the "exercise" of godliness. The Apostle makes this distinction. He says to Timothy, "Exercise thyself unto godliness; for godliness is profitable unto all things." He therefore draws a distinction between "godliness" and an "exercise" unto godliness. We will first, then, see what "godliness" is, and then we shall be better able to see what "exercise" unto godliness is.

By "godliness," then, we are to understand that which comes immediately from heaven; that of which God himself is the author; which "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) The Lord Jesus is "the author," that is the beginner, as well as "the finisher of faith;" and "the good work" which God has promised to fulfil, is said also to be "*begun*" by him. Every grain therefore of true religion, every spark of vital godliness, comes directly and immediately from God.

But this "godliness" has branches, parts, graces, gifts, teachings, and operations connected with it. For godliness is a very wide subject; it embraces the whole work of grace from first to last, from the very first sigh of conviction to the last hallelujah of a departing saint. Godliness embraces the whole work of the Spirit; and that work being so comprehensive and diversified, it must needs be a very extensive subject. It comprises repentance, faith, hope, love, prayerfulness, humility, contrition, brokenness, patience; in a word, every act of the blessed Spirit upon the soul, and every fruit that springs out of those actings of the Holy Ghost upon the heart.

But the chief thing to which the Apostle directs his son Timothy, and to which I wish this morning to direct your minds, is the "exercise" of godliness. Godliness at times seems to lie still in the heart. It is there, but without much apparent movement. The life of God never dies in the soul; but it has its ebbings and flowings,

its throbbings, its heavings, its movements, its awakenings, its desires, its feelings, its actings, its goings out, its drawings in. This is the life of religion in the soul. In fact, we only know that we are partakers of godliness by feeling the exercise of it in the heart. The exercise, too, of godliness is known by the opposition it meets with. Every grace of the soul is from time to time drawn forth into exercise; but it is drawn forth usually by the opposition made to it, by the difficulties it has to surmount, by the enemies it has to encounter, by the conflicts it has to pass through. And as the body is only kept healthy by exercise; as a man may lie in bed until he dies in bed; may bind up his arm, like an Indian Fakir, till he cannot put it down again; or tie up his leg till it wither in the socket; so religion must be continually exercised in order that the soul may be alive and healthy unto God. All the fruits and graces of the Spirit are, so to speak, stagnant in the soul, except so far as they are brought into living, individual, and active exercise.

Let us look a little more closely at these various graces, and see how they are brought into exercise.

1. There is the grace of *repentance*, sorrow for sin, holy mourning over the iniquities of our heart, lip, and life. But is not this holy sorrow, this contrition, this repentance, this mourning over sin—is not this grace of the Spirit often stagnant, as it were, and asleep in the soul? It has then to be drawn forth; to be exercised. And it is from time to time drawn forth into exercise as God is pleased to lay upon our consciences the filth and guilt, the weight and burden of sin; to set before our eyes the Lord Jesus Christ in his sufferings upon Calvary's tree; or to melt and soften our heart with some compunctious touches of the Spirit; and thus cause us to feel that repentance which is not to be repented of. Here is the exercise of repentance.

2. So with *faith*. You may possess faith; and doubtless there are those here who do possess it. But is not this precious grace and gift of faith often, so to speak, in your souls so dormant, that you cannot awaken it? so stagnant, that you cannot move it? But the

Lord is pleased from time to time, by laying eternal things with weight and power upon the conscience, by applying some truth to the heart, by visiting the soul with his Spirit and grace, by setting Jesus before the eyes, by drawing up our desires unto himself—the Lord is pleased, in some way like this, to call forth into exercise that dormant principle of faith, which before seemed well-nigh buried and hidden in the breast. It is drawn forth into exercise; it looks unto, believes in, and hangs upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It receives out of his fulness; it comes to him poor, needy, naked, faint, helpless, and receives strength to believe in his name—to look unto him—and to cast itself wholly upon him. Look at Jonah in the whale's belly, when he cries as it were out of the very belly of hell: how we find faith under the exercises of his soul; "Yet will I look again," he says, "toward thy holy temple!" Look at Hezekiah upon his bed of sickness, and, to his feelings, on the bed of death: how he turned to the wall, and cried, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me!" Look at David through all his various troubles, trials, afflictions, and persecutions: how his eyes and heart were continually looking up in faith unto the Lord, and resting wholly and solely upon him! And, in fact, God puts his people from time to time in such situations and trying circumstances, that they have no one else to look unto. They have no other help, shelter, or refuge; but out of sheer necessity are obliged to cast their souls on him who is able to save. And in this we often find the exercise of faith.

3. So with the exercise of *hope*. How the poor child of God sinks at times into such trouble and despondency as scarcely to have a grain of hope left! When Satan tempts, and guilt presses upon his conscience, how his soul is cast down within him! And when God hides his face, and he feels no help nor strength remaining in himself, how his heart is cast down into despondency, and almost despair! But how, too, in these seasons is his hope revived! How the Lord can and does apply a suitable promise to his desponding heart! How he can bring to his recollection what he has done for him in times of old; the hills Mizar on which he has stood; the Ebenezers which he has been enabled to raise! How the Lord, laying his arm secretly underneath his soul, can whisper a hope in

his breast that maketh not ashamed, and give him an anchor sure and steadfast within the veil.

4. Then, as to *love*—how cold, how dead, how unfeeling, how lifeless is the soul at times toward God and godliness, as though there had never been a spark of spiritual affection either to God or his people! But how the Lord can at times melt the soul into affection and love, and make Jesus truly and really dear, near, and precious! How dependent we are thus upon the Lord himself, not only for the communications of godliness, but also for the exercise of godliness! And how he himself must needs exercise his own graces in the soul!

But we pass on to consider how this "godliness," or rather, the "exercise" of godliness is "*profitable unto all things.*" The Apostle speaking of "bodily exercise" declares that it "profiteth little: but godliness," he says, "is profitable unto all things." What a comprehensive term—"all things!" So that there cannot arise a single circumstance in which and unto which godliness shall not be profitable. All states, all circumstances, all conditions; adversity or prosperity; what the world calls happiness, or what the world calls misery: take all the complicated circumstances that befall a child of God through his pilgrimage here below; and *of them all, and in them all, unto them all, godliness is profitable.* Not always to his feelings, not always in his judgment, not always in his apprehension; for, usually speaking, the things most profitable are to our feelings the most painful. And yet, "godliness is profitable unto all things." You cannot be placed in any circumstance in which godliness is not profitable; you cannot suffer any affliction in which godliness is not profitable; you cannot meet with any trial unto which godliness is not profitable. There is not a single event that can befall you, in providence or in grace, unto which godliness will not be found in the end really and truly profitable.

But what is "*profitable?*" I may define it in one short sentence—that which does the soul good. Now "godliness" is profitable unto all things, as doing the soul good in all circumstances. Here it

stands apart and separate from everything of a worldly nature. Here it is distinguished from the "bodily exercise that profiteth little." It is "profitable unto all things." In sickness, in health; in sunshine, in storm; upon the mount, in the valley; under whatever circumstances the child of God may be, "godliness," or rather the "exercise" of godliness, is profitable. And it is drawn out by these circumstances. It lives in the face of trials; it is strengthened by opposition; it becomes victorious through defeat; it gains the day in spite of every foe;

"Stands every storm, and lives at last."

It does not die away like "bodily exercise;" it does not bloom and fade in an hour; it is not like Jonah's gourd that grew and withered in a night; it does not leave the soul in the horrors of despair when it most needs comfort; it is not a fickle, false friend that turns its back in the dark and cloudy days of adversity. It is "a friend that loveth at all times," for the Author of it "sticketh closer than a brother." It can come to a bed of sickness when the body is racked with pain; it can enter a dungeon, as with Paul and Silas when their feet were in the stocks; it can go, and has gone with martyrs to the stake; it soothes the pillow of death; it takes the soul into eternity; and therefore, it is "profitable unto all things." It is a firm friend; a blessed companion; the life of the soul; the health of the heart; yea, "Christ himself in you, the hope of glory." It is God's own work, God's own grace, God's own Spirit, God's own life, God's own power, God's own dealings, which end in God's own happiness; and therefore, it is "profitable unto *all* things."

But compare this work of grace upon the soul, this teaching of God in the heart, this life of faith within,—compare this vital, spiritual, heavenly, divine, supernatural religion, with that flimsy counterfeit, "bodily exercise." Compare the actings of real faith, real hope, real love; the teachings, the dealings, the leadings, and the operations of the blessed Spirit in the soul, with rounds of duties, superstitious forms, empty ceremonies, and a notional religion, however vamped up, however varnished. Compare the

life of God in the heart of a saint, amidst all his dejection, despondency, trials, temptations, and exercises—compare that precious treasure, Christ's own grace in the soul, with all mere outside, superficial, flimsy, notional religion. O, it is no more to be compared than a grain of dust with a diamond; no more to be compared than a criminal in a dungeon to the sovereign on the throne. In fact, there is no comparison between them.

O what a mercy for you and me if we are partakers of godliness; if the Lord's own grace be in our soul; if there be anything divine in our heart! We shall find it "profitable unto all things." It will not go out in darkness; it will not expire like a flickering lamp; but will burn brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. We need envy none, if we are partakers of one grain of vital godliness. We need envy no professor, however high: nay, we need envy no child of God himself, however favoured. If there be real grace in our souls, it will be found "profitable unto all things." It will do the soul good. There is a reality in it; a blessedness in it; for there is eternal life and immortal bliss in it. It is of and from God; it came from God, and leads to God. It begins on earth, but it is consummated in heaven. And therefore, well may we say, it is "profitable unto all things."

But there is another thing said of it—that it has "promise of *the life that now is.*" What is "the life that now is?" And how has godliness the promise of that as well as of the future?

1. "The life that now is"—the life that we live in the flesh—the life of these mortal bodies—is, for the most part, *a life of affliction.* For the Lord has chosen his Zion in the furnace of affliction. If we suffer with him, we are to be glorified together. Now godliness has "the promise of the life that now is," as a life of *affliction.* And O, how real affliction deadens us to everything else! When there is no affliction, the world dances before us with a sunbeam upon it—attractive, dazzling, and beautiful; and we, in our carnal minds, can fly from flower to flower as a butterfly in the sun. Our religion is at a very low ebb when this is the case: there may be a decent profession; but as to any life and power, how little is there

except when affliction presses the soul down! True religion lies deep: it is not a balloon hovering over us miles up in the air. It is like truth—it lies at the bottom of the well. We must go down then into religion if we are to have it really in our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He took the lowest, last, and least place. He was always down; so that if we are to be companions with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must go down with him—down into the valley, down into sufferings, down into humiliation, down into trial, down into sorrow. When we get puffed up by worldly joy, or elated by carnal excitement, we do not sympathise with the Lord Jesus Christ in his suffering manhood; we do not go with him then into the garden of Gethsemane, nor behold him as "the Lamb of God" on the accursed tree. We can do without Jesus very well when the world smiles, and carnal things are uppermost in our heart. But let affliction come, a heavy cross, a burden to weigh us down, then we drop into the place where the Lord Jesus Christ is only to be found. We find *then* if the Lord is pleased to bring a little godliness into the soul, and to draw forth this godliness into vital exercise, that it has "the promise of the life that now is." There are promises connected with it of support and strength, comfort, consolation, and peace, that the world knows nothing of; there is a truth in it, a power, a reality, a blessedness in it, that tongue can never express. And when the soul gets pressed down into the vale of affliction, and the Lord is pleased to meet with it there, and visit it then, and draw forth godliness in its acting and exercises, then it is found to have "the promise of the life that now is." Faith, hope, love, repentance, prayerfulness, humility, contrition, long-suffering, and peace—all these gifts and graces of the Spirit are exercised chiefly when the soul is down in affliction. Here is "the promise of the life that now is," in the drawing forth of these heavenly graces in the heart.

2. "The life that now is," is *a life of temptation*. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." (James 1:2.) "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15.) "Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (Matt. 4:1.) And we are to share with him in these sufferings. It

is, then, a life of temptation. O, how continually is the poor child of God tempted! And what strong temptations! how painful, how powerful! how distracting, or how entangling! how harassing, or how bewitching! How Satanic is the black devil! how more Satanic is the white devil! How continually is the child of God exercised with temptation! And temptation so suitable, so powerful, so overpowering, that nothing but the grace of God can ever subdue the temptation, or deliver the soul out of it. But godliness hath the promise of "the life that now is," though "the life that now is," for the most part, is a life of temptation. For it is when godliness is in exercise, that the strength of temptation is defeated. But *where* are we? *what* are we? *what do* we? *what should* we do *not*? when sin and temptation meet together, and the Lord's grace does not intervene? Now "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is," that you "shall not be tempted above that ye are able to bear, but with the temptation God will make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it;" and thus deliver (for the Lord knows how to deliver) "the godly out of temptation." He can either break the temptation to pieces, or else deliver you from the temptation altogether.

3. But it is *a life of trial*. "The Lord trieth the righteous." (Ps. 11:5.) In fact a righteous life is for the most part a tried life. There is not a child of God, whose graces are lively and active, that is not tried in his soul. I have no more belief that the soul can live without exercise than that the body can. The more the soul is exercised, the healthier it will be. Trial is one main source of exercise. If you are tried as to your standing, tried as to your state, tried as to the reality of the work of grace upon your soul; tried as to your soul; tried as to your experience; tried as to your manifestations, deliverances, and evidences; tried by your sins, tried by Satan, tried by professors, tried by profane; and, above all, tried by your own heart, and that continually—it will keep your soul in exercise.

And this is "exercise *unto* godliness." If these exercises are *unto* godliness, they lead to godliness, they take you on your way to godliness, they bring you near to godliness, they bring you into

godliness; and, above all things, they bring godliness into your soul. And thus, there is an exercise of the soul *unto* godliness. Does not your heart at times seem without a grain of it? You see what godliness is in its nature, in its branches, in its fruits, in its graces, in what a Christian should be, practically, experimentally, and really—outwardly and inwardly—in the church and in the world. You say, '*I* a Christian? *I* a godly man or woman? Let me compare myself with godliness. Am I godly? Is there grace in my heart? Do I live? do I speak? do I think? do I act? do I walk? do I suffer as becomes a Christian? Is my life, my profession, my conduct—in the family, in the world—in the business, in the church—at home, abroad—openly, secretly—privately, publicly—is it such that I can take it and lay it down, step by step, with vital, real, experimental, scriptural godliness? O,' say you, 'I shrink back from the test. There are many things in me inwardly and outwardly which will not bear to be weighed up with godliness as revealed in the scriptures of truth.' Well, your mind is exercised, I suppose, when you have these workings. Now what is the result? It is an exercise unto godliness. You want it; you strive for it; you cry for it; you press after it; you know that none but the Lord can work it in your soul; you feel needy, naked, and destitute; you know that without it you can neither happily live nor die; yet have it you must, or perish body and soul for ever.

Now if this is going on in a poor sinner's heart day after day, it will be an exercise unto godliness. And this godliness hath "the promise of the life that now is," because godliness is "profitable unto all things;" and has promises, precious promises to those who are thus exercised. "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor. 12:9.) "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. 33:25.) "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:29.) "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.) "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5.) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) "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.) Thus, godliness hath "the promise of the life that now is,"

in having such suitable promises to the souls that are exercised unto godliness.

Is your soul exercised? If your soul is exercised, you will find it is unto godliness; and you will see at times a beauty in godliness, compared to which everything else shrinks into nothing. For Christ is himself godliness, the Author and the Finisher; the head and object; the beginning, the middle, and end; and therefore to have godliness, is to have Christ.

A few words more, and I conclude. Godliness hath the promise also of "*the life that is to come.*" It supports in life and in death; and takes the soul into a happy and blessed eternity; and therefore has "the promise of the life that is to come." Grace will end in glory; faith in sight; hope in fruition. The soul taught of God will see Jesus as he is. Thus godliness has "the promise of the life which is to come," when eternal peace shall abound, tears be wiped from off all faces, and grace consummated in endless bliss.

## **Faithfulness unto Death**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 8, 1861

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10

These words which, as uttered by my voice, are still sounding in your ears, form a part of the message sent by the Lord Jesus Christ through his servant John to the angel of the church of Smyrna. This, I need not tell you, was one of the seven churches in Asia to which special messages were addressed by the Lord Jesus when he appeared to John in the Isle of Patmos. In that lonely isle, whither John had been banished "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," he had a glorious vision of the Son of God, and by him was bidden to write to the seven churches. It is the opinion of some learned, and, I may add (which is of greater authority), of some gracious interpreters of God's word—I need only mention among the latter as a proof of my assertion the revered names of Dr. Gill and Mr. Huntington—that these seven churches of Asia Minor have a prophetic aspect; in other words, that they represent seven church states which were to intervene between the apostolic age and the consummation of all things, when our Lord shall come a second time without sin unto salvation. I shall not occupy much of your time in stating the various arguments used to establish this position, more especially as it is not one much commended to my conscience. But they view it thus. They argue that as the Revelation is wholly a prophetic book, it would be very strange and unsuitable to its title if the three first chapters contained in them nothing prophetic; that the glorious appearance of Christ to introduce these messages seems scarcely necessary to send messages to a few particular churches; and that promises are contained in them which seem of a more prophetic and spiritual character than could fairly belong to these assemblies of the

saints, some of which were very small and most of which soon passed away. You will observe that I am merely stating their arguments, not my own, and I am bound to say that, though far from conclusive, there is some force in them. The very names of the churches they consider also to have in them a spiritual significance. Thus the church of Ephesus, which they consider to signify, at least by allusion, *desire*, expressive of fervent love, represents the apostolic age; that at Smyrna, which signifies *myrrh*, the time when the church was suffering oppression and persecution under the Roman Emperors, their patience under their torments breathing forth, like bruised myrrh, a sweet smell of incense; that at Pergamos, which means *high* and *lofty*, especially a lofty tower, the rise of the Papal power, for this church dwelt "even where Satan's seat is," which we know is proud and lofty Rome with all its abominations. Thyatira, which they understand to mean a *daughter*, represents, according to their view, the Church's darkest age, when superstition and idolatry pervaded every nation, and the worship of the Virgin Mary, called by the Romanists "the daughter of God," prevailed over and was set above the worship of Jesus Christ. Then was truly the reign of "the woman Jezebel," and the prevalence of the awful "depths of Satan." Sardis, which may mean *precious*, as alluding to the precious stone called *sardian* or *sardine* (Rev. 4:2), represents the time of the Reformation, when Luther and Calvin burst the fetters of the Romish Church and proclaimed salvation through the blood of the cross. We are in the Sardis state now, according to the views of these learned men, and just towards the close of it when the church "has a name that she liveth and is dead." And yet through sovereign grace there are still "a few names even in our Sardis which have not defiled their garments" with the pollutions of the world or the deep-dyed stains of error; and those shall one day walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy. Then comes the next state, the Philadelphian, which signifies *brotherly love*, when, according to their view, there will be a large outpouring of the Spirit of God, a day of great prosperity to Zion, a spreading of the Gospel to all the nations of the earth, and the spiritual reign of Christ, when the brethren will love each other, not as now coldly, but with a

pure heart fervently. Then comes the Laodicean state, which signifies *the judgment of the people*, the last and the worst, when the church will have sunk into such a state of lukewarm profession that the Lord will "spew her out of his mouth;" and this will introduce the general judgment when the Lord will sit upon his throne, and men shall be judged according to their works.

Now though this interpretation of the seven churches is very ingenious, and though there may be some degree of truth in it, I cannot say it meets with full acceptance in my mind, and indeed I see great difficulties in it. I prefer, therefore, to take a different view of the whole subject, and laying aside or leaving out of consideration any prophetic aspect that those churches may bear, I choose rather to regard them in a spiritual and experimental point of view. Let me explain my meaning more distinctly. I view these churches, then, as laid naked and bare before us by his eyes which are as flames of fire, and spoken to by his voice which is a sharp two-edged sword, as representing certain evils that manifest themselves from time to time in the visible Church of God. These messages, then, contain rebukes or admonitions from the Lord suitable to the eruption of these various evils, and embrace at the same time peculiar and precious promises adapted to the family of God as exposed to the various temptations incidental to those evils, as well as to support them under their trials, and deliver them out of their afflictions. This view of the subject, which makes every word of these messages instructive at every period of the Church's history to those who fear God, is, I think, very much borne out by that remarkable appeal which is given at the close of every one of them, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Of one thing I am very sure, that whereas the prophetic view may be but speculative, this is practical; while that may be merely fanciful, this is real; while that at the best is but doctrinal, this is experimental; whilst that is for different times, this is for all times; and whilst that may amuse the mind and instruct the judgment, this searches the heart and reaches into the inmost conscience. Under this point of view I shall, therefore, with God's help and blessing, attempt to handle

our subject this morning.

The message of the Lord to the Church at Smyrna has this peculiar character stamped upon it, forming a single exception to the messages directed to the other churches—that there is no rebuke contained in it. Knowing her suffering circumstances, the Lord dealt with her very tenderly. She was in the flames of persecution, and it would seem that a still hotter fire was preparing for her, for some of her members were to be cast into prison. Polycarp, it is generally supposed, was at this time the chief superintendent of the Church of Smyrna, and to him as its angel or messenger was this message most probably sent. He was cast into prison some years afterwards, and then burnt to death, leaving behind him a blessed testimony which is still preserved in church history. The Lord, then, seeing her present affliction and knowing what was about to come upon her, does not rebuke her for any evil that might have been apparent in her, for we cannot think that she was altogether free from fault, but sympathising with her in her afflictive circumstances, rather speaks to her words of encouragement and consolation, as a sustaining cordial for the present and the future.

We may, I think, in looking at our subject from that spiritual and experimental point of view of which I have already spoken, divide it into these four leading features:—

I.—*First, an intimation of suffering, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer."*

II.—*Secondly, a gracious admonition not to be daunted by any suffering that might come upon her. "Fear none of those things."*

III.—*Thirdly, an exhortation to faithfulness under all circumstances, and to the very last. "Be thou faithful unto death."*

IV.—*Fourthly, a blessed promise of an eternal inheritance: "I will give thee a crown of life."*

I.—*Suffering*, in one shape or another, is the appointed and therefore the universal lot of the Church of Christ. It was the way in which her Head preceded her as a man of sorrows; and as we are to be conformed to the suffering image of the Son of God here, that we may be conformed to his glorified image hereafter, every member of his mystical body must fill up his appointed portion of afflictions. The apostle, therefore, speaking of himself, says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24.) These are remarkable words, but have a deep spiritual and experimental meaning. The apostle does not mean that there was any deficiency in the meritorious and vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ which he could complete; but his meaning is, that there was a certain measure of suffering appointed to him as a member of the mystical body of Jesus which he was to fill up. We gather, then, from these words that a certain amount of suffering is allotted to the mystical body of Christ as well as to its suffering Head; so that when all the members of this mystical body shall have filled up each his appointed portion, then the whole amount of predestinated suffering will be complete, and every member will then have been conformed, according to his appointed measure, to the suffering image of our gracious Lord. Are we not expressly told, "If we suffer we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12); and again, "If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together?" (Rom. 8:17.) And does not the apostle speak of suffering as a peculiar privilege: "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake?" (Phil. 1:29.) So deeply were the apostles of the Lord penetrated with this truth that when they had been beaten they "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." (Acts 5:41.) If, then, you are a sincere follower of the Lord the Lamb, lay your account with suffering: it is a mark impressed upon every member of Christ's mystical body, what we may call the sheep-mark of the flock of slaughter. (Zech. 11:7.)

i. But this suffering assumes various shapes and forms. The Lord,

who is full of infinite wisdom as well as goodness and mercy, deals out to every member of his mystical body not only that measure which seems good in his eyes, but also that peculiar mode of suffering which he sees is most conducive to its good and redounds most to his own glory. But taking a general view of the sufferings of the saints of God, we may divide them into two grand branches: the sufferings of *the body* and the sufferings of *the soul*: those sufferings which are *temporal* and *natural*, and those sufferings which are peculiarly *spiritual* and *experimental*. Not but what all their suffering is in a measure spiritual and experimental, because the blessed Spirit makes use of every kind of suffering to work thereby the good pleasure of his will. But, taking a general view of the subject, we may divide the sufferings of the saints of God into two grand branches—temporal and spiritual.

1. *Persecution* is one mode of suffering with which the Lord has seen fit in all ages to exercise his afflicted people. It was especially so in the times when the scriptures were written, and more so after the canon of Scripture was closed, during the persecutions of the Roman Emperors. It is true that in our day persecution has lost much of its force. Martyrs are no longer burnt in Smithfield flames, and prison doors no longer open that the saints of God may be immured in their lonely cells. But though persecution, through the advance of civilisation and the general feeling of humanity and liberality, is muzzled as to open violence, yet the enmity of the human heart against the saints and the truth of God remains unextinguished and inextinguishable; for if the carnal mind is at enmity against God, it will manifest itself in enmity against those who belong to God and bear the image of God. Therefore, as far as can be manifested, persecution will lift up its head. I have myself in days gone by, especially when I first made a profession of religion, much suffered from persecution. When I was at Oxford as a Fellow of a College, it was especially directed against me, to the entire breaking up of all my worldly prospects, and, could some have had their full liberty, to the stripping me not only of my just due but of everything that I possessed. Since then my

persecutions have been not so much from the world as from the professing church. Let me, however, waive this subject, though I feel bound to speak of it for the comfort of those who may have to pass through similar trials. Persecution from the world or from the church never hurt a hair of my head. Here I stand this day more benefited than harmed by it.

2. But take another form of suffering. Look at the various *providential difficulties and trials* that all in a measure are subject to. Losses and crosses, with great and sudden reverses in providence, are not limited to one class, the last and lowest in the social scale. They are universal; for providential reverses may and do come upon the rich as well as upon the poor. It is a great mistake to think that none know poverty but the poor. In fact, the contrary is rather the truth. He that has little to lose can lose but little; but he who has much may in a moment lose his all. How many at this moment, who were once in comfortable circumstances, have by the breaking of a bank or some such unlooked-for incident, been cast down in a moment into the very depths of poverty. Those in the middle class of life, who to all outward appearance may seem thriving, often have great reverses in business, unexpected losses, which, in spite of all their care and industry, may sadly cripple their means, if not actually bring them into destitution. And the labouring man, whose capital is his brawny arms and his stout heart, may have his share of providential suffering by being cast upon a bed of sickness, or, as many of the working classes are now experiencing in the North, by being thrown out of employment by dullness of trade or other circumstances. The poor have an idea that none suffer from poverty but themselves. Now my full persuasion is that the class just above the poor, as the small farmer, the little tradesman, the cottager with his few acres of land, and persons of small independent means, are often much more sharply bitten by the tooth of poverty than those who work for wages. But of course I speak of these providential trials as a part and a very large part of the sufferings of those who truly fear God, for with others I have nothing to do; and as the Lord has his people in various classes of society, so he exercises very many of

them with these providential trials. In fact it is absolutely necessary that we should experience at some period of our lives some of these providential crosses, losses, and reverses that we may know there is a God in providence, that we may see *that* side of God's face as well as his more gracious aspect. It is poverty and more especially losses and reverses in providence that teach us there is a God who has the hearts of all men in his hands; that "the silver and the gold are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." If there were no such reverses or losses, and no such appearance of a kind God in providence, we should, like the world, be either worshipping mammon with all our heart when the wind of success filled our sail, or sink under the storm when adversity beat upon our ship.

3. Look again at another form of suffering, when *the Lord lays his hand upon our earthly tabernacle*. How many of the dear saints of God at this moment are stretched upon beds of pain and affliction! The Lord in his infinite wisdom, seems to have special reasons thus to lay his hand upon the bodies of some of the most eminent of his saints, that he may bring them more sensibly down under his chastening hand. Some of the choicest, most highly-favoured, and deeply-taught Christians I have ever conversed with are those who have been most heavily afflicted with bodily sickness, and, in several cases, who have lain for years on a bed of affliction. The Lord has so sanctified their bodily sufferings to their soul's good; has so fully separated them not only in body but in spirit from the world whilst lying upon their beds of pain and languishing; has been pleased so to draw near to them in sweet communion; so to manifest to them his love and grace, that he has made their bed in all their sickness, and raised up in the lonely hours of the night many a note of praise for his afflicting as well as his consoling hand. I have had myself for many years no small measure of bodily infirmity and at times of severe illness, which has been a daily and sometimes a very heavy cross; but some of the best seasons I have ever enjoyed have been upon a bed of affliction.

4. Take, again, *family afflictions*, for while we are in the body we

are so closely connected with domestic ties, and they twine themselves so firmly round our heart, that out of the bosom of our warmest affections often spring our sharpest sorrows. How few there are of those who fear God who do not sooner or later drink the bitter cup of domestic sorrows, whether in painful bereavements of husband, wife, or child, or from circumstances arising in the family which are more grievous than death itself. When the grave opens its mouth upon the dear object of creature love, it seems as if that were the heaviest of all family sorrows; but there are afflictions far deeper than those of the grave, especially if the departed one has been laid there with a good hope of rising to glory on the resurrection morn. A profligate husband, a faithless wife, a dishonoured daughter, an infidel son may be a much worse affliction than a buried partner or an entombed child.

But I shall not dwell any longer upon these *temporal* afflictions, though in God's mysterious alchemy they are made to work for spiritual good to those who fear his great name. Yet as they are in some measure common to the saints of God with the world at large, I shall rather direct your attention to those *spiritual* sufferings which none experience but the Lord's living family. These far exceed all temporal sorrow, for as eternity exceeds time, so that the one is but a drop while the other is an ocean, and as the soul excels the body, the one being mortal and the other immortal, so spiritual afflictions far outweigh the heaviest natural trials. As a proof of this, look at the case of Job, upon whose head such an amount of temporal suffering was accumulated: all his property gone at a stroke; his ten children crushed under the ruins of a falling house; his body afflicted with boils from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; his wife, who should have been his support and comforter, tempting him to curse God and die. Job, however, bore all those temporal afflictions patiently and submissively. But when spiritual afflictions were added to the weight of these temporal sorrows, when God hid his face, when Satan harassed his soul, and he seemed set up as a mark for the burning arrows of God's wrath, then he began to curse his day and wish he had never been

brought into being. Spiritual afflictions cut so deep from this circumstance that they enter into the very depth of a man's soul, and seem but a prelude to eternal misery. Here it is that they so widely differ from any amount of temporal afflictions. Assume that you are even now afflicted in the most grievous way with temporal trials, there will be an end to them if eternal life dwell in your bosom. If reduced to live and die within the walls of a union workhouse, death will but transport you to a heavenly mansion when the clods fall over your elm shell in a parish grave. If persecuted by an ungodly world, you will stand before God clothed in white robes and with a palm of victory in your hands, when your persecutors are cast into the depths of eternal woe. If your body is afflicted, it is but for a few weeks, or months, or years, and then you will have a glorious body, without pain, ache, or suffering. Or if your families are the cause of acute trouble, time must remove you from them or them from you. But O! the soul! that immortal principle which must live for ever: this cuts so deep. If this be wrong all is wrong; if this be right all is right. But again how tender and sensitive is the soul compared with the body! The one is flesh, the other spirit; the one a mere mass of bones and sinews, but the other the breath of God; the one to rot and moulder in its native earth, the other to exist for ever in happiness or misery. This is the reason, then, why spiritual troubles cut so deep, because they cut into that which is to live for all eternity; that undying, immortal, unquenchable principle which will exist when time itself shall be no more.

1. Look, for instance, at the *sufferings of a soul under the first convictions of sin* when lying under the curse of a broken law, and trembling under the apprehension of wrath to come. Is not the poor soul almost ready to curse the very day of its birth? How gladly would it be a dog, a bird, a reptile sooner than as a human being to possess an immortal soul and lie for ever under the terrible indignation of the Almighty. Now what are all temporal sufferings compared with the pangs of a guilty conscience, the fear of lying for ever under the burning wrath of God; to be shut up, and that for ever, in that horrible abyss of woe out of which there is no coming; that dark and gloomy abode into which no

ray of hope will ever penetrate, and for ever to be surrounded with the company of devils and lost spirits, tormenting and being tormented, hateful and hating with eternal hate? As these gloomy thoughts revolve over the soul, under the first breakings in of light to see and life to feel the guilt of sin, how they swallow up all temporal sufferings as an ocean swallows up a brook.

2. Look again at *the temptations and fiery darts of Satan*, what has been well called the artillery of hell, which he opens with such readiness and plies with such vigour when permitted by the Lord. What, I may ask, are temporal troubles weighed in the scale against Satanic temptations to blasphemy and suicide? If you are persecuted by man, even were you, like the Italian and Spanish converts, shut up in prison or condemned to the galleys for faith in Christ, you might even there, with Paul and Silas with their feet in the stocks, or with John Knox when he was pulling at the galley oar, sing psalms of praise to your God. His presence could illuminate the darkest cell; his love support under the deepest bodily suffering. If reduced to the extremest poverty, were you favoured with a sense of the Lord's goodness, you might bless God in your lonely garret and water your crust with tears of gratitude. If afflicted in body but supported in soul, you could bless God for a sick chamber. If painful circumstances arise in your family, or the desire of your eyes be taken away at a stroke, you might still be able, in sweet submission to the will of God, to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." Thus under the greatest temporal affliction, the soul may enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding. But where are joy and peace, where even calmness of mind and submission of spirit, when fierce temptations roll over your soul and fiery darts burn in your bosom? For these temptations do not come alone; they meet with the corruptions of our nature, and set them all on fire. What then is any temporal affliction compared with the wickedness of the human heart stirred up by the power of Satan, or the awful thoughts even against God himself that pass and repass over the troubled soul?

3. Look again at the *doubts and fears* in which many of the saints of God are held, and some of them during the greater part of their life. All the family of God do not sink so deep into soul trouble as I have described, nor are all exercised by those grievous temptations as to the being of God, or those blasphemous suggestions and vile imaginations to which I have just alluded. But very many of the family of God who are spared these distressing sorrows are deeply exercised as to their state and standing for eternity, passing their days full of doubt and fear; and thus they go on for years, like Pharaoh's chariot wheels, driving heavily along through the deep sand sometimes even to a dying bed.

4. Or if you have been blessed in any measure with a sense of God's goodness and mercy, then to experience *the hidings of his face*; the darkness of mind that takes place when the light of his countenance is gone; the grievous temptation to doubt and fear whether the whole was not a delusion; the painful retrospect of having neglected so many opportunities which the Lord gave when he indulged you with nearer access to himself, and seemed to hear your prayer almost before it was uttered. What temporal afflictions are equal to the hidings of God's face?

5. Again, look *at the guilt of backsliding*; the sorrows and troubles which many of the saints of God have to wade through from being overcome by the power of sin and entangled in the snares of Satan. Guilt of soul, from a sense of backsliding, cuts more deeply into the conscience and is a source of far acuter grief and sorrow than the first convictions of sin. Surely to sin against light and conscience, against goodness and mercy, against love and blood, is a transgression of a far deeper dye, of a much blacker hue, than to sin in ignorance, in carnality, in death. How the sin of David was aggravated by the Lord's mercies, and how the Lord reminded him of this by Nathan when he told him, "I anointed thee King over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul." "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight." (2 Sam. 12:7, 9.) It is sinning against the Lord's goodness and mercy which so aggravates the

sin of backsliding, and it is the producing guilt of conscience which makes a sense of those slips and falls to be more heavy and acute than that felt in the first application of the law.

ii. But if we look a little more closely into our text we shall find in it an intimation that some of the saints at Smyrna would have to pass through a peculiar trial; and, viewed in a spiritual and experimental sense, we may find in this something applicable to the state and case of the family of God now. "*Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.*" This in their case was true literally; not that the devil could take them by the neck and hurl them into prison under a bodily shape. But he cast them into prison by instigating those to do so in whom the power was lodged. He worked upon the prejudices and passions of the mob; he stirred up the enmity of the Roman governor; he insinuated lies and calumnies against them into the mind of the priests of the false worship then prevalent in Smyrna; and thus, though he himself put forth no hand, he instigated those to do it who had the power. I have already intimated that there might have been some intimation here of the imprisonment and martyrdom of Polycarp, who was at this time over the church at Smyrna. But whether so or not, and I by no means wish to speak of it with any degree of certainty, the devil was to cast some of them into prison, not for their destruction, but that they might be tried. Prisons now are shut upon us. No Bedford gaol takes in another Bunyan. No soldiers are standing at our chapel door to carry me off to prison, as would have been the case had I stood up here 200 years ago. We have neither Bedford gaols nor have we Bunyans now. In losing the one we have lost the other. Not that I wish to see the interior of a prison for righteousness' sake, for that would soon close my earthly career. But there is a *spiritual* prison into which the devil is permitted at times to cast some of the saints of God. As he was the instigator of the mob who cast Polycarp into prison, so he can instigate the baser and more furious mob of our own blind passions and corrupt affections, and then, as the consequence of the commission of sin, afterwards cast us into the prison of a guilty conscience. Are you never in prison? Is not this sometimes your melancholy cry,

"I am shut up and I cannot come forth?" Is there no bondage ever over your spirit; are there no fetters ever around your limbs? When you come to the throne of grace, when you bend your knee before the majesty of heaven, when you assemble yourselves in the house of prayer, is it all freedom, holy boldness, filial confidence, and sweet access unto the Father? Is there never any groan or lamentation over hardness of heart, deadness of affection, and that miserable bondage which shuts up your soul almost in the condemned cell? And why is this? You can see there was a cause; that Satan, by working upon your corrupt affections, has entangled you in some snare. And what has been the consequence? You have been cast into the gloomy gaol, and there, like Samson, with your eyes put out, you are grinding and groaning in the prison-house.

III. But why this? That you maybe shut up for ever in the prison of hell? that this present darkness and gloom should be but the prelude to eternal woe, to the blackness of darkness for ever? that like a man to be hanged to-morrow, you are now shut up with bolts and bars, to be taken out of the condemned cell to be made a public exhibition, and then to be gibbeted for ever, as a monument of God's awful displeasure? No; that is not God's purpose in letting you go to prison; but "*that you may be tried;*" that every grace of the Spirit in you may be proved as by fire whether it be of God or man, that your faith may be tried and proved to be genuine; that your hope may be tried and found to be a good hope through Christ; that your love may be tried if it be feigned, or whether you will love the Lord in spite of his desertion of you and the hidings of his face; that your patience, your perseverance in well doing, your endurance to the end, your repentance and godly sorrow for sin, your humility, spirituality of mind, separation from the world, your crucifixion of the flesh, and holy determination to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, may all be tried. The prison, the gloomy cell, the darkness under which you labour, the struggles for deliverance, the fear that you may never come out—all these things will try you to the uttermost; but by them it will be made manifest if you are a true saint of God and whether the work upon the conscience is

genuine. We think it hard to be so often in prison; and yet how the prison tries the graces of God's people! How it makes them look and examine to see whether the root of the matter be found in them! How completely it puts a stop to all creature boasting! How it makes them long for deliverance! How it whets the edge of their appetite for the promises, for the application of atoning blood, for the discovery of salvation, for the revelation of Christ, and for the manifestation of his dying, bleeding love! How it stirs up prayer and supplication in their breast! How it makes them look and long for the Lord's appearing, so that they can say with David, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psa. 42:1); and again, "I wait for the Lord: my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." (Psa. 130:5, 6.) Thus their mournful cell is made to them a place of most blessed profit, for in their prison they are tried, and when tried they come forth, as Job said he should, as gold. Was not this the Lord's special mission "to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house?" (Isa. 42:7.) Was he not specially anointed and sent "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?" (Isa. 41:1.) O, how many of the Lord's dear family are shut up in the prison house out of which they cry, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee" (Psa. 79:11); and how the Lord "looks down from the height of his sanctuary to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death."

iv. But there is another feature which I cannot pass over, for it seems to cast a light upon the whole of the path of suffering in which the Lord's saints tread. "*Ye shall have tribulation ten days.*" These ten days are supposed by some interpreters to signify the ten persecutions under the Roman Emperors, or the ten years of the last persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. Whether such be the right prophetic interpretation of the passage or not I will not attempt to decide, for on these points I have very little light. I prefer a spiritual, experimental interpretation, as not only much surer and safer, but much more profitable. I consider, therefore,

the "ten days" to signify a *certain definite period*, not strictly ten days either as measured by the rising and setting of the sun, or by understanding days for years, but a space of time fixed in the mind of God. I gather, then, from these "ten days," as the fixed limit of the suffering of the church at Smyrna, this sweet inference, that the Lord has appointed a certain bound to all the tribulation which his people shall endure; that as he determined the church at Smyrna should suffer ten days or ten years, if such be the mind of the Spirit, so he has fixed tribulation as the lot of his people to be endured only for a certain period. As, then, when those ten days were run no tribulation could hold the prisoners at Smyrna fast, so when the saints of God have filled up each the appointed measure of suffering, then their tribulation will come to a close.

Look at this in a spiritual point of view, and compare it with the variety of suffering that I have brought before your notice. You are now suffering persecution: it is but for a time; there are only ten days of persecution for you. You are afflicted in providence; you have great reverses; you have losses in business; you have bad debts; you are reduced to a measure of destitution, and are trembling and fearing what will be the consequence. It is only for ten days; there is an appointed time when there will be a change for the better, and providence will once more smile. You are suffering in body; you have an afflicted tabernacle; you are often brought down by sickness; scarcely know a day's thorough health; it is but for ten days. If those days spread themselves to the end of your life, still it is but a few days compared with eternity, and we may say of it what Rebekah's mother and brother said of her, "Let the sickness abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that it shall go." (Gen. 25:55.) Or these ten days may be for ten weeks only, or only ten literal days, and then your illness may be turned into health. So of family afflictions, the hidings of God's face, the temptations of Satan, bondage, and imprisonment, and all the various modes of suffering which I have run through, all are but for a limited time; God has fixed the exact period when they shall come to a close; and thus we see that tribulation itself, like the sea, may loudly roar, but has

certain bounds which it cannot pass.

II.—But this leads us to our second point, which is the *gracious admonition* that the Lord speaks by John to the church at Smyrna, not to be *dismayed* at affliction and trouble; "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*" It is as if the Lord said to the church at Smyrna, "Look at the things which thou shalt suffer; examine them well; take a clear and full view of them; draw up a catalogue which shall contain every item; consider them one by one; cast up the whole amount; look at them singly and wholly fairly in the face, and when thou hast taken this deliberate survey of them, let this be the feeling of thy heart, Fear none of them." "But we do fear, Lord! Our flesh is cowardly; we shrink from the fire; we cannot bear suffering; it is so painful, so trying, and we are so weak; O, if it be possible let this cup pass from us." But the Lord replies, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Your fears are groundless; your apprehensions have not any solid base upon which to rest. I tell you again, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." I do not say, Fear not *some*, but I say, "Fear none."

But let us, with God's help and blessing seek to dive a little deeper into the meaning of this gracious admonition, and seek out what spiritual reasons there are why we are not to fear.

1. First, then, none of those things which we shall suffer, if we are indeed the Lord's, *will be able to separate from the love of God.* Was not this the apostle's bold and noble challenge to all modes of suffering, as if he bade them come forward and do their worst? When he had given a catalogue of all the sufferings that God's people can endure, he then adds, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38, 39.) Now if none of these things shall be able to separate those who are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord the Lamb, from the love of God; if tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,

or nakedness, or peril, or sword, are all powerless to separate, may we not give full credit to the Lord's own words, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer?" No; they shall never separate thee from the love of God if ever it has been shed abroad in thy heart; they shall never be permitted to overwhelm thee, if indeed thou hast a living faith in the Son of God. Be they temporal or spiritual, ever so high, or ever so deep, they shall never separate thee from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, for that like himself is eternal and unalterable. Therefore, fear none of them.

2. But again, take another reason, why you should not fear any suffering. *The Lord will support you under them.* His own promise is, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." A sweet assurance and a blessed experience of this made the apostle Paul glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for the Lord himself assured him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.) If, then, the Lord's grace is sufficient for thee; if his strength is made perfect in thy weakness, "fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Let them come in any form they may, persecution, losses in business, reverses in providence, poverty and destitution, afflictions of body, troubles in the family, nay the very hidings of God's face, and fiery darts of the devil, and any or every spiritual affliction that may be heaped upon thy head: "fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer;" none of them, none of them shall harm thee. Why need, then, thy heart sink under their prospect or under their reality? If strength shall be given thee according to thy day; if the grace of Christ is sufficient for thee, and if his strength is made perfect in weakness, why need you fear them? If these troubles only bring you nearer to Jesus; if they are made means in the Lord's hands of drawing ampler supplies of grace and strength out of his fulness; if you learn thereby more of his sustaining power, and see deeper into his sympathising heart, they are not your enemies, but your best friends; for his blood and righteousness, his finished work, death, and resurrection have taken the sting out of every affliction. For what is that sting? *Punishment.* There is this difference between

afflictions coming upon the world and afflictions coming upon the church. Afflictions upon the world are angry punishments; afflictions upon the church are merciful chastisements. As Jesus, then, when he died took the sting out of death, so that the dying saint can say, "O death where is thy sting?" so when Jesus suffered, he took the sting out of affliction; and as by dying he turned death into life, so by suffering he turned affliction into profit.

3. Take, therefore, another reason why we should not fear any of those things which we may suffer; these afflictions *will all work together for our spiritual good*. Do we not read that *all things* work together for good to those that love God? Thus, then, our affliction will work together for good; for surely among the "all things" sufferings must be included. As in some beautiful piece of machinery, say, the watch which you carry in your pocket, wheel works into wheel, and all for one definite end, to tell you the correct time of day; so it is with the afflictions, trials, and temptations which befall the church of God; they all work with and into one another in a mysterious manner for the good of the soul. It is true that we cannot see how they work to this end. Is it not so naturally? We might see a piece of beautiful machinery and not understand why one wheel moves in this direction and another in that; why there are cogs here and cogs there; why the wheels are of a different size and in different positions; but if we observe a definite result, and find that our watch keeps time to a minute, we believe, though we may not see, how every wheel and cog was necessary, and that the whole was put together with the most consummate skill. You see on every side beautiful patterns. The dress which you wear or the walls of your house present to your eye a definite and perhaps a beautiful pattern; but you could not explain how a machine could be so contrived as to print it so beautifully in all its various colours; yet you know that it is so. So it is as regards the soul. When the beautiful pattern comes out, the image of Christ stamped upon the heart; when we see in others or feel in ourselves any measure of conformity to the suffering likeness of the Son of God, then we can believe, though we may not understand or be able to explain,

how troubles and temptations, sorrows and afflictions, have all been so working together with the Spirit and grace of God, as to bring out that resemblance to the image of Christ which is the glory of the church here below. Do you not long to be conformed to Christ's image? Is not this your desire and prayer? Then fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer, if they be a means of your prayer being answered.

4: But take another reason why you should fear none of those things which you shall suffer, which will close this part of the subject; they *will all work for the glory of God*. God is glorified in the sufferings of his saints. By their patience under them, their humility in acknowledging that they deserve them, their submission to his holy will, and especially by the display of his wonderworking hand in bringing them out of all their troubles, and giving them the victory over all their afflictions, a revenue of glory redounds to his great and worthy name. The apostle thus sought to encourage those who were suffering for Christ's sake, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." (1 Pet. 4:14.) And is not that worth suffering for, that you may contribute to the glory of God; that you may endure whilst upon earth the will of God, and be the means of adding to the harvest of praise which is to be reaped one day in the mansions of the blessed? Well may the Lord, then, bid his suffering church to fear none of those things. If none can separate her from the love of God, if support is given her under all them, if all shall work together for her good, and the glory of God shall be the final result, well may Jesus say to the Church, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer."

III.—But I pass on now to the Lord's *exhortation*, and a most blessed exhortation it is. The Lord lay it with power upon your heart and mine! "*Be thou faithful unto death.*" What is the cogency and pertinency of this exhortation here? Suffering has a tendency to make us unfaithful; therefore, we need the Lord himself to lay this exhortation with power upon our heart, that we may not give place to the tempter.

i. Say, for instance, that you were called upon to suffer. Say that I, like my namesake, was called upon to suffer for Christ's cause and be burnt, as John Philpot the martyr, in Queen Mary's days, was at the stake: should not I need special grace to make and keep me faithful to my views of divine truth, to my experience of the power of God, to the doctrines I have preached so long, and for so many years so firmly held? Should I not need the same grace as was bestowed upon that martyr whose name I bear and whose examinations and confession of faith are so well recorded in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, that I might be faithful unto death as he was? Who knows how we should stand if persecution roused up the slumbering flame? I know that I am weak as water and should sink and faint, unless held up by Almighty power.

Or again, look at the various troubles and afflictions which I have laid before you, such as losses in providence, affliction of body, family trials; and besides these external afflictions, the long catalogue of spiritual troubles, such as temptations, the hidings of God's face, the assaults of Satan, and the mournful despondency of a despairing heart: how we need faithfulness to carry us through this scene of trouble and woe, for how they all foster a murmuring spirit and a giving up in the hour of trial!

1. The word "*faithful*" here has two senses. First, it means believing, as the word in the original is often rendered in the New Testament; as in the passage, "Be not faithless, but *believing*" (John 20:27); and again, "They that have *believing* masters." (1 Tim. 6:2.) We may, therefore, read it thus: "Be thou *believing* unto death." Thus we are bidden never to give up our faith, never to cast away our confidence, but still to believe whatever may arise; in the dark as well as in the light, when sense, nature, and reason all fail, and nothing remains but the pure word of truth. If ever the Lord has blessed me with a living faith in his name and I have embraced him in the arms of a living faith and affection, I am never to let him go, but believe in spite of unbelief. I am still to repose my soul upon his faithfulness, still to hang upon his promise, and still, as Hart says, to "credit contradictions."

Whatever sin or Satan or unbelief may suggest, I am still to believe in spite of all the powers of earth and hell. This is the fight of faith; this is how the believer comes off victorious. And this does not depend upon the measure, but upon the nature of our faith. If I have but weak faith I must no more give up than if I have strong faith; if I have but little hope I must no more part with that than a great hope; for though it be little, if of grace, it is good. A large ship needs a large anchor; but a little boat must have its anchor too; and the little anchor will hold the little boat as much as the large anchor the large ship. But this faith must be maintained by the same power that gave it, and that, too, in the means of God's appointment. We cannot expect to have this faith in vigorous exercise unless we use those special means which the God of all grace has provided, such as earnest and continual prayer and supplication, reading and searching the word of truth, meditating upon the works of God's hands, deep and sincere attention to the preached word, and, as furnished with them, the ordinances of God's house. These are certain means that God has put into our hands whereby faith is maintained in lively exercise. If I am to be faithful or believing unto death, I must not neglect these means to keep me so. I must not go into battle without my rifle. I must not face an invading foe and leave my arms at home. And how am I to shoot with any certainty of hitting the mark unless I practise? How am I to wield the sword of the Spirit if I have never been taught, or, having learned, have by disuse, forgotten the broadsword exercise? No, we are not called upon to play but fight; not merely to appear upon parade, but go when called into the thickest of the battle. I am to pray and meditate and strive in spite of everything opposed to my faith, and thus be believing unto death itself.

2. But the word means, as rendered here, *faithful* as well as believing. All Christians are called upon to be faithful. I as a minister must be, above the measure of private Christians, faithful; for it is expected in stewards that a man be found faithful. I of all men am called upon to be faithful—faithful to the ministry, faithful to the office into which I hope God has put me,

faithful to the people amongst whom I labour, faithful to my position in the Church of Christ, as contending by my pen as well as by my tongue for the truth as it is in Jesus. And how faithful, whether I or you?

1. First, we must be faithful to the *light that God has given us*. If God has given us light, it is that we may be faithful to it; not to hide our candle under a bushel, but hold it up that men may see its beams far and wide. The apostle tells the Philippian believers that they shine or should shine in the midst of "a crooked and perverse generation as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:15.)

2. Be faithful also to what God has written with his own hand upon *the tablets of conscience*. Never fight against conscience, never resist the inward dictates of the fear of God, nor sin against the admonition of his Spirit within; but whatever the fear of God prompts you to do, do it, and do it thoroughly; and what the fear of God bids you shun, avoid it and avoid it wholly. Be faithful to God's vicegerent, an enlightened, a tender conscience, which he has placed in your breast as a witness for himself.

3. Be faithful also to *any promise* which he has ever given you, to any *admonition* he has ever applied to your soul, or to any *precept* he has brought with power into your heart. And remember however difficult it may seem to be to carry these things out, that the Lord's grace is sufficient for you; and be assured that we can have no real or solid comfort except in proportion to our faithfulness. How could I, for instance, if I had a spark of godly fear in my bosom, after my Lord's day's labours, lie down upon my pillow with an easy conscience to-night if I knew that I had been unfaithful through the day; if I had been deceiving the people by erroneous doctrine or false experience, and thus flattering souls into hell? So we all who desire to fear God must be faithful according to the various positions which we are called in the providence and grace of God to occupy. You as hearers are as much bound to be as faithful in your position as I am in mine. You are not to call upon me to be faithful, and then you yourselves neglect the very thing you call upon me to

exercise, and for the want of which you would severely and that justly condemn me. You, in your respective positions, are to be faithful to the light that God has given you, to the admonitions of his Spirit in the word and in your conscience, to the profession that you make of his name, to the hope that you have of eternal life, to your fellow believers, and, I may add, to your fellow men. For ye are witnesses for God, as the Lord hath said, "Ye are my witnesses" (Isai. 43:10); and you know God's own testimony that "a faithful witness will not lie," and that "a true witness delivereth souls, but a deceitful witness speaketh lies." (Prov. 19:5, 25.)

ii. *And that "unto death."* There is to be no intermission in this warfare. The time is never to come when you may be a little unfaithful, when you may allow yourselves for a short time to be carried down the stream, when you may indulge yourselves for an hour or two in trifling with sin, or let the devil for a little while put his chain round your neck. May a wife be a little unfaithful to her husband? Then may you be a little unfaithful to Christ. There is then to be no cessation of arms, no truce with sin and Satan, no yielding, no surrender. "War to the knife" must be your motto. You must die with the sword in your hand; and fight to the last gasp. Just as our brave soldiers will go on fighting when they have received a mortal wound, so it must be with the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ. They must die believing, as well as live believing, resist Satan to their last breath, and lay firm hold of Jesus up to the last gasp.

IV.—Then comes our fourth and last point, the *sweet promise* from the Lord's own mouth to all who thus faithfully live and faithfully die. "*And I will give thee a crown of life.*" This promise of an immortal crown is an allusion to the ancient practice of crowning the successful runner in the foot-race with a crown of leaves. The Lord uses this figure as one well known at the time, and gives it a spiritual meaning. But what is "a crown of life?" Why, life eternal; a life of glory in the mansions of ineffable bliss. The faithful warrior has not his reward, at least, not his visible reward, in this life. He must die to have it. As our blessed Lord himself passed through the sufferings of death to win his eternal crown, so must his believing followers. But even in this life the

Lord is sometimes pleased to stretch forth this crown as with his own hand from the heights of heaven, that his dying saints may see it as with believing eyes before it is for ever put upon their head. This Paul saw and felt when he uttered the words, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:6, 7, 8.) Nor is Paul the only saint of God who has had this blessed assurance. In fact, what else can cast the light of heaven upon a dying bed?

How cheering then are these words to the poor, tried, tempted saint of God, who is pressing on through innumerable difficulties, to believe there is a crown of life to be put upon his head, that he shall see Jesus as he is without a veil between, that he shall enjoy a glorious and unfailing immortality in the immediate presence of God, where sin and sorrow are unknown, where tears are wiped from all faces, and there will be nothing but one uninterrupted song of eternal bliss. This is at best but a dying life. What enjoyments we have here are but transient. The sweetest comforts—how soon they vanish away! The happiest frames—how quickly they pass away, and what a blank they leave behind! But heaven when it comes with all its glories will be for ever and ever. There will be no cessation to the eternal happiness which will then be the portion of all the saints of God, but one undying song. To praise and bless the Lord will be the unceasing joy as well as the unceasing occupation of the glorified members of the mystical body of Christ. The Lord, if it be his infinite mercy, set these things upon our heart, and give us that faithfulness unto death whereby he who has graciously revealed the promise will surely perform it, and give us a crown of life!

## **The Faith and Confession, Life and Death of a Pilgrim**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 29, 1866

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Hebrews 11:13, 14

There never was, there never can be but one religion, I mean, of course, one true religion. There can no more be two religions, that is, two true religions, than there can be two Gods, that is, two true Gods. The words of the apostle are decisive upon this point. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4, 5, 6.) How plainly does this testimony from the word of truth prove that there can be but one true religion. As naturally, so spiritually, there is but "one body"—the mystical body of Christ. Have you two bodies or one? So with Christ mystical. Has he two bodies or one? And what is this body but the Church, according to those words? "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.) And as there is but "one body," so there is but "one Spirit," which is, so to speak, the animating soul of that one body. Have you two souls or one? Similarly as there is but "one body"—the mystical body of Christ, so there is but "one Spirit," by whom we are baptised into that one body. These are two grand facts to lay hold of, two grand truths to believe and abide by; and were they more fully believed, and more faithfully acted upon, there would be much less error and much less evil in the professing church. Now, flowing out of the oneness of the body and the oneness of the Spirit, there is but "one faith," "one hope," and "one baptism;" and as the Object of this one faith, of this one hope, and of this one baptism, there is but "one Lord,"

the Lord Jesus Christ, and but "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

But were there no other testimony than this in the word of God; did not the whole current of divine revelation run in the same channel; did not the united voice of apostles and prophets bear the same uniform witness, it would spring out of the very necessity of the case that there can be but one true religion, of which grace is the fountain, the Scriptures the inspired revelation, faith the instrument, God in Christ the Object, the Holy Ghost the worker, godliness the proof, and salvation the end.

But a question may arise in your mind: "Have you no other explanation to give us as to what constitutes true religion? for we are very anxious to know what it is, and, above all, whether we are partakers of it." Let us see then whether an examination of the meaning of the word will give us any help here. What is its literal meaning? for that is a point which may be useful to know. The word "religion" is derived from a Latin word, which signifies to bind, and not merely simply to bind, but to bind fast, or rather to bind again and again by repeated cords. Religion, therefore, properly signifies that strong fastening which binds and binds and binds again, and thus holds fast and firm. It is not indeed a word much used in Scripture, or rather, is not frequently employed by our translators. We find it, however, in Paul's defence of himself, where he says to king Agrippa, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26:5.) There it is applied to false religion; but James uses it to set forth the true, drawing a distinction between a religion which is "vain" and one which is "pure and undefiled." "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:26, 27.) I may observe, however, that the word "religion," as thus used by James, rather means worship, and that his object is not so much to explain what we understand by the word religion, as to show what pure and undefiled worship or

service of God consists in,—that he best serves him with a pure conscience and undefiled worship, who manifests his love and affection, sympathy and kindness to Christ's people, by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping himself unspotted from the world.

But though the word "religion," as used in the Scripture, does not exactly convey the same meaning as I have given it, yet the word of truth is full of that in which the vital essence of all true religion consists, for in fact, all our knowledge of true religion is from the word of God. Its leading idea, as I have already explained, is, that it binds us fast and firm to the throne of God. Thus, we find the apostle speaking: "The love of Christ constraineth us." Was there no binding influence here? Yes; for so powerful was the constraint of this love upon his soul, that he could say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So also, "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 again, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 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." (Phil. 3:7, 8.) Do we not see in all these desires and feelings the expression of a binding power upon the heart? We may define religion, therefore, as the effect of that work of grace upon the soul which, as being of the operation of God, has a binding influence, a constraining efficacy upon our heart, upon our lips, and upon our life.

Now, as by faith we stand, by faith we live, by faith we walk, as without faith we can neither please God nor worship him in spirit and in truth, nor know his will, nor do it; as by faith Christ is made precious, his blood and righteousness looked to and embraced; as by faith the heart is purified, the conscience cleansed, and the life regulated; and as all these divine realities have a binding, constraining influence and effect, may we not say that faith is the essence of all true religion, its vital principle, and

its grand distinguishing characteristic? Thus there cannot be two kinds of religion because there cannot be two kinds of faith. Have I not already shown you from the word of truth, that as there is but "one God" and "one Lord," so there is but "one faith?" All who are bound as a living sacrifice by the cords of love to the horns of the altar; all who know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; all who worship God in spirit and in truth, must possess one and the same faith, for unless it be a principle of the same origin, producing the same effect, working in the same way, and issuing in the same result, it would not be a religion of which faith is the substance, nor one of which salvation is the end. Does religion, true religion spring then out of a living faith? Then there is only one living faith, and only one true religion as the fruit of that faith. Does true religion consist in having a good hope through grace? Then there can be only one good hope, the "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." As love is a component part of true religion, one of the cords which bind the soul to the throne of God, there can only be one true love, which is, as the apostle declares, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. As repentance is necessary to salvation, and as Jesus is exalted to give this, there can be but one true repentance, that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. And so I might run through every grace of the Spirit and show its oneness.

Thus we come to the same point by whatever road we travel to it, that there is and can be but one true religion. There may indeed be as many creeds upon the face of the earth as there are shades of colour amongst its inhabitants; or as many different religions in this country, as there are churches and chapels in the land; but it will be found at the appearing of the Great Judge of all, that there never has been but one way of obtaining eternal life and salvation from the wrath to come. But though religion is the same wherever it exists, it may differ in the variety of expression. It is analogous to what I was endeavouring to show this morning with respect to that one grand thought of God's heart which runs through the whole of his word. I showed you that this thought

was but one, and yet that round that one central thought there played a wonderful variety of details, but such a variety as never disagreed or was discordant with the central point which holds it firm in its place. Thus, the religion the Old Testament saints, though the same in substance as ours, differed from it in expression. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped God by sacrifice. But now to offer a ram upon an altar would be the highest degree of profaneness. After the law was promulgated from Mount Sinai, the godly Israelite carefully and scrupulously attended to the ritual therein prescribed. He practised circumcision; he abstained from unclean meats; he was bound by certain rites and ordinances given by God himself to be observed with the greatest strictness. For us to do the same things now would be apostasy from Christianity to Judaism. But he was then an accepted worshipper. The expression was different, the mode of worship was not the same; but Abraham's faith was the same as ours; Abraham's hope the same as ours; Abraham's love the same as ours; because Abraham's God is ours. Unless, therefore, you can make out that God may be acceptably worshipped carnally as well as spiritually, believed in acceptably naturally as well as spiritually, you must come to the point with me that there never was and never can be but one religion, and that that must be wrought in the heart by the power of God himself.

This, then, is the reason why the apostle in Hebrews 11. traces out faith in the beautiful and blessed manner he does, as dwelling in the Old Testament worthies, showing that the faith for which he contended, the faith which he preached, the faith which he enjoyed, the faith whereby he was looking to be saved, was exactly the same faith in its nature and substance as the faith of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the faith of Samuel and the prophets; the faith of all the Old Testament believers, who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.

These thoughts may lead us to our text; and if the Lord be pleased to open my mouth this evening, may help to cast some

light upon it. But you will observe, that the apostle in it is speaking not of the Old Testament believers generally, but of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and especially of Abraham and Sarah. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

I think we may observe four things in the words before us:—

I.—*First*, the *faith* of the persons spoken of.

II.—*Secondly*, the *confession* which they made as springing out of that faith.

III.—*Thirdly*, the *desire* which they had for the better country.

IV.—*Fourthly*, their *death*.

I. I have then to show, with respect to these Old Testament believers, their faith, their confession, their desire, and their death. And if we possess the same faith of which they were the blessed partakers, similar will be our desire, similar will be our confession, and we hope, similar our deaths.

i. The faith of these Old Testament believers in some respects differed from ours. This difference was not in the *faith itself*, for, as I have shown you from the Scripture, there is but "one faith" that, namely, defined by the apostle as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Nor did it differ in the *object* of that faith, for as there is but "one Lord," and he is the object of faith, that object was as much one as the faith itself. The Lord therefore said of Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56.) Nor did their faith differ from ours in its *operation*, for it was the work of the Holy Spirit, and worked by love. Nor did it differ in its *effects*, which were to purify the heart, separate from the world, and produce the fruits of godliness. Nor did it differ in

its *end*, which is the salvation of the soul; for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will sit down in the kingdom of heaven. (1 Pet. 1:9; Matt. 8:11.) If then it did not differ in its nature, in its object, in its operations, in its effects, or in its end, how did it differ? It differed in this way,—in the distinctness in which the Object of faith was revealed to their spiritual view. We read, therefore, in our text that they did not receive the promises. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." The meaning of this expression is that they did not receive the promises in their fulfilment. They received the promises themselves, that is, by faith, for they were persuaded of them, and embraced them; but they did not receive the fulfilment of the promises as we have received them under the gospel dispensation, since the Lord Jesus, the object of faith, has been revealed in the flesh. We see this very plainly marked in the experience of Simeon, of whom we read that "he was just and devout," that is, a righteous, godly man. He was "waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him." The experience of this godly man represents the experience of the Old Testament saints. He was waiting for that which had to be revealed. We read that "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." This he saw when he took up the child Jesus in his arms, and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." (Luke 2:29.) The experience of Simeon *before* he saw Christ represents the experience and faith of the Old Testament saints; and, the experience of Simeon *after* he had seen Christ, and held him in his arms, represents the experience and faith of New Testament saints since Christ has been revealed in the flesh, and as he is revealed in them by the Spirit.

If you have gathered up my meaning, you will now see what was the faith of these Old Testament believers,—that they looked forward to Christ who was to come, as we look backward upon Christ who is come. With this difference, however, that the object of their faith not having then been revealed in the flesh, there was a dimness and indistinctness in their faith, corresponding to the distance, so to speak, of the object from their eyes.

ii. But now let us look a little at "the promises" which "they saw afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." I showed you that the persons of whom the apostle is immediately speaking in our text were Abraham and Sarah, together with Isaac and Jacob; for it was of these the apostle says more particularly, "These all died in faith." Now there were certain promises made by God to Abraham; and these promises it may be as well for us to examine. They were chiefly three.

1. The first was that he would be "a God to him and to his seed after him;" and I may add, a covenant God; for the words of the Lord to him were, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 17:7.)

2. The second promise which he gave him was that "He would give the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. 17:8.)

3. The third promise which he gave him, and which we may well call the sum and substance of the whole was, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:18.)

These then were the three grand promises which God gave to Abraham, and they were ratified both to Isaac and Jacob—to Isaac when he was in Gerah (Gen. 26:4), and to Jacob at Bethel, as he lay with his head upon the stone which he had taken for a pillow. (Gen. 28:14.)

But you will observe that neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob "received" any one of these three promises in their complete fulfilment. This is the reason why it is said in our text that "they received not the promises," because they received not the

complete fulfilment of them. Though God was their covenant God, yet they did not receive the fulfilment of that promise in all its blessedness; for Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, was not yet come. Canaan was not given into their possession, for they dwelt as sojourners in it, not having a foot of land to call their own, and thus "sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country." Nor did they receive the fulfilment of the promise that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, for Messiah was still in the loins of Abraham, and had not yet appeared in the flesh. In this sense, therefore, though they firmly believed the promises made to them and embraced them, they did not receive them in their fulfilment.

iii. But I will now show what they did receive. We read that "they saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them."

You will observe that the apostle does not say promise, but "promises;" and, as I have before shown that their faith was the same as ours, I may add that they saw and received the same promises in their substance that we do.

The promise of the land of Canaan was indeed a special promise to the lineal descendants of Abraham, and therefore does not belong, unless in a spiritual sense, to us Gentiles. But the two other promises, viz., that God would be a covenant God to him and to his seed, and that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, stretch beyond the bounds of the children of Abraham after the flesh, and embrace all those who, as being of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. (Gal. 3:9.) Faith puts us into possession of the promises; for as being the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, all distinctions between Jew and Gentile are put away, and we are all one in Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:28, 29.)

Now all these promises are firm and steadfast as being ratified in

Christ, for he is not only the sum and substance of them, but they are all established in him, and ratified by him. We therefore read, "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.) We have already seen that all the promises belong to those who believe, for they inherit them through faith and patience. But as they are almost innumerable, scattered up and down the word of truth on every side, I can mention only one or two of the most prominent by way of illustration; and in so doing I shall compare their faith in them with what we often see and find now in the experience of believers.

1. The first of these promises is "*eternal life*." "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2.) We see from these words that it was "promised before the world began;" and was, therefore, couched in the first promise after the fall that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This was the hope which animated and sustained the faith of Abraham; for we read that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and so of those in our text it is declared, "But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly." In the faith of this eternal life in the heavenly country they died, for they saw it afar off, were persuaded of it, embraced it, and looking forward to it, "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

2. But as we, as well as they, are poor, vile, and undone sinners by nature and practice, the promise of eternal life is connected with the *pardon of our sins*, the justification of our persons, and our acceptance in the Beloved. It therefore embraces salvation by free, sovereign, distinguishing, and superabounding grace, and every mercy and blessing connected with God's way of salvation.

These promises the Old Testament believers "saw afar off," for eternal life and salvation by grace were not then clearly revealed; and in this dimness of sight many of God's people strongly resemble them.

The first grand promise which they saw afar off, and of which they were persuaded, was *eternal life*. In this point Old Testament believers and New Testament saints are fully agreed. Now, when God by his secret and sacred work on a sinner's conscience is preparing him for the believing reception of these promises, he works in him by his Spirit and grace a faith whereby he is persuaded that these promises were given by God of his own free goodness and mercy, and are blessedly suitable to his state and condition. He thus sees them afar off, in the dim distance, as these pilgrims did. But though these promises are not at first brought blessedly near, but are as yet seen in the dim distance, yet they are sufficiently visible and sufficiently suitable to his state and feelings to attract his thoughts, engage his mind, raise up his faith and hope in them, and draw forth his affections towards them. Look at a sinner when first convicted of sin. Take your own case and state when first brought under the sentence of condemnation, with a burden of guilt upon your conscience, distress in your mind, and many fears of everlasting perdition pressing down your spirit. What hope or help, strength, wisdom, or righteousness could you find in self? Was not every door barred, every way of escape cut off, every hope resting upon the creature brought to an end? Now, if in this state there were some testimony of Christ given you, some light upon the word, some view of him in the Scriptures, some drawing near of his gracious Majesty, some sweet invitations from his gracious lips dropping into your soul, some kind promise held forth by his hand, was there not in all this testimony as revealed to faith both a sight and an attractive influence? The promises of eternal life and of a full and free salvation might be distant, but a light shone upon them which made them visible. We well know how a gleam of sunlight shining upon a distant spot makes it at once visible; and how different it is, as regards our view of it, when the same spot is covered with clouds and darkness. In this way, the ancient believers saw the promises afar off. Even Abraham himself, though strong in faith, and giving glory to God, saw the day of Christ but afar off, but he rejoiced to see it and was glad. So with you, perhaps, in days gone by. You saw Christ afar off, yet you

saw him as truly as if you had seen him near, for it is the same faith by which, as with our natural eye, we see what is afar as what is at hand. But though salvation was seen in him and in no other, it had not yet come nigh; it was in the dim distance, like the jubilee trumpet of which I was speaking this morning; the faint notes were heard before the trumpet itself sounded strong and clear under the walls of the prison where the captive was held in chains. We don't get at Christ in a moment. He will and does reveal himself in his blessed fulness, in his own time and way; but, usually speaking, we don't get a full manifestation of Christ at first. God's work upon the soul is often very gradual. Faith at first is often very weak, especially as regards taking hold of eternal life; and therefore the hope which springs out of this faith is faint and feeble too. The views of Christ which are entertained by believing hearts in the first stages of Christian experience are usually obscure, and yet they are true as far as they go. Few of the family of God at first are even led into a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel. Legality and self-righteousness darken and confuse their views, and the natural enmity of the human heart against the sovereignty of God is not yet subdued. I have thought sometimes that we often take a wrong view of what may be called a growth in grace; and as on the one hand, we do not make sufficient allowance for the weakness and ignorance of young believers, so on the other, we much forget our own experience and the way in which we ourselves were led. We insist upon a full manifestation of Christ, a gracious revelation of his love and blood, and are too much disposed to think little of, or even to cast aside those minor helps, tokens for good, droppings in of gracious words attended with softenings of heart, meltings of spirit, and gentle intimations of the love of Christ, which in times past were afforded. Because we want something better now, stronger now, clearer now, deeper now; because further and deeper led, more tried and exercised, more acquainted with the evils of our heart, and the snares of sin and Satan, we must not discard things highly prized when it was with us the days of our youth. How highly prized in early days was any view of Christ in the word, anything that testified of him under the preached gospel, any dawning, hope,

any moving or melting of heart at his approach, or any springing up of faith to embrace him, with love to flow out toward him. We saw Christ indeed afar off, but so far as we saw him by faith, anchored in him by hope, and embraced him in love, it was genuine; it was the fruit of the Spirit, it was the effect of grace. And even now may we not say the things we do desire to know, feel, and enjoy, the things which we look unto and look after, and stretch the breathings of our soul unto, are often afar off? We want them near. We would fain enjoy a fuller, clearer, nearer, dearer and more blessed discovery, revelation, and manifestation of the Lord Jesus, and a more powerful application of his blood to our conscience. God still often hides himself. We cannot get near to him as we would. He does not indulge us with those sweet embraces, love kisses, manifestations and revelations of his goodness, love, and mercy which our soul is longing for. So even now, though we may have enjoyed sweet manifestations in times past, and cannot give them up, because to give them up would be to give up our Ebenezers, our testimonies, our standing ground; yet even now we often see the promises afar off. Pardon, and peace and acceptance with God, and everything that our soul is stretching forth its desires after, are often seen but in the dim distance. We just descry the outline, see enough of them to know they are there, and long for a nearer approach, to get a firmer grasp, a fuller discovery and a sweeter manifestation, as knowing that all our salvation is in them and all our dependence upon them; but they are afar off. This, then, is seeing the promises afar off; and thus, in this respect, there is often a similarity between the experience of these Old Testament saints and our own.

iv. But what was the *effect* produced upon their minds by their seeing the promises, though they saw them afar off?

1. The first effect produced was that they "were *persuaded* of them." God the Holy Ghost so convinced them of their truth; he impressed them with such power upon their mind; he sealed them with such firm assurance upon their breast; he attended the word of promise with such a convincing evidence; he gave such a

substance to the promises, and so clothed them with a living reality that they were as if divinely overcome to receive them into their heart as from God. This is the meaning of their being "persuaded of them." There is a sweet persuasion attending the Spirit's work. He does not drive, but draw; does not compel and flog and urge, but gently allures; and his teaching persuades the inmost mind, for it drops like the rain, and distils as the dew, so as to soften the heart, and make a place in it for the word of truth to come and dwell. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. 3:16.) We read, "God shall enlarge Japheth." (Gen. 9:27.) It is in the margin "persuade." The Hebrew word literally means "to open," and thus corresponds with what is said of Lydia that "the Lord opened her heart unto the things which were spoken of Paul." The heart naturally is barred against God's truth. Unbelief closes every avenue against its reception; but the Lord by opening enlarges the heart to receive his word; and when it is received "not as the word of men but as the word of God," from its coming "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," the heart is persuaded, gently and yet powerfully persuaded of the truth thus effectually made known, and opens itself to all its sweet and blessed influences. Have you not at times been as fully persuaded of the being of the Son of God as if you had seen him with your bodily eye? Have you not been fully persuaded that there was eternal life in him, that there was salvation in his blood, justification by his righteousness, acceptance with God in him? Why else do you believe in his name but from a sweet persuasion that he is the Son of God? Why do you approach him, worship him, adore him, embrace him, cleave to him, and love him, but from an inward persuasion which the Holy Ghost has given you that he is the Son of the Father in truth and love, that he is risen from the dead, and is at God's right hand, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Whenever a promise has been applied with power to your heart, brought home and sealed with a sweet assurance upon your breast, it created a persuasion not only of its truth but of the certainty of its fulfilment. There may be many difficulties, impediments, obstacles, hindrances, seeming impossibilities in the way of its being fulfilled, but faith, in the

language of the hymn—

"Laughs at impossibilities,  
And says, it shall be done."

But let us look at this point more particularly in the case of Abraham, for it is of him mainly and of Sarah that the apostle is speaking in our text. There is this character given of him: "he staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Romans 4:20, 21.) You see how this corresponds with the words of our text, the only difference being between "persuaded" and being "fully persuaded," which is merely a difference in degree. It was this full persuasion of the power of God to perform, and of the faithfulness of God to his word of promise to execute which stamped upon the faith of Abraham its distinctive character. A persuasion of these two things is necessary.—1. That God is able; 2, that God is faithful. We therefore read of Sarah's faith that "she judged him faithful who had promised." (Heb. 11:11.) It is this persuasion of the power of God and of the faithfulness of God which makes faith, "the evidence of things not seen;" and as the things promised are always desired and desirable, faith is also "the substance of things hoped for."

Now, if our faith be genuine, as there is but "one faith," it must be the same as the faith of Abraham. We find, therefore, the apostle speaking: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:23, 24, 25.) If we are to have the same righteousness imputed to us as was imputed to him, we must have the same faith; and as his faith believed in God as raising up a son from him when dead, so our faith believes on God as raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is alike beautiful and blessed thus to see the similarity of the faith of the saints now with that of Abraham; and if we have but a

testimony that we possess that faith for ourselves, what a mercy and favour it will be for us.

v. But now what was the next step taken by those whose experience is recorded in our text?

They "*embraced* them." The word literally means they "saluted" them, that is, they hailed them, welcomed them, threw their arms round them, and as it were affectionately kissed them as guests or friends, whom they gladly received and entertained as dear visitors who had come to see them.

But now comes the question. *How* did they embrace them? I think we shall find that they embraced them chiefly by the exercise of the three grand leading graces in the soul, that is, by faith, and hope, and love.

1. First, then, they embraced theme in *faith*. Is it not by faith, and that of God's giving, that we believe the promises? Is it not by faith that we lay hold of the Son of God, bring him into the heart when he manifests himself, and take hold of his strength that we may have peace with God? Surely faith is first and foremost of the three sisters here, and takes the lead of them in saluting, welcoming, and embracing such blessed visitors. She is the eldest of the three, and like some elder sisters, almost a mother to the other two; and therefore she goes out first to welcome and entertain in her home and heart, the blessed promises as they come down from heaven, almost as if then were angels of God come to meet her as of old they met Jacob at Mahanaim.

2. But *hope* is not far behind, for she expects and waits for that which faith believes. If faith sees the promises afar off, hope anticipates and waits for their arrival. The word of truth therefore says, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:25.) Hope is also compared to an anchor: "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." As then we embrace the promises we cast anchor in

the free grace of God as revealed in them, and especially in him who is the sum and substance of them all,—God's dear Son. The promises afford us blessed anchorage. We may be in storms and tempests; winds and waves may be tossing the ship up and down as on a sea of troubles; and we may be encompassed with thousands of doubts and fears. Now we want both anchor and anchorage. Hope is our anchor, but what is our anchorage? May we not say the promises which are "all yea and amen in Christ Jesus," especially such as, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The children of God are called "heirs of promise" (Heb. 6:17); and O what a large and abundant inheritance is theirs, for surely the promises with which the word is studded are like the sky, all glowing with stars on a winter night. But observe in what way the promises provide anchorage for a soul that keeps hoping in the Lord. They keep it in some good measure at rest, or at least from being driven upon the rocks. We see this in the case of David. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Here was hope anchoring in the promises, and looking out for better days with a sweet confidence and blessed expectation that the Lord would appear to the joy of his soul.

3. But they are embraced also in *love*. Though last, this is not the least of the three Christian graces; nay, according to Paul's testimony, she is the greatest of the three. If, then, last, she is only last in starting, but may be first in reaching; as loving John outran believing Peter. (John 20:4.) There is a sweetness in the promises which captivates the heart; a beauty in Christ which wins the soul; a saving unction and power in the word of God when applied, which draws forth toward it every secret and sacred affection. Can you not sometimes look up and say, "Blessed Jesus, I do love thee?" And when the word of God is opened up, applied, and made sweet and precious, have you not felt sometimes as if you could kiss the sacred page, as conveying

such sweetness into your soul? This is embracing a promise in love—throwing our arms round it, drawing it near to our breast, kissing it again and again with kisses of love and affection, and taking that sweet delight in it with which the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, as now all his own—at times almost lost, but now wooed and won, no more to be parted. This is rejoicing in the word of God, delighting in a blessed Jesus and in the promises which testify of, and centre in him. Have you not felt these sweet embracements in your soul of the truth as it is in Jesus as so precious, so suitable, so encouraging, and so adapted to every want and woe? then you are a believer; then you are a child of God; then there is a work of grace upon your heart; then you know the truth for yourself by divine teaching and divine testimony. If you have seen the promises afar off, if you have been persuaded of them by the inward teaching and testimony of God the Holy Ghost, and if you have embraced them in love and affection, you have a testimony that you are one possessed of the faith of God's elect. And yet you may be in a great measure like these ancient worthies. You may not have received the promises in their entire fulfilment. You may still not have had that full deliverance, that blessed revelation, that overpowering manifestation whereby all your doubts and fears have been swept away, and your soul settled in a firm enjoyment of the liberty of the gospel. You may have had it or may have had it not. But if you have this character stamped upon you that you have seen the promises afar off, and been persuaded of them, and embraced them in faith, hope, and love, you have a mark of being a partaker of the faith of God's elect.

II.—But now we come to the *confession* of these ancient pilgrims. Their religion had not only a weight and a power in it, but produced manifest effects. Possessed of a living faith, there were living fruits attending that faith. And we have here a mark which the Holy Ghost has especially given of the reality and genuineness of their faith: "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

This confession was the peculiar mark of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. Thus we find Abraham speaking to the children of Heth: "I am a stranger and sojourner with you." There he confessed he was a stranger and a pilgrim. When Isaac sent Jacob away to Padan-aram, he prayed that "God would give him the blessing of Abraham, that he might inherit the land where he was a stranger." There Isaac confessed that he was but a stranger on the earth. And when good old Jacob stood before Pharaoh in Egypt, he spoke of "the days and of the years of his pilgrimage." The word "pilgrimage," means, literally, "strangership." Thus Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed with their lips that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

But they confessed it more by their actions than by their words, more by their lives than by their lips. For what was their life? A wandering life. They lived in tents, having no fixed house nor home, not dwelling in cities among the inhabitants of Canaan, but moving from place to place as strangers and sojourners in the land of promise. They confessed therefore, not only with their lips but with their lives, that they were strangers and pilgrims in the land that was given to them for a possession. This is set before us as our exemplar, as what is the characteristic of those possessed of a similar faith. If, then, you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a feeling experience. You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world; it is not your element, it is not your home. You are in it during God's appointed time, but you wander up and down this world a stranger to its company, a stranger to its maxims, a stranger to its fashions, a stranger to its principles, a stranger to its motives, a stranger to its lusts, its inclinations, and all in which this world moves as in its native element. Grace has separated you by God's distinguishing power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it. You feel, therefore, a stranger here: as David says, "a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." I can tell you plainly, if you are at home in the world; if the things of time and sense be your element; if you feel one with the company of the world, the maxims of the world, the fashions of the world, and the principles of the world, grace has

not reached your heart, the faith of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom. The first effect of grace is to separate. It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God's own word to his people is now, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Separation, separation, separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness. There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is, separation of heart, separation of principle, separation of affection, separation of spirit. And if grace has touched your heart and you are a partaker of the faith of God's elect, you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

But they were "pilgrims," that is, sojourners through weary deserts, longing, longing for home, possessing nothing in which they could take pleasure, feeling the weariness of a long travel and anxious for rest. Are you not sometimes almost worn out by sin and self, trials, temptations, and afflictions, so that you would fain lay down your weary body in the grave, that your soul might rest in the sweet enjoyment of the King of kings and the Lord of lords? If such be our spirit, we have something of the spirit of the pilgrim sojourning in a weary land and longing for rest, happiness, and peace in a better country.

III.—But now comes their *desire*: "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country," or, as we read in almost the next verse, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly."

Wherever there is faith there is desire; and as faith embraces heavenly realities, desire embraces that of which faith testifies. The promises of which I have spoken, all centre in Christ Jesus. They are all connected with his Person and work, death and resurrection, and what he now is at the right hand of God. And as

they all centre in him, so they all testify of him and come from him. It is this which gives them their suitability and invests them with their peculiar sweetness and power. Now, as the soul is wrought upon by a divine power, and faith is drawn forth into blessed exercise upon the promises of which it is persuaded and which it embraces, desire is kindled for their enjoyment. Religion is not a burdensome, painful, melancholy, wearisome, and toilsome task or employment as many think. It has indeed its trials, temptations, afflictions, cutting griefs, and depressing sorrows; but it has its sweetness, its peace, its delights, and its enjoyments. And it is the sweetness that we feel, the enjoyment that we have, and the delighting ourselves in the things of God, which hold our head up and encourage us still to persevere and travel on through the wilderness. It is not all bondage, nor distress of mind, nor sorrow of heart, nor perplexity of soul which the heirs of promise feel. There are sips and tastes, drops and crumbs, and momentary enjoyments, if not long nor lasting, yet sweet when they come, sweet while they last, and sweet in the recollection when they are gone. The Lord gives that which encourages, strengthens, comforts, and delights, and enables us to see that there is that beauty, blessedness, and glory in him which we have tasted, felt, and handled, and which we would not part with for a thousand worlds.

Now this is what they sought in desiring a heavenly country. They wanted something heavenly, something that tasted of God, savoured of God, smelt of God, and was given of God; a heavenly religion, a spiritual faith, a gracious hope, and a love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; something which came from heaven and led to heaven; which gave heavenly feelings, heavenly sensations, heavenly delights, and heavenly joys, whereby the heart was purified from the love of sin, carnality, and worldliness, by having something sweeter to taste, better to love, and more holy to enjoy. It is these heavenly visitations, droppings in of the favour, goodness, and mercy of God, which keep the soul alive in its many deaths, sweeten it amidst its many bitters, hold it up amidst its many sinkings, and keep it from being drowned whilst conflicting with many waters. A carnal

mind has no taste for heavenly things, no sweet delight in the word of God; no delight in the Lord Jesus as revealing himself in the word; no delight in closet duties, secret meditation, searching the Scriptures, communion with God, or even in the company of God's dear family. There must be a heavenly element in the soul to understand, realise, enjoy, and delight in heavenly things. The Holy Ghost must have wrought in us a new heart, a new nature, capable of understanding, enjoying, and delighting in heavenly realities, as containing in them that which is sweet and precious to the soul. They desired, therefore, a better country, that is, a heavenly, a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; where pleasures are at God's right hand for evermore; where the pure river of the water of life ever flows; where the tree grows on which are found leaves for the healing of the nations; such a city as John describes in the Book of Revelation, where all is happiness, harmony, and peace.

IV.—Now what was their end? *How did they die?* "These all died in faith." When death came it did not rob them of their faith. They held with their believing hand in death every truth which they had held with their believing hand in life. It is in death that the gospel is such a blessing when held by a believing hand. What should we do upon a dying bed, with all our sins staring us in the face in all their awful magnitude, accused by Satan, condemned by conscience, terrified by a holy law, and frowned upon by an indignant God? What must be our end upon the bed of death if we had nothing to look to but a God who is a consuming fire, with nothing but the bitter recollection of past sins to agonise the mind and distress the conscience? O, if ever faith is needed, it will be needed then; if ever the gospel embraced, embraced then; if ever Christ looked to, looked to then; if ever laid hold of by the hand of faith, laid hold of then. "These all died in faith." They had not received the fulfilment of the promises; they looked forward to the full enjoyment of them in another life. They had received enough to give them faith, received enough to communicate a good hope, received enough to make Christ precious to their soul, received enough to make them know what faith was, and to live and die in the exercise of it. Now, if you know what faith is, and

your faith has embraced the Son of God, and love has worked by that faith, and Christ in that faith has made himself precious, that faith will never give up the ghost in a dying hour. False faith will then expire; but the faith of God's elect, the faith I have described this evening, will not leave you in the hour of death, but support you as you pass through the dark valley, and land you safe on that happy shore where faith is turned into sight, hope into enjoyment, and love abides in its fullest manifestation.

Now, do you think you can take your experience, and your life in conjunction with your experience, and lay them down side by side with this? God has not written this for our amusement or entertainment, or to listen to for an hour as a text on which to found a discourse. The Holy Ghost has written this for our instruction and edification, that we may take it home to our breast, bring our experience to the light of it, and see how it stands the searching testimony. I have not set up this evening a very deep, or very great, or very high experience. I have simply set before you what God the Holy Ghost has laid down in the words from which I have spoken, described therein the faith of God's ancient saints, and shown, as far as the Lord has given me strength and ability, what that same faith is now in its operations in God's elect. If you have the same faith, it will have the same effect upon you; it will embrace the same Object, create the same hope, communicate the same love, and work in you the same upright, godly, and consistent practice.

## The Faith and Confession of a Pilgrim

Preached at Jewry Street Chapel, Aldgate, for the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society, on Tuesday Evening, August 13, 1844

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Hebrews 11:13, 14

The Holy Ghost in this chapter (Heb. 11) not only gives us a *definition* of faith, (as we find verse 1,) but draws out also that definition into a number of *examples*. His object is to show us, that there is but "one faith," as there is but "one Lord, and one baptism;" and that the Old Testament saints were partakers of the same faith which Christ and his Apostles preached as necessary to salvation. Now this was very much to the purpose, considering the persons to whom the Epistle was addressed. It was written "to the Hebrews," that is, to the believing Jews, as distinguished from the believing Gentiles; and it was therefore exceedingly appropriate for the Apostle to show that the very faith of the gospel which he preached, and for which he was contending, existed in the days of old—that it dwelt in the heart and conscience, and was manifested in the life and conversation of the Old Testament saints. In order to prove this, he takes his stand from the very first saint recorded in the Scripture, Abel, and brings it down even below the times of the Old Testament; for there is in the latter part of the chapter (ver. 35,) a clear allusion to a circumstance recorded in the Apocrypha, "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." There is an evident allusion here to an account given us in the book of Maccabees (2 Mac. 7) of a mother with her seven children, who were all offered their lives, one after another, on condition of renouncing Judaism; but who all consented to die under the greatest tortures rather than give up the faith of their forefathers. One of the brothers, "when he was ready to die said thus, It is good, being put to death by men, to

look for hope from God to be raised up again by him." (v. 14.)

Thus the Apostle shews, that all the Old Testament saints, of whom the Jews had the highest opinion, and to whom the Lord himself had borne the strongest testimony, such as Enoch, who was translated; Noah, who, was saved in the ark; Abraham, their lineal ancestor; Sarah his wife; Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others, of whom time would fail him to tell—that all these ancient believers were partakers of the same faith which was set forth in the gospel. It is as though the apostle said, "It is no new faith that we preach; your forefathers possessed and were saved by it. The Scriptures in your hands testify of it; to them we appeal as our witnesses that the saints of old lived by and died in the faith that we now by the gospel preach unto you."

The words, from which I hope to speak this evening, refer chiefly to the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for these, with Sarah, appear to be the persons of whom the Apostle says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour this evening to trace out the faith spoken of in the text; to show, if God enable me, what were the fruits and effects in the hearts of those to whom it was given; and what a confession they made by their lips and in their lives.

I.—The first point to which I shall call your attention is contained in the clause, "*Not having received the promises.*" Of whom is the Apostle speaking here? Of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the lineal ancestors of the Hebrews to whom he was writing. But what were the promises which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? If you look to the book of Genesis, you will find, that the promise made to them was two-fold; and that the Lord repeated the same promise to each of these patriarchs. One was, that the land of

Canaan was given to them and to their posterity, for a perpetual inheritance; and the other, that "in Abraham, and his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Thus one of the promises was temporal, though doubtless typical; and the other spiritual, pointing to the Messiah who was to come from the loins of Abraham, and in whom all the chosen seed are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. These were the two grand promises on which their faith was fixed; and yet neither of these two promises was ever received by them in their complete fulfilment. Bear this in mind, that they received a portion of the promise; but because they had not received the whole, the Holy Ghost in the text speaks of them as "not having received the promise." This clears up what appears to be a little contradiction; for we read a little lower down (verse 17), "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and *he that had received the promises* offered up his only-begotten son." Now there the Holy Ghost declares that he "had received the promises;" and yet in our text, we read, that he had *not* received the promises. There is no real contradiction. He received the promises in a portion of them; but he did not receive them in their complete fulfilment. He had an earnest of them, but not the whole harvest; he had the first-fruits, but the whole crop was not gathered in. For instance. He was a stranger in the land of Canaan, and "dwelt in tabernacles," as we read, or tents, with "the heirs with him of the same promise." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were but sojourners in the land of Canaan, though it was given them for an inheritance; yet they all laid their bones there, and thus took possession of it in death. But their faith laid hold of it as their inheritance; and therefore Abraham would not suffer the servant of his house to take his son Isaac back to his own country, the land of the Chaldees (Gen. 24:6-8); and Jacob and Joseph left a charge on their death-beds that their bones should be carried up from Egypt, and laid in the land of Canaan. (Gen. 49:29; 50:25.)

Again. They did not receive the complete fulfilment of the promise, that "in Abraham, and his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed." (Gen. 22:18.) It was near two thousand years after the promise was first given before Christ came into

the world; and in this sense therefore "they did not receive the promises," because they did not receive the complete fulfilment of them, that being reserved for a future period.

II.—But though they did not receive the promises in the sense I have explained, yet we read, "*they saw them afar off.*" The promises which God gave them were held up to the eyes of their faith; and by this faith they saw the promises near at hand; though, as to their actual fulfilment, they were far off. For that is the meaning of the expression—not that they saw the promises to be far off, but that they themselves being afar off, or remote by the length of time from their complete fulfilment, yet saw them as near at hand. For they would not otherwise have "embraced" them. We do not embrace what is distant, but what is near to, yea, what is already in our arms.

Thus by faith Abraham saw that his descendants should one day inherit the land of Canaan in which he was a sojourner; and in the exercise of that faith he buried his wife Sarah in the cave of Machpelah, and he himself was buried in the same spot. (Gen. 25:9, 10.) In similar faith lived and died Isaac and Jacob; and in the same land were their bones laid. Thus the certainty of the promises they saw afar off; though none of them enjoyed in their time the complete fulfilment of them. This is the way in which faith acts now; and if we have the same faith that they had, (for the Apostle's object in this chapter is to shew that there is but "one faith,") it will act in the same way, and run in the same channel. Do we not then receive the promises of the heavenly Canaan in the same way as Abraham received the promise that his seed should inherit the earthly Canaan? The land of Canaan was typical of that better country, that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Abraham was a sojourner in the land; he never could say that a foot of it was his own; yet he walked up and down in it, believing that all was his by a divine grant, and that his children should have full possession of it. Nay, when he wished to bury his wife out of his sight, he had to purchase a burial-place of the children of Heth. Is not this the way with the children of God respecting their eternal inheritance? God has given them a home above, and has promised them an eternal

weight of glory. The heavenly land is theirs, and Christ the forerunner has already taken possession of it for them. It is theirs by promise and the oath of God; and yet not theirs by present possession. They have it in promise, but not in enjoyment; in prospect, but not in reality. They sojourn in a waste howling wilderness, looking forward to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; hoping for a better country, even a heavenly one; and yet it is a great way off. In this sense then we do not receive the promise; we have the earnest, the first fruits, the beginning; but the full accomplishment of it is reserved for a future period. Now this is the way whereby faith is exercised. Was it not so with the patriarchs? Five different times did the Lord distinctly promise Abraham that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan. (Gen 12:7; 13, 15; 15:7, 18; 17:8.) The same promise he repeated to Isaac, (Gen. 26:3); and again to Jacob at Bethel, (Gen. 28:13); and yet the soil was in the possession of seven strong nations who dwelt in walled towns and cities, while they lived in tents, roaming about as strangers in the land which they believed to be their own, because God had made it theirs by a divine grant. May we not justly suppose that their hearts were at times exercised, when they looked at themselves as a few, feeble sojourners, and saw the land possessed by armed inhabitants? Men of like passions with ourselves, and encompassed with the same infirmities, must not their faith have been often shaken whether the promise would ever have a completion? Look at their difficulties. How could their families grow up in sufficient multitudes to take possession of the land? How could they rise up against its warlike inhabitants without being crushed in the bud? We who have the Bible in our hands, and read the history of the past, can form no idea of the difficulties that perplexed them. We can see now, in God's mysterious providence, they were to go down to Egypt, to multiply there, and come up six hundred thousand fighting men, besides women and children. To us the book of the past is unfolded, and we can read the promise and the fulfilment; but to them the book of the future was sealed, and they had only a bare promise to embrace. How tried and exercised their minds must have been as they walked backwards and forwards in the land;

and how their hearts must have sunk within them when considering how they ever could wrest it from its present possessors! How Jacob was terrified lest the violence of his two sons should bring down upon him their vengeance! "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." (Gen. 34:30.) And thus it is now with the exercised children of God. He that knows himself by divine teaching, and has had a glimpse of future bliss and glory, will often thus reason with himself, "How is such a poor, blind, ignorant creature as I, surrounded by so many enemies, oppressed or beguiled by so many of Satan's temptations, beset by the workings of a depraved nature—how am I ever to enter the heavenly inheritance, and enjoy the promised rest?" True faith always has difficulties to encounter. There are two things that stamp faith as genuine. In one of them consists the nature of faith; in the other the trial of faith. And observe how the Apostle brings together these two marks of faith in the chapter before us, as well as in Romans 5.—1. that the nature of faith is to believe what God has revealed and sealed upon the soul; and 2, its trial is to have a constant opposition made to it. Look, for instance, at Abraham's faith with respect to the promised seed. It clung to the promise that his seed should be for number as the stars of heaven. This was his justifying faith, as we read Gen. 15:6, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Thus to believe was the nature and essence of his faith. But had it no trial? Did all things flow easily towards the accomplishment of the promise? Were there not (shall I use the term? it is not too strong) impossibilities in the way? And yet Abraham's faith clung to God's promise in spite of all these impossibilities. It was the actings of living faith, in spite of impossibilities, that proved it to be the faith of God's elect; and God was glorified in removing these impossibilities in his own sovereign way, and fulfilling the answer in his own appointed time. So that an easy faith, a faith that is never subject to questionings, a faith that is never opposed by Satan, a faith

never assaulted by doubts and fears and the infidel suspicions of our carnal heart—a faith of that smooth, slip-shod kind, is not the living faith which the saints of God had in the days of old. Their faith was of this nature—it hung upon the promise of God, made known by a divine testimony to their conscience, in the midst, and in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles that fought against its fulfilment. For their faith was not "to take God at his word," as it is called, because such and such truths were found in the Scripture; for there was not one line of the Bible written in their day; but they believed what God spake with his own lips to their heart with divine power. And this is the nature of faith now, to believe the promise that is spoken to the heart with divine power, while every thing in nature opposes it; and thus to maintain its ground in spite of all the impossibilities that hang like a mill-stone round its neck. If, then, your faith is never subject to difficulties, trials, questionings, and oppositions; if you can always believe, and take hold of the promises in the word, as you would cut a slice from the loaf upon your breakfast table, is it not to be feared that it is a dead faith, and that you are but a dead professor?

Thus Abraham's faith must have been tried also with respect to the promised Messiah. God declared to him, that "in him and his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:18.) But what difficulties lay in the way! How day by day the promise seemed to be removed farther and farther off! How for twenty-five years the Lord kept back the fulfilment of the promise! Must not Abraham's heart often have sunk down within him? He and his wife getting older and older; and the accomplishment of the promise removed farther and farther by natural circumstances! But yet his faith held on to the promise of God in spite of them all. Thus, to get to heaven we must wade through difficulties, improbabilities, nay, impossibilities. We shall meet with such hindrances, such impediments, such obstacles, that nature will fail and give up the ghost, as much as Abraham's and Sarah's decayed body. And yet, as divine power, in their case, triumphed over nature's death, so grace superabounds in the case of the Christian over all the abounding of sin, and lands him safe in glory.

But this was the grand point in which Abraham's faith, and that of the patriarchs, was conspicuously manifested, that *they "saw the promises afar off."* Though the promises were, so to speak, at a distance so remote that by the eye of sense, nature, and reason they could not be seen, yet faith's perspective glass pierced through all the intervening distance, and fastened upon the promise which God had made sure to the heart. I may illustrate it thus. Has not love, I mean natural love, very keen eyes? How the lover (not to bring the subject down too low) can tell the form and figure of the person he loves at a distance, where the eye of another could not perceive it! And has not love very sharp ears? How well the affectionate wife knows her husband's footstep! You mothers, do you not know your children's cry? You can tell your child's voice out of a thousand others. So with faith. It is so keen-sighted as to see into futurity; so keen-eared as to hear what the Lord speaks to it; so keen-hearted as to feel, though clouds of obscurity and mists of darkness are wrapped around it. Thus they saw the promise "afar off."

III.—But what is the next thing that we read of these ancient believers? "*And were persuaded of them.*" This is the nature of faith, to be persuaded of the reality and certainty of God's promises. We therefore read in the first verse of this chapter, "Faith is the *substance* (or *realization*) of things hoped for, the evidence" (or convincing testimony) "of things not seen." The nature of faith is to realize the things which God has spoken, and to believe them to be most certain and true, though nature, sense, and reason contradict them. Faith thus turns into reality, and gives a substance to things that to other persons are but shadows. The living faith of God's elect is not a mere passing thought, or hasty opinion, or fancied imagination; no, nor a well-grounded conclusion from arguments and proofs, nor any exercise of reason, in its lowest or highest degree. It is a divine faculty in the soul, as distinct from sense and reason, as the eye of a living man from the eye of a marble statue. And its work and office is, to turn the truths of God which are revealed to it into blessed realities; to feed upon them as heavenly food and to

believe them to be as certain and far more abiding than the things the bodily eyes see, the natural ears hear, and the literal hands touch. Is your faith of that nature—a thing that has substance, reality, and power in it? All other faith is but emptiness and delusion; all other faith leaves the soul under the wrath of God. Thus, those ancient patriarchs, possessing this living faith, "were persuaded" of the truth of those things that were revealed to them, and of the certain fulfilment of those promises which God had given them. They knew that there was no uncertainty in the matter; but were confident that God who cannot lie would fulfil the promises which he had made for his own name's sake.

There is a very sweet meaning, I think, contained in the expression "*persuaded*." There is a softness, a tenderness, and yet an experimental power and beauty in it which I much admire. If a person persuade you into a thing, it is with your own will; you are not driven, forced, compelled into it. A man may do many things by force of circumstances, or by compulsion from others—that is not persuasion. Persuasion carries the heart with it. And this corresponds with what we read Psa. 110:3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." If a person persuade me into a thing, I do it willingly, cheerfully, pleasantly. It was not, indeed, at first my own suggestion; but he has, so to speak, put his mind and will into me; and it has now become my mind and will as much as if it had originated with myself. He has given me his eyes; and I now see it as he does. Thus, when the patriarchs are said in the text to have been "persuaded of the promises," it implies that the promises had been so wrought with divine power into their hearts, so communicated with sweetness to their souls, that God's mind and will had become theirs. Their hearts were moulded into a reception of them as sweet, precious, and suitable, bringing glory to God and happiness to them. O what inestimable favour it is to be persuaded of the truth of God's promises by a revelation of them in our conscience!

And you will bear in mind, that to persuade a person implies that there was a difficulty to be overcome. If I persuade a person to

do a thing, it presupposes that the person is not willing at first to do it; but at last by my arguments, or on account of his natural love to me, or through the influence I may have over him, he is persuaded to do it. You wives, you know what it is sometimes to *persuade* your husbands into something you wish to be done. You cannot drive nor compel them, for you are the weaker vessel; but you gently persuade them; and then they follow in the path marked out, and do it cheerfully and willingly. So spiritually. When the Lord makes a promise sweet, opens up the truth to our hearts, gives us to see the beauty and glory that there is in the Son of his love, he persuades us to receive in love what he reveals in power. This is called in Scripture a receiving of the love of the truth, that we may be saved (2 Thess. 2:10); an opening of the heart (Acts 16:14); an inclining of the ear that our soul may live (Isa. 55:3); and it seems especially summed up in that verse (Gen. 9:27): "God shall enlarge (marg. *persuade*) Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Our hearts are thus drawn toward the Lord, and we receive the truth as it is in Jesus; not by compulsion, not merely as a speculation, a notion, or a theory in our judgment, but with a divine power. The heart and conscience are persuaded; the rebellious will is subdued; unbelief and infidelity are silenced; and that takes place of which the Apostle speaks, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5.)

IV.—And this leads us to the next thing said of these ancient patriarchs, that they "*embraced them.*" What did they embrace? The promises. But does it not say in a preceding clause, that "they had not received them?" How could they embrace what they had not received? It is true that they had not received them in their complete fulfilment, but they embraced them as to be fulfilled. These are two different things. We may embrace the earnest of a thing, and yet not receive it in its full completion. And this was the way with the ancient patriarchs; they did not receive the promises in their full completion, but they embraced that earnest of them which was given into their hearts. Though so

distant, faith brought them near; and what faith brought into their heart, their affections laid hold of and embraced. There is something, to my mind, very sweet and expressive in the word "embrace." It signifies a laying hold of a beloved object, a clasping of it in our arms, a bringing of it to our bosom, a bestowing of all our fondness and love upon it. This is the way whereby God's people embrace the truth. It is clasped in the arms of affection, as something sweet, suitable, dear, near, and precious. And yet the promises thus embraced are seen afar off, and not received in their full completion. God has given many promises to his people. He has promised them "eternal life" (Titus 1:2);—that "all things shall work together for their good" (Rom. 8:28);—"that he will never leave them, nor forsake them" (Heb. 13:5); and that they shall eventually be with him where he is (John 14:2, 3.) The people of God do not receive these promises in their complete fulfilment. Like the patriarchs, they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The inheritance of the saints is still future; but yet a sufficient measure of its sweetness and glory is given to show them what it is, and to raise up in their souls a love and affection, whereby the promises concerning it are embraced as sweet, suitable, and precious. To embrace a thing implies an affection on the part of the person who embraces; it implies a closeness, and also that we desire to hold the object embraced as near to our heart as we can. So that when the soul embraces the promises, it is not with our reasoning mind, as we receive natural truths; but in faith, hope, and love, as precious realities. There are degrees of this divine embracement of the truth, from the feeblest actings of that faith which works by love, to the height that Peter speaks of, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8.)

There are many men who preach what is called truth; but if you look at the grand object and drift of their discourses, what is it? Merely to fill the people's mind with certain ideas; to inform their judgments; to bring them off Arminian errors; and to settle them down into a sound creed. To belabour the doctrine of free will,

and to prove the doctrine of free grace; to bring some novelty out of the Scriptures; to ridicule the Arminians, and flatter the Calvinists,—it is to be feared, is the sum and substance of much that is called "preaching the Gospel." But this will not satisfy one whom the Lord has thrust out into the ministry. To see people deceiving themselves into the belief that they are the children of God, because they have a few sound opinions in their heads, a few scriptural sentiments floating in their brain, and a Calvinistic creed embraced in their judgment—O what a spectacle to an honest man of God! Will he, can he foster such a delusion, when he knows that souls are at stake, and eternity at hand; that salvation does not consist in a few crude ideas or sound doctrines; but that it is an eternal reality; revealed and manifested to the conscience by the power of God the Spirit? As the brisk gale drives before it the rolling mists, so does the north wind of the Spirit's teachings drive away this delusion out of the hearts of the Lord's saints; and when the south wind blows upon their soul, they embrace the truth, because it drops into their heart from the lips of God, as the dew of heaven. Truth and the believer's heart are like the mortise and tenon; the mortise is useless without the tenon, and the tenon is useless without the mortise; but put them both together, and there is a union. So with God's people. Their heart is the mortise, hollowed and chiselled out, so to speak; a place dug in it for the Lord to occupy, for the truth of God to come in with divine power. Until a man is emptied and stripped, and a place made in his heart for the Lord to come into the tenon, God's word, the power of God's truth, and the promises God has made, have no place in his heart; as the Lord said to the Jews, "My word hath no place in you." (John 8:37.) They wanted the Spirit's inward work chiselling out a place for the truth of God to fit into. But when the heart, under divine teaching, becomes exercised, cast down, and humbled; when the world and its charms fade out of sight, and eternal realities come with weight upon the conscience—then the precious promises which God has revealed in his word, especially those that speak of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, and justification by his imputed righteousness, are embraced in the arms of love and affection as sweet and suitable. In this way the

old patriarchs embraced the promises. When they walked up and down the land of Canaan in which they were sojourners, they were thinking of the time when their posterity would inherit it; and they embraced it as for them. Thus the Lord commanded Abraham, "Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee." (Gen. 13:17.) Abraham thus saw what a goodly inheritance it was for his children to dwell in. So spiritually. The Lord sometimes lets down a little taste of heaven into the soul, gives a sweet rest from sin, from the devil, from doubts, fears, and perplexities; and as he took Moses upon Pisgah's top, and shewed him all the length and breadth of the land, so he sometimes takes his people to the top of the spiritual Pisgah, and shows them by faith the goodly land which is their inheritance. This they embrace in its sweetness, power, and reality; their affections go out after it as their eternal home, believing that one day they shall be where sin and sorrow are no more, where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick," and where tears will be wiped away from all faces.

So also with respect to the promise of the Messiah. Abraham, and the patriarchs were not only persuaded that the Lord would give the Messiah from Abraham's loins, but they embraced it, and felt a sweetness and power in it; their faith leaped over all the distance that separated them from its fulfilment; and they rejoiced in it as if already accomplished. Thus the Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56.) He looked over the intervening near two thousand years. His faith over-leaped every obstacle, and saw the day when God would appear in flesh, when the Son of God would come into this world to take the body which was prepared for him in the womb of the Virgin Mary, Abraham's lineal descendant. More than nineteen hundred years before the God-Man came, shed his blood on Calvary's tree, and rose from the dead, Abraham embraced the power of that blood to purge his conscience, and the power of that righteousness to justify him before God. We have received the promise indeed in its fulfilment; but we need similar discoveries, Pisgah views, glimpses and glances of "the King in his beauty," in order to

embrace him in the arms of faith and say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." (Psa. 73:25.) Old Simeon thus embraced the babe Jesus in the temple, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke 2:29, 30.) Nor till we embrace in the arms of faith and affection the Lord of life and glory can we use the language of that aged saint. What a blessing it is to embrace Jesus, and the truth as it is in Jesus, in a living conscience and a believing heart, by the operation of the blessed Spirit! and thus to feel the sweetness, preciousness, reality, and power of vital godliness! How different this is from merely being a sound Calvinist, possessing a correct set of sentiments and scriptural views of the scheme of salvation floating in our mind, while the heart is as destitute of divine unction and heavenly teaching, as the stones in the street on which we tread!

V.—But what was the effect of this faith on the aged patriarchs? "*They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*" What made them witness this good confession? It was because seeing the promises afar off, and embracing them, they felt a measure of their sweetness and power. If you look to what is recorded of the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you will see that they all acknowledged they were sojourners in the land. Abraham said to the sons of Heth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." (Gen. 23:4.) Here he confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. We find Isaac also making the same confession when he sent away Jacob to Padan-aram, "God Almighty 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. 28:4.) And we find Jacob making the same declaration before Pharaoh, (and to this the Apostle seems more specially to allude,) "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." (Gen. 47:9.) Thus we see these three patriarchs confessing they were

strangers and sojourners on the earth; and this, the Apostle says, sprang from their seeing the promises afar off, and being persuaded of them, and embracing them. It was because these three things had been done in their conscience that they made this confession. But this acknowledgment of the lips sprang from the feeling of it in their soul;—did it not? For "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10.) "I believed, therefore have I spoken." (Psa. 116:10.) The witness in the heart first, the witness in the lips next; faith the root, confession the fruit. So with these patriarchs; they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims, because they felt it; otherwise their confession would have been but hypocrisy. What made them strangers and pilgrims? Their persuasion of the promises; having seen them afar off; having embraced them in their conscience. Look at the case of Abraham. Had he not every thing to make him happy naturally? Had he not more than three hundred armed servants ("*trained*," as we read in the margin) to defend the rest of his property? These servants were soldiers, at least, might be used as soldiers, to defend the rest of his goods. He was most abundantly rich in flocks and herds; yet he was a stranger and a pilgrim; and, doubtless, often burdened and tried through the difficulties of the way. It was because these patriarchs had received eternal realities into their heart and conscience that they felt themselves to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth. Nothing else will effect it. Many people say, they are "strangers and pilgrims" here below; but they take care to have as much of this world's comforts as they can scrape together by hook and by crook. They talk about being strangers, yet can be in close connection with men of the world. And could you see them upon 'Change, at the market, behind the counter, or at home with their families, you would not find one mark to distinguish them from the ungodly. Yet they come to chapel; and if called upon to pray, they will tell the people they are poor strangers and pilgrims, in a vale of tears; while their hearts are in the world, and their eyes stand out with fatness; while they are as light and trifling as a comic actor, and have no care or anxiety except to get the largest slice of the well-sugared cake that the world sets before them.

It is not the mere profession and acknowledgment of the lips, but grace in the heart, that makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made no affinity, no connection with the Canaanites; they kept to themselves, and were a separated people. And so God's people do now, as the Lord works in their hearts. They are strangers and sojourners; the world is not their home; nor can they take pleasure in it. Sin is often a burden to them; guilt often lies as a heavy weight upon their conscience; a thousand troubles harass their minds; a thousand perplexities oppress their souls. They cannot bury their minds in speculations and derive all their happiness from their successes; for they feel that this earth is not their home; and they are often cast down and exercised, because they have to live with such an ungodly heart in such an ungodly world.

A stranger, you know, is distant and shy. When he comes into company, his lips are closed; there is no familiarity, because he is a stranger. If, then, we are strangers in the world, we shall have some distance and shyness towards it; we shall have no fellowship with the carnal people that we are mixed up with; but we shall stand aloof from them, and with the dead professors also of the day. We cannot be at home with those who have no fear of God in their hearts; who have but a name to live, and are dead. We cannot take up with every sound Calvinist, and receive him as a brother, because his head is clear in the truth. We want to find some true faith, some marks of the life of God being there; some evidence that his conscience has been made tender in God's fear; that he walks consistently in life and conduct with his profession; and that he really is what he professes to be,—a stranger, not having his heart fixed upon the things of time and sense.

But they confessed they were "pilgrims." What is the literal meaning of the word? The English expression is borrowed from superstitious times, and applies chiefly to those travellers who used to visit the sepulchre at Jerusalem. I do not know whether our translators were very wise in using the word. But the Greek word means sojourners; that is, persons not natives of the place

where they dwell, but aliens or foreigners, who tarry for a time in another country that is not their native home. That gives us a better idea of the word "pilgrim," than of one who went to the Holy Land gathering up dead men's bones, and, with a cockle-shell in his bonnet, bringing home chests full of rotten relics. A sojourner is one that does not speak the language of the country, nor understand its customs, nor associate with its people. This metropolis is full of foreigners. How they all herd together! They cannot speak our language; they are not familiar with our habits! What a picture this is of God's family, sojourners in a strange country, speaking another language! They cannot lie, cheat, swindle, and carry out tricks of trade under the mask of a profession, nor do those things that honest and honourable men would be ashamed of. But their language is pure, the language of Canaan seasoned with grace. They speak of the exercises, troubles, and difficulties of their path; and of those manifestations and testimonies which none know but themselves. But some of our Calvinistic preachers—see them out of the pulpit, and what would meet your eye and ear? lightness, frivolity, and joking. But the Lord's people, whose hearts the Spirit has touched, are strangers and sojourners; they do not live in this world as men of the world. In that invaluable work of the immortal Bunyan, "The Pilgrim's Progress," which the more it is read the more it is prized, what a sweet account we have of a conversation that was held in the house Beautiful. "I will warrant you," to use one of his own expressions, there was no jestings there, no light, frivolous vain conversation. How Prudence, Piety, and Charity, those three modest damsels, entertained the Pilgrim with the work of grace upon the heart! What a sweet picture this is of the family of God conversing of the things he has done for their souls! These were true sojourners; not professors merely; but persons having the real grace and fear of God in their consciences. And thus the patriarchs confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims; and they walked as a peculiar people living to God's honour and glory.

VI.—And from this the Apostle draws this conclusion, "*They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*" A man

must have some home. If he cannot be at home with the world, it is plain he is seeking a home somewhere else. Now if these aged patriarchs could have been satisfied as the rest of the nations were, they would have built houses, and tilled the fields, and not have been a company of houseless wanderers, living in tents. They would have had houses, lands, and title-deeds, and been like our modern Colonists. But "they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" and by that confession declared that they were seeking another country; that is, as the Apostle explains it, "a heavenly one." And all their pilgrimage and all their sojourning declared this, that they sought this country. They had no land of their own; neither house nor home; no fixed habitation; but they sought "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." In a word, their hearts were, more or less, in heaven; their desires were tending there, and there in due time they hoped to be. And having this experience wrought with divine power in their conscience, they declared it plainly, so that men could see it by their actions, that they sought another country.

Now, does your profession of religion allow you to be like other people? Is your pride like theirs? Is your covetousness like theirs? Are your affections like theirs, buried in the things of time and sense? Are you selfish and quarrelsome, and acting all together as the men of the world? What will they think, what can they think of such a profession as this? They will say, "The man talks about heaven; but he is very glad to get a heaven here below too; he tries to make himself as comfortable as he can now; he talks of his treasure being above; yet a keener man in the market, or a greater screw to his servants, is not to be found in the whole town." What do the apprentices and servants think? They must say, "Master tells us at family prayers that his treasure is in the heaven; and yet he gets out of our bones all the sweat and blood he can." Now, I say, such men are a disgrace to the Christian profession. Is this the way for them to declare they are seeking a country? How did you come by your religion? Does it consist in expressions picked up from the pulpit, and scattered up and down in the family prayers? Or, is it manifest in your life

and conversation, by a deadness to the world, and a separation from the things of time and sense; and so made evident that you are seeking a better country, that you are not satisfied with the poor perishing things of the world, but looking forward to a city "which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21:23.)

## **The Faith and Cry of the Destitute**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Behalf of the Aged Pilgrims Friend Society, on Thursday Evening, July 24, 1845

"But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." Psa. 141:8

There are times and seasons when the language of praise is most seasonable and suitable for a living soul. There are times also when the harp is hung upon the willows, and "the organ," as Job speaks, "is changed into the voice of them that weep;" and then confession, bewailing, and lamentation are suitable and seasonable to the soul. And there are times when the Lord pours out a Spirit of grace and supplications into the heart; and then praying, begging, wrestling, and leading with the Lord are most suitable to the soul. We have no command over ourselves as to what shall be our spiritual state; we cannot put ourselves into a praising, lamenting, or praying frame. For these matters we are absolutely dependant upon "God the Lord," who worketh in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, and bringeth forth that which is according to his own good pleasure. But we may lay this down as a rule generally in consistence with the experience of God's people, that the times of praise with them are very few in proportion to the times of prayer; and that could we sit by their side, when the harp is strung and when the harp is unstrung, we should find that the seasons of prayer and lamentation far exceed in number the seasons of praise and thanksgiving. And thus we find, that the Psalms, which are a manual of Christian experience, bear a similar proportion. If you were to look over the Psalms, and compare the number of those which are psalms of praise with those which are psalms of lamentation or prayer, you would find that the former bear a very small proportion compared with the latter.

The words of the text are not the words of praise; they are the

words of *prayer*; and, being the words of prayer, they are often more suitable and more seasonable to the hearts of God's people than if they were the words of praise. For there are many times and seasons when we can use the words of prayer, and find a sweetness and suitability in them, when the accents of praise would falter upon our stammering lips.

I.—The first petition, though it does not altogether assume the language of prayer, is this, "*Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord.*" We will view this as the experience of a child of God. We will not consider it so much David's particular state and case here; but we will endeavour to view it in a more general light, as applicable to the experience of every living soul.

Now observe, first, the *character* pointed out by the words, "*Mine eyes.*" For who alone has "*eyes?*" Is it not the living soul; one taught of God the Spirit; one in whose heart the Holy Ghost has begun and is carrying on a gracious work? In fact, before the Lord the Spirit begins this gracious work, we have no "*eyes;*" we are altogether shut up in nature's blindness, and the very light that is in us, as the Lord said, is but darkness. None, then, but a living soul can use such words as these with real spiritual feeling: "*Mine eyes are unto thee.*"

But observe, in the second place, the *condition* of the soul here pointed out. This condition is one of soul poverty, soul exercise, soul distress. So that it is necessary not only to be a living soul, but it is also necessary to be placed by the Spirit in a certain *condition*, before we can know anything of the experience set forth in the words before us.

But having taken a glimpse of the *character* and *condition* implied in the text, let us now look at what is more specially contained in the words themselves: "*Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord.*"

1. By "*eyes,*" we may understand three different things as taking place in the soul's experience. First, it may signify *the eyes of the*

*understanding;* as the Apostle says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph. 1:18.) Before divine life enters into the heart and conscience, there is no spiritual light in the understanding. We require therefore a special illumination of the understanding in order to see the things of God; and more especially to see the Person of the Son of God. For, you will observe, our text refers altogether to "God the Lord." Before, then, our eyes can be unto "God the Lord," we must have the eyes of our understanding enlightened to see who this Lord God is. Now, I believe in my heart and conscience that every living soul of God's family is brought to know, believe in, to worship, and to love a Three-One God. There are no—there can be no Arians, or Socinians, in the Lord's living family. The Lord the Spirit leads all his quickened ones into a personal experimental knowledge of, and faith in a Three-One God, by unfolding to their understanding, and opening up to their heart and conscience the sacred mystery of three glorious Persons in one undivided Godhead. For instance; when the Psalmist says, "Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord," his eyes were unto God the Father, desiring to experience a measure of the spirit of adoption in his soul, enabling him to cry, "Abba Father;" unto God the Son, as the treasure-house of all spiritual blessings; and unto God the Spirit, as the only teacher and revealer of salvation to the soul.

Thus the eyes of the understanding are not merely enlightened to see the Person of God the Father, but they are enlightened also to see the Person of God the Son. They are enlightened, for instance, to see the Godhead of Jesus; and what a sweet glory is cast into the soul, when the eyes of the understanding see the Godhead shining forth in the Person of Immanuel! And what an infinite preciousness, unspeakable value, and glorious dignity this stamps upon every word and action of a suffering Jesus, when we see the Godhead shining forth through them all! When the eyes of our understanding are also enlightened to see the manhood as united to the Godhead; when we view this mysterious, secret, and indissoluble union; when we trace the human nature of the

Lord of life and glory having a distinct existence from, and yet intimately united unto, his glorious and eternal Godhead;—when the eyes of the understanding are thus enlightened to see the union of the infinite Godhead and the finite manhood in one glorious Person, and to view him not only as God, and not only as man, but to view him as the God-Man exalted far above all principality and power, a risen Mediator, a glorious High Priest, an ever-living and ever-loving Advocate, Mediator, Friend, and Intercessor,—what glory and beauty *then* shine forth in this Immanuel!

But not only are the eyes of the understanding enlightened to see the Person of the God-Man, "Immanuel, God with us:" but they are also enlightened to see *the distinct personality of God the Holy Ghost*; and not merely brought to see it as revealed in the Scriptures, but to see it in that peculiar indescribable way whereby a living soul only can see it.

2. And this leads me to shew, that not only are there eyes of the enlightened understanding, but that there are also *eyes of faith*; for we read, "By faith he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Wherever there is spiritual understanding, there must be spiritual faith. The graces of the Spirit are never separated; they are all in blessed and holy union one with another: yet they may be distinct in the matter of personal experience. Thus, sometimes we may see things by the eyes of our spiritual understanding; and yet find faith too weak to embrace that which is thus seen. Nay, when we are in this state, we may even fear lest the portion of Balaam seem to be ours, that we "shall see him, but not nigh." He had his eye upon, but never had faith in the glorious Person of the Son of God. But the Lord gives to his people not merely spiritual eyes of the understanding, but also gives them the eyes of living faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And when these new eyes, the eyes of faith, are given, then indeed we see. There is a sweet and solemn looking up of the heart unto the Lord; there is a going forth of faith upon his glorious perfections; there is a gracious internal act of the soul, whereby the person of the God-Man is looked unto, believed

in, hoped upon, and cleaved to with purpose of heart. And wherever the soul has had, not merely the eyes of the understanding enlightened, but also has had the eyes, the believing eyes of living faith communicated to it, to lay hold of the Person, blood, righteousness, work, and love of Immanuel, that soul is passed from death unto life, and saved with an everlasting salvation.

3. But there are not only the eyes of the spiritual understanding, and the eyes of living faith; there are also *eyes of loving affection*. Therefore the Bridegroom says to the Bride, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck:" and then, turning to her, he says, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." The eyes of the Bride gazed upon the Bridegroom, and cast upon him a languishing look of love. It is so naturally. If there be a beloved child; if there be an endeared wife or husband; if there be a cherished friend, do not the eyes look upon them with tenderness and affection? Can we ever look too much? can we ever look too long? And as the eye rests upon the beloved object, do we not drink in deep draughts of still more tender affection? So spiritually. Wherever the eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened, and wherever the eyes of faith look up unto the Lord, there also will be the eyes of affection. And these eyes of affection look up unto the Lord with sensations of the tenderest love; they look up unto him not merely as casting all our hopes of salvation upon him, not merely with admiration of his glorious Person, viewing his surprising majesty and beauty; but also with tender affection and devoted love, flowing forth out of the heart unto him who is "altogether lovely."

If ever I knew what it was to have the eyes of my understanding enlightened, the eyes of my faith opened, and the eyes of my affection looking up to the Lord of life and glory, it was during an illness I had last Autumn. There on my bed I knew what it was, I believe, in the actings of living faith and living affection to be looking up unto "God the Lord." And sweet and blessed indeed was the sight of "Immanuel, God with us," in his beauty,

loveliness, and glory. It indeed softened my heart; and I knew a measure of what the Scriptures speak of in those words, "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Therefore in describing these things, I speak of what, I hope, the Lord has shewn me, and wrought with divine power in my heart; and from time to time I do know what it is to be able to say, "Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord." For I am sure there is no other Object in earth or heaven that we can look to with any hope, or with any confidence; nor is there an object worthy of our heart's affection or trust but "God the Lord." God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Israel's Three-One God in covenant love and covenant ties, is worthy of, and will claim all the faith, all the hope, all the trust, all the admiration, and all the affection of every believing, hoping, loving heart. And when these blessed realities are brought with divine power into the soul, we are enabled to say, "Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord," and to no other.

II.—But this leads me to what we read in the next clause, "*In thee is my trust.*" Now before we can be brought to trust in the Lord, depend upon it, we must have been cut off and cut down from all creature confidence. I am well persuaded in my soul, that as long as we can look to the creature we shall look to the creature; as long as we can hang upon man we shall hang upon man; and therefore it is needful for "God the Lord" to cut us up and cut us off from resting upon the creature in any shape and in any form, in order that our trust may be simple, childlike, and implicit, so as to be wholly and solely fixed upon him.

But what are the ideas connected with the expression *trust*? "My trust is in thee." Before we can trust a person, must we not *know* that person! "They that *know* thy name will put their trust in thee." Must I not, then, have some spiritual and experimental knowledge of God—of this Object that is so trustworthy, before I can trust in him? How can I trust in him whom I do not know? of whose character I am altogether ignorant? I must have some experimental knowledge of God in my soul before I can say, in the language of truth, faith, uprightness, and simplicity, "In thee

is my trust." Knowledge, then, experimental knowledge, is the very ground of trust. An experimental knowledge of the true character of God as a covenant God, full of mercy, full of faithfulness, full of lovingkindness and truth; an experimental knowledge of the grace and glory of God the Father; of the Person and work of God the Son, through the teachings and operations of God the Holy Ghost, must be ever the foundation of gospel trust.

Besides that, there is another idea connected with the word "trust," and that is *confidence*. I may know a person, and believe that he is trustworthy; and yet not have had any such personal experience of his trustworthiness as to confide in him. But when, in addition to my knowledge of him, he has done that for me which has given me a confidence in him, then my trust arises, not from a bare knowledge of his character, but it also springs from a knowledge of what he has done for me. So that all true spiritual trust is composed of these two elements—a knowledge of God, and a confidence in God on account of what he has done for the soul. Now, in order that our trust may be in "God the Lord," we must see him worthy of it. Trust and confidence in God comprehends the Three Persons of the Godhead. When David said, "My eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord," it was to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, Israel's Three-one Jehovah, that his eyes looked. So, when he says, "In thee is my trust," it is, in the same manner, Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, and Jehovah the Spirit, in whom his heart reposed all its childlike confidence. He trusts in the Father, because he has made a "covenant ordered in all things and sure;" because he has chosen him in Christ before the foundation of the world; because he has shewn forth his mercy in the face, Person, work, love, and blood of his dear Son. He trusts in God the Son, because he sees in him everything trustworthy; he views him as having died for his sins; beholds him as having brought in an everlasting righteousness; sees every action and every suffering of the blessed Immanuel stamped with infinite dignity and glory; and feels he can commit his soul into his hands, for he beholds a cursing and condemning law completely fulfilled, the justice and

purity of God's character amply satisfied, Satan cast down, dethroned and destroyed, death abolished, and life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. He sees also that he has at the right hand of God the Father an ever-living and ever-glorious Head and Mediator, to plead his cause for him; and to keep him by faith through the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. And thus he sees in the Person of God the Son every thing on which he can repose with the most implicit confidence. And so, with respect to trusting in God the Spirit, who has borne with his manners in the wilderness, whom he has often grieved, but yet who has from time to time brought him back when he had backslidden after idols, melted his soul into penitence and sorrow, smitten the rock that the waters might gush out when his heart felt like an adamant, and led him, with weeping and supplications, to the feet of the Saviour, the exalted and glorified God-Man in his heart's affection—having had this experience of his love and power, he can trust in the Holy Ghost to carry on the work that he has begun till he brings it to full and final perfection.

Thus, when the believer is enabled to say, "My trust is in thee," all his hope, all his confidence, and all his expectations are founded upon the Three-One God, in his distinct personalities, and yet unity of essence. But, as I before observed, before we can come to this spot, "My trust is in thee," we must be thoroughly weaned from the creature; we must be cut off from an arm of flesh; our own righteousness must be dashed to a thousand shivers before our eyes; our wisdom must have become utter foolishness; our strength must have become thorough weakness; we must have felt the misery of our previous idolatries; we must have mourned over our perpetual and unceasing backslidings; and we must have seen in the Lord everything to draw forth the affections and desires of our soul.

Thus also before there can be trust in the Lord, there must be secret divine communications from him. So that if there be trust in the Lord, there will be not only a going forth of the soul to him, but there will be a coming down of that very Lord into the soul, enabling it to trust in him. There will be also trials, and promises

in those trials; there will be temptations, and deliverances out of those temptations; there will be afflictions, and consolations proportioned to those afflictions; there will be exercises, and relief in those exercises; there will be miseries, and mercies suitable to those miseries. And these things being wrought in the heart, and brought into the conscience by a divine power, there will be strength to trust in the Three-One God, such as the Lord communicates only to those who truly and earnestly seek his face.

But will not this trust be tried? Every thing worthy of trust is tried. The very musket that the soldier carries into the battle is sent to the proof-house before it is thought fit to go to war with; the sword or sabre he wears to fight his country's battles are tested and proved before they are committed to his hand. And will not your trust, if it be spiritual trust, if it be a spiritual weapon to fight your soul's battles, have to be tried too? Is it not "the trial of your faith," and not faith itself, which is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire?" Does not James tell his brethren to "count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of their faith worketh patience?" &c. So that wherever there is trust in God, that faith will be tried. If we trust God in providence, there will be things to try that trust; if we trust him in grace, there will be temptations, besetments, perplexities, daily trying that trust, whether it be genuine. If our trust be weak, it will have weak trials to encounter; if it be strong, it will have strong trials to encounter. The back is suited to the burden; and the burden is suited to the back. The trial is proportioned to the faith; and the faith is proportioned to the trial. It is a great point then to come to, to say, "My trust is in thee;" for it is to say, "Thou hast weaned me from the creature; thou hast reduced me to thorough poverty and destitution of spirit; thou hast separated me from creature wisdom and creature strength; I have none other to look to but thee; thou art my only refuge, my only harbour, the only haven of my tempest-tossed soul." So that to be able to look to the Lord solely, and say feelingly, "My trust is in thee," is one of the strongest expressions a child of God can make use of.

III.—He adds another supplication, "*Leave not my soul destitute.*" His soul then knew what it was to be destitute; he had known the misery of beggary and soul poverty. It was not with him as natural poverty is with the rich, a matter of speculation, a mere matter of theory; but a matter of personal and painful experience. He knew what it was to be destitute; and feeling the misery and wretchedness of being thus destitute, when he was favoured with his eyes being unto the Lord, he was enabled to say, with tenderness and implicit submission, "My trust is in thee." He was looking to the Lord, then, to obtain from him that which his soul was most specially bent upon, that upon which his heart was most intently fixed: "Leave not my soul destitute."

Now there are two seasons chiefly, or rather, two stages of experience when this prayer becomes suitable. In early days, before the Lord has much blessed the soul with manifestations of his kindness and favour, the eyes of the understanding are often enlightened to see what mercy, pardon, and the grace of God are; and though the soul is not yet fully cut off from the creature, the arm of self-righteousness broken, nor the idol of fleshly wisdom dethroned; yet the mercies, the visits, the enjoyments that the Lord favours his people with, are not powerfully brought into the heart. But this experience leads the soul to know what it is to be feelingly destitute. There is this conviction wrought in the heart, "If I have not the pardon of sin manifestly communicated, I must die in my sins; if I have not the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, I have no testimony that the Lord loves me personally; if he do not answer my prayer; if he do not apply his word; if he do not bring home his promises; if he do not bless me with the sweet manifestations of his everlasting favour, I am undone," "I know," says the needy soul, "I cannot procure these things myself; yet I know that I must perish without them." Now one in this state of experience knows what destitution is, and can therefore say, "Lord, leave not my soul destitute." It is in the margin, "Make not my soul bare;" "Strip me not of every hope; leave me not completely naked; abandon me not to nature's beggary and misery; let me not go down into the pit with

all my sins upon my head; leave not my soul destitute of pardon and peace."

One prayer, then, is of this nature. But there is another of a more matured kind. When the Lord has in some measure blessed the soul, and given it a knowledge, not merely of what grace is in the word, but what grace is in the heart; when not merely his favour is seen in the Scriptures, but has shone as a matter of personal experience into the conscience;—when this is not in present feeling, the soul is obliged to cry, "Leave me not destitute." The soul in this state is like one who has been what is called 'well to do in the world,' and then been stripped of all; who has known the comforts of opulence and then been reduced to the extreme of poverty. This is a far worse state than to have been born and bred poor. The nobleman reduced to bankruptcy, the wealthy banker compelled to beg for a livelihood, must needs feel the sharp pangs of poverty far more keenly and acutely than he who was born in a workhouse, and cradled in the depth of natural indigence. So spiritually. If the soul has tasted that the Lord is gracious; if it has felt anything of his kindness and mercy; if it has enjoyed his favour like dew upon the grass, must it not feel more keenly the deprivation of these things than if it had never personally experienced them? So that, when the Lord withholds his presence, does not drop in his favour, nor shed abroad his testimonies within, then the cry will go forth, "Leave not my soul destitute."

Now you may depend upon it that every living soul is brought to this conclusion that he is utterly destitute, except so far as God the Spirit has done something for him, or as God the Spirit is doing something in him. For I am convinced in my own heart, that the Lord brings all his people to this spot, to know that they have nothing spiritually but what he gives them, feel nothing but what he works in them, and are nothing but what he makes them. The Lord has enlightened the eyes of their understanding to see what his grace, mercy, and favour are; he has taught them what his manifestations are, and shown them that his visitations, and his visitations alone, preserve their spirit. It is not their piety,

resolutions of amendment, nor profession of religion that can make up for heavenly manifestations of divine favour. No; these things condemn them often more than sin; for they make them appear more like varnished hypocrites. But being in a measure honest and sincere, they cannot bear to think that they should be hypocrites, have a name to live while dead, and thus perish with a lie in their right hand. Thus they know what the Psalmist says, "Leave not my soul destitute." The cry and breathing of his soul was, that the Lord would bless him with some manifestations of his goodness; that he would cause his favour to rest upon him like the dew upon the branch; that he would shed abroad his everlasting love in his soul, and fill him with joy unspeakable and full of glory; that he would come down into his heart in his precious, blessed, and manifestive mercy, and make him like a hind let loose, or like a watered garden, prepared unto every good word and work. When he has not this, when the Lord withdraws himself, when there is no answer to prayer, when there is no special teaching and power of the Lord, when all is dark within and gloomy without, when his soul sinks thus into the depths of creature wretchedness and poverty, then he cries, "Leave not my soul destitute."

Now, there are many things that a living soul is panting after, the deprivation of which makes it feel destitute. One is, *the fear of God*. When we see (as we do see sometimes) what snares are spread for our feet—when we know, as we painfully know, daily know, the workings of our dreadfully depraved and corrupt nature, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—when we feel this infernal trinity all struggling for the mastery, and fighting against a Three-One God—do we not want (I at times deeply do) to feel the fear of the Lord at work in our souls, as "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death?" When we see our weakness, when we know our frailty, and that we are walking in the midst of gins and snares; when our wicked heart is going out after every imagination of evil; when nothing seems to be too base for us to do, or too vile for us to desire, will there not be at such times a cry to the Lord, as there was with one of old, that he would keep us from evil, that it may not grieve

us, and so our heart might be made tender in the fear of the Lord?

Again, when we feel full of unbelief, unable to muster a single grain of faith, or are exercised, harassed, and perplexed by the vilest temptations to infidelity, do we not then want, as the Lord raises up the desire in the heart, to be blessed with *a living faith*? and when we have not this, do we not often feel destitute? And do not our hopes sometimes sink very low? Are not our *evidences* often beclouded? Do not the *testimonies* of the Lord sink out of sight? Are not past *feelings* and *favours* covered with a thick cloud, so that we can scarcely think the Lord will visit our soul in mercy? Do not these feelings make us cry, "Leave not my soul destitute?" And does not sin often lie on the conscience? Do not secret backslidings bring guilt? And do not our inward adulteries and idolatries receive stripes, inward stripes, as their punishment? Does not the feeling of guilt make us long after manifested pardon and the sprinkling of atoning blood to heal the guilty conscience, and purge it from filth and dead works? And when this is withheld, does it not bring us to say, "Leave not my soul destitute?" Are we not also frequently in our feelings *without life or love to God's people*? without any holy affections, any heavenly-mindedness, any spirituality of soul? Will not this too lead us sometimes to say, "Leave not my soul destitute?" And do we not value sometimes the favour of God more than ten thousand worlds? the testimony of the Spirit more than thousands of gold and silver? and the sweet witness within that we are the children of God more than anything the world can offer? When our witnesses seem to be against us; when the leprosy rises up in our forehead, as in the forehead of Uzzah, and in the face of Miriam, do we not anxiously desire that the Lord would shed abroad his love in our hearts and tell us, with his own peace-speaking lips, that he is our God and Father? And do we not often want to be fruitful in every good word and work, and lament our barren lips and useless lives; lament that we have so little conformity to the crucified Lord, so little separation from the world that lieth in wickedness, so little contrition and meekness of heart, do so little for the Lord, and live so much for ourselves,

and so little for his glory? Does not our heart at times desire more conformity to Christ's image? and to walk more simply, more believingly in his blessed footsteps? And when we cannot do these things, but rather do the contrary, will not this be the secret breathing of our soul, "Leave me not destitute?"

But the very cry is a pledge that the Lord will not leave the soul destitute. Strange though it be to us; it is the light that shows darkness; it is life that makes us feel deadness; nay, more, it is fertility and fruitfulness that make us feel barrenness; it is riches that makes us feel poverty; it is God's teaching and presence that make us feel destitution. Look at the dead professor, and hardened presumptuous wretch, with a lie in his right hand. Is he ever crying and groaning to the Lord in the secret corners of the house, on his bed by night, or during his occupation by day, that the Lord would look upon him and bless him, give him a sweet testimony, shed abroad his love in his heart, and lift upon him the light of his countenance? With all his profession, he is unfruitful in every good word and work; like the barren fig tree, he only cumbers the ground; he is but a sapless branch, which the sharp pruning-knife of the husbandman will soon cut away. This very mourning over our barrenness; this very feeling of our inability to do good, is a proof of the life of God in the soul, an evidence of the work of grace in the heart. "Leave not my soul destitute." This is something genuine; this is heart work; these are the footsteps of the flock; these are the leadings and teachings of God the Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed. These things are saving; these things will lead the soul to eternal glory. And he that knows any of these things by personal experience will one day see the glory of the Lord face to face. What do we then know of these things? Can we lay our experience side by side with this experience of the Psalmist, and say, "Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." Wherever that prayer is, it will bring an answer; and wherever that answer is, there will be matter for everlasting praise. Blessed are the souls that know these things from genuine heartfelt experience. They will shine forth as stars for ever and ever; and when the Lord of life and glory comes a second time without sin

unto salvation, then shall they also appear with him in glory.

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I had forgotten till a late period of the day that I had to plead the cause of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society this evening. The text broke in upon my mind this morning as I was reading the Scriptures; it seemed suitable for this evening, though it was not taken by me with any view to the cause I am to plead for; and yet I could not but afterwards be struck with the connection between them (a connection not sought by me) and the case before us this evening.

It has struck my mind, then, that many (may we not say most?) of these Aged Pilgrims, whose cause I am attempting to advocate, are saying, "Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord." If they are, as we have reason to hope, partakers of grace; and if they are (as we know they are) bereft of those things which the world makes its god, can they not say, "Mine eyes are unto thee?" If some of these aged saints knew that I was pleading their cause to-night, and if they could look out of their cellars, and garrets, and lonely abodes, and look upon this large congregation, would not their hearts be going out to the Lord that he would open the hearts and hands of his people to contribute to their wants? And if the Lord has brought them down in providence, has he not made them say, "My trust is in thee?" May we not add one little word to the text, (I shall not incur John's condemnation if I do), "leave not my body and soul destitute?" We can do something for the body; we can do nothing for the soul—that we must leave to the Lord. But you and I have to do now with the body. Is it not a mercy to be the Lord's almoners? Look at the mercies you enjoy—the comfortable homes—the food spread upon your table—the many comforts, shall I say luxuries? that some of you can readily procure. Are you not connected with these Pilgrims by a secret bond? If they are, as we have reason to believe—if they are, with you, among the family of God, is there not a mystical union between you and them, though they may lodge in a garret or cellar, and you may live in a house; they

may lay on a hard flock bed, and you may sleep on a soft and downy couch? But if the spirit of the Lord is at work in their hearts and in your heart, there are the same spiritual feelings in your souls. You may say, lying on your soft downy couch, "Mine eyes are unto thee;" and they may say, with more feeling than you and I perhaps, from their dark cellars and hard mattress, "Mine eyes are unto thee."

I feel glad to plead for this cause at Zoar. It gave me pleasure to find the managers gave ready permission to have a sermon on their behalf here. It gladdens my heart to see the large congregation—not to hear a poor worm like me—but in the hope that the Lord may in some measure work upon your hearts and open your hands to contribute to their wants. I feel great interest in the Society; I have four pilgrims on their books for whom I have a real sympathy. But I will not attempt to work upon your feelings—I must leave it wholly and solely to the Lord. I shall therefore conclude by reading a paper which the secretary has put into my hands.

## FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, July 4, 1841 at Zoar Chapel,  
Great Alie Street, White Chapel

"That thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." 1Timothy 1:18, 19

I have been frequently led to admire, and I trust, not only to admire, but to feel also, the Epistles of Paul to Timothy. There are in them, to my mind, two very striking features. The one is the mellowed tone which is diffused through them. "Paul, the aged," writes as one meekened and softened by his long and wearisome pilgrimage; therefore, though he writes with authority as an apostle, yet that authority is tempered by a spirit of meekness and gentleness, produced by a long series of afflictions and consolations, as well as by the recollection of what he had been before grace come into his heart. He never forgot that he had "persecuted the church of God," had been "a blasphemmer and injurious;" and the continual recollection of what he had been before the Lord called him by his grace, kept him humble at his feet. Therefore, he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; **of whom I am chief.**" Still the chief of sinners, though "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles;" "less than the least of all saints," though he had been caught up to the third heaven, and there had heard unspeakable words, which were not lawful **(or possible)** for a man to utter. The other feature in these two Epistles is, the fatherly tone in which he writes to Timothy, as being "his own son in the faith;" not using the language of haughty dictation, as though Timothy were to bow down to him sitting in the professor's chair; but writing with authority as his father in Christ, and yet that authority softened down by the affection which he had towards him as his "dearly beloved son." Thus the warnings and instructions which he gives to his son Timothy, however solemn and faithful they are, are yet

mingled with the utmost tenderness of affection and feeling. And it is this union of faithfulness and affection which gives point to all instruction, as well as edge and force to all reproof. The minister who stands up in the name of God to take forth the precious from the vile, should combine **(and he will combine them, if the Lord the Spirit is his teacher)** the extremest faithfulness with the tenderest affection; so that he may come up to that standard laid down to Paul, "speaking the truth in love." Truth must needs offend; it is a sword with a keen and cutting edge, and must needs inflict deep and painful wounds in the conscience. But we are not called upon to jag the edge by harshness in our manner and spirit, but so to use the word of truth, "the sword of the Spirit," that it may do just God's work and no more, that it may just cut between flesh and spirit, natural religion and spiritual religion, and yet not so cut as to cut away anything of God's implantation, or to wound the tenderest heart that God himself has touched with his finger. But as in other cases, here we continually err. I know not what you feel, but I know that I have never done anything right in my life; I have never said a word, nor ever done an action that could bear a strict and spiritual scrutiny. Something of my own has marred it before, in, or after it passed from me. If it came from right motives, some base and selfish feeling mingled with it and defiled it. Nor have I ever been able to wield the sword of truth aright. My heart has staggered, and my hand wavered between the two extremes of harshness and softness; and all I seem to have said and done has been clumsily and ineffectually, like one fighting with an enemy in a dream, aiming right, but the sinews weak, and the arm unsteady, and every blow powerless and vain.

The apostle then lays before his son Timothy most solemn warnings and most profitable instruction; and yet the blessed Spirit so filled his heart with tenderness, and so anointed his pen with authority and power, that one alive in God's fear cannot recoil from the one or the other. And as our text seems to contain in it this admixture of instruction, warning, and tenderness, I shall, without farther preface, simply take up the subject as it lies before me, believing that rightly to divide "the word of truth," and

to divide the living from the dead, is a division more suitable with the Scriptures, and more profitable to the people of God, than a formal division into heads of my own making, which were I to adopt, I should probably not be able to adhere to. "That thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."

"That thou **by them.**" What does the apostle mean by this expression? It refers to the words that immediately precede. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies that went before on thee, that thou **by them**" (**that is, by the prophecies, according to them, in obedience to them, acting with reference to them**), "mightest war a good warfare." In the primitive church!: there were persons who were called prophets (1Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). Their office was not, generally speaking, to predict future events,—they were not prophets in the Old Testament sense of the word, but they were what we should call, in modern language, "preachers." This seems evident from the effect ascribed to their prophesying (1Corinthians 14:24-25). "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." Here we see what the effect of their prophesying was. The prediction of future events could not "judge," that is, condemn a casual hearer, nor make manifest the secrets of his heart; but the preaching of truth in the power of God the Holy Ghost, is every way calculated to convince of sin, and lay bare the hidden recesses of conscience. Again, we read, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other" (**that is those who sit by**), "judge," that is, decide, if he preaches truth. They could not judge whether he predicted future events aright, for that could be proved only by their fulfilment. "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The prediction of events to come, communicates neither instruction nor comfort at the time, but preaching does both. And, therefore, we gather that these

prophets were not prophets in the strict sense of the term, as predicting events to come, but preachers of God's truth. Now it seems that when Timothy was set apart for the work of the ministry, there were certain prophecies uttered by those preachers in the church to which Timothy belonged. No doubt, lessons of instruction how Timothy was to conduct himself; no doubt, lessons of deep and solemn warning, that he should be faithful to the Lord that had put him into the ministry; no doubt, encouragements also and promises that the Lord would stand by him, and enable him to do that work to which he had called him.

The apostle then, writing to Timothy, reminds him of what was spoken to him, when he was set apart for the ministry. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them," that is, "that thou" in strict compliance with them, "that thou" by their weight and their power resting upon thy mind, "that thou" by the application of them to thy conscience, and by walking in the path to which those prophecies pointed, "that thou," in strict accordance with those solemn words of instruction which were dropped from the mouth of God through his prophets, "mightest war that good warfare" to which thou art called. This seems to me to be the most consistent and the most scriptural interpretation of the words.

But we gather from this apostolic charge, that Timothy was a soldier of Jesus Christ. He says to him, in his second Epistle (2Tim. 2:3,4), teaching him under figures, "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Timothy then had been enlisted under the banner of the Lord. He was no voluntary recruit, but the Lord "had chosen him to be a soldier," had selected him out of others for the express purpose that he might fight his battles, had called him by his grace, and quickened him by his Spirit, had put upon him the whole armour of God, equipping him with "the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, having shod his feet

with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and girt his loins about with truth," and thus sent him into the field to war a good warfare, and to fight under the banner of Immanuel.

The apostle then, addressing him as a "faithful soldier of Jesus Christ" tells him that he must "war a good warfare," and gives him some instructions how he is to war this "good warfare," by holding "faith and a good conscience," solemnly warning him that some who had put away "a good conscience, concerning faith had made a shipwreck." The first part of his injunction is "to war a good warfare." This implies that there is such a thing as warring a bad warfare for if there were no warring a bad warfare, there could be no meaning in the charge, that he was to war "**a good warfare.**" There are many who are guilty of this capital charge. Those, for instance, war a bad warfare who fight on the side of error against truth: this comprehends all Arminians, Arians, Socinians, and other opposers of the doctrines of grace. Those too war a bad warfare who fight against the convictions of their own consciences, and against all the solemn warnings that are in the word of God against the impenitent, the ungodly, and the unbelieving. But the charge given to Timothy that he was to take especial heed to war "a good warfare," implies that it is possible even for the soldier of the Lord to war a bad warfare. The good soldier then wars a bad warfare, when he goes out into the field of battle in his own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, "at his own charges," as the apostle elsewhere speaks (1Corinthians 9:7), equipped in armour of his own making, and his own putting on. Of this folly those are guilty who attempt to convince people of the truths of religion by argument, to make proselytes to a certain scheme of doctrine, and to enlist under the banner of party those whom the Spirit of God does not call by his quickening grace.

He, too, wars a bad warfare who contends for truth in a bitter spirit, who dips his words in vinegar, and cannot spread forth a table with the milk and honey of the gospel, without setting on it the wormwood and gall of his own morose temper.

He also wars a bad warfare, who distresses "the poor and needy" of Gods family. He plays the part of Amalek, who fell upon the rear of Israel's army, and "smote the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble, faint, and weary" (Deuteronomy 25:18), and, therefore, unable to keep up with the march of Israel.

Timothy was a minister of righteousness, and yet Paul warns him to war a good warfare. Ministers, then, of truth may be led aside into warring a bad warfare. Good men have preached the gospel in their own spirit; have built up hypocrites and distressed the living family; have sought to make proselytes to their own opinions, rather than to bring converts to the feet of Jesus; have gone forth in their own strength, as though they would beat down error by weapons of their own manufacture, instead of going as "poor and needy," weak and feeble, and hanging wholly and solely upon the strength of the Lord.

And so private Christians war a bad warfare, by fighting with weapons which are not put into their hands by the Spirit of God. The living soul sometimes finds a powerful working of sin in him, a rising up of base lusts, craving and hankering after forbidden things. Convinced of the guilt of these things, and of the hatred of God against them, he seeks to overcome them in the strength of the flesh. This is not warring "a good warfare," because he wars not against his passions with spiritual weapons, but encounters flesh by flesh, and employs the strength and wisdom of the creature to keep down the evil and corruption of the creature.

Others of God's children war not "a good warfare," by not keeping to the post which the Lord has assigned them in the battle. The Lord places each of his children in a certain post; some he chooses should be weak and feeble; others he chooses should be powerful and strong. Some he sends into the front ranks to fight manfully "the good fight of faith;" others he places in the rear, because he knows that they are not strong enough to fight against his enemies. He, then, whom God places in the front rank to fight his battles, that deserts his post through cowardice or love of lucre, wars not "a good warfare;" he is a deserter from

the post where the Lord has placed him. And he that rushes, uncalled, into the front rank, when the Lord has assigned him an inferior place; he that, instigated by his own pride and presumption, pushes himself into the pulpit, without the Lord's calling him up there, wars not a good warfare, by assuming a situation to which the Captain of armies has never appointed him. He too wars a bad warfare, that leagues with God's enemies, and deserts God's friends, that wears the regimentals of the corps in which he is enlisted, and yet is carrying on treacherous designs with the enemy. Are there not professors of religion, yea, some who we hope are God's people, that can be, as they say, "all things to all men," and change their creed according to their company, that desert the principles which they profess to hold in one place, when those principles are attacked in another? And thus wearing the dress, and receiving the pay of the great King, they through cowardice, or fickleness, espouse the part of the enemy.

Again; those war a bad warfare who hang on the outskirts of the army, watching every unguarded place, observing every wavering regiment, scanning with curious eyes the weakest points, and, perhaps, affording intelligence to the enemy. These are the spies and renegades that hang upon the flanks of the army of the LORD of Hosts. Are not some such here? you keen-eyed observers that are watching for the slips and falls of God's children, that are ready to catch up every incautious expression dropped from their lips, that are ever seeking to make a minister an offender for a word, and carp and cavil unless every syllable be squared or rounded according to your fancy, are not you warring a bad warfare?

But the apostle tells Timothy what weapons he must make use of in order to war "a good warfare." "**Holding faith and a good conscience**, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." These are the two weapons which the LORD of Hosts equips his champions with, and which he bids them hold fast. We will consider them separately, and see how appropriate

and suitable these weapons are to the soldiers that fight under the Lord's banner.

The first weapon which he is to hold is "**faith**." It is not an implement for show, but for use; not to be suspended in the armoury, like the pistols and bayonets in the Tower, nor like a rusty broadsword over a man's chimney piece; but to be grasped and held. But before he can **hold** it he must **have** it. The weapon must be put into his hands. It is the King's gift, for faith is "the gift of God." It is that which is committed to him. "O Timothy," he says, "keep that which is committed unto thy trust." The weapon of faith, therefore, is put into the hand of the soldiers of the cross; not suspended in God's word, that armoury of truth; not admired as worn by the side of others; not a mere weapon in readiness for some nightly thief, which may never be needed for a whole life; but a weapon for daily use, first received and then held, and wielded in such a way as the Lord himself shall direct.

But what has faith to do in this "good warfare?" why should it be so important, so indispensable a weapon? Because every step of ground that we advance upon, we can only advance upon through faith; every enemy that we have to contend against, we can only contend against in faith; every promise that shall be for our support, every instruction which shall direct us how to act, every reproof and solemn rebuke that shall be for our spiritual chastisement, we can only receive by faith. And, therefore, the soldier, without the weapon of faith, stands naked and defenceless before his enemy. Think not yourselves, then, soldiers in the army of the LORD of Hosts, unless you know something of what it is to hold the weapon of faith in your hands.

This "good warfare" is carried on against three principal enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil; and each of these enemies so closely allied to ourselves, and each so powerful and so hostile, that they must surely overcome us, unless we are "strengthened with strength in the inner man." There is the flesh, with all its baits, charms, and subtle attractions continually laying its gins and traps for our feet; perpetually ensnaring us in some

evil word or some evil work, and we in ourselves utterly defenceless against it.—Said I defenceless?—yea, eager to run into it, like the silly bird that sees the grains of corn spread in the trap, but thinks not, when it flutters around it, that the brick will fall and confine it a prisoner. So we, allured by a few grains of corn spread before our eyes, often see not the snare, until we are fast entangled therein. Faith, then, is that eye of the soul which sees the concealed hook; by faith we call upon the Lord to deliver us from snatching at the bait; and by faith, as a spiritual weapon, we cut at times the snare asunder. Oh, how defenceless are we, when the temptations and allurements of the flesh plead for indulgence, unless faith is in exercise, unless faith realises the hatred of God against sin, and brings into our consciences a sense of God's heart-searching eye, and his wrath against all transgression! But where the Lord has put this weapon of faith into the hand of his soldier, he will often strengthen his arm to wield it in these seasons of extremity, even though that weapon should cut and wound self.

How Joseph was enabled to resist the snares spread for his feet, by calling to mind the presence of the Lord! How he was strengthened to break asunder that bond which was fast twining round his heart, when faith sprung up in his soul, and he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" How the three children who were about to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, unless they would worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, overcame that dreadful temptation to renounce their God and prove apostates, by living faith. How the worthies record in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: "out of weakness were made strong and waxed valiant in fight," simply through that faith whereby they were enabled to see the invisible God and the glories of the unseen world! And how in this country, and in this very metropolis, martyrs have gone to the stake, and died horrible deaths, rather than renounce the Lord Jesus, simply and solely through the exercise of that living faith which the God of all grace

had implanted in their souls! Oh, what a weapon faith is, when the lord does but give us power to wield it! How, as Hart says,

**It cuts its way through hosts of devils While they fall before the word.**

But when sin, temptation, and unbelief beat this weapon out of our hands, when it lies seemingly shivered at our feet, and we cannot get another such sword from God's armoury, how we stand naked and defenceless before our enemies. Therefore what need we have not merely of this heavenly grace in our souls, but to hold it fast and not let it go, lest the enchantress should catch our feet in her wiles and snares.

So again with respect to **the world**. What a snare the world is to God's people! Oh, the excitement of the past week! **{The week of the general election of members of Parliament for the City of London and Metropolitan boroughs.}** How many of God's children has it ensnared! How they have been carried headlong into the whirlpool of politics! How anxious they have been that the side which they favoured should be triumphant, and how deeply interested in all that has taken place! How their hearts have been drawn away from Him who sitteth enthroned on the water-floods, holding the reins of government, and directing all things according to the counsel of his own will! But faith in a man's bosom in lively exercise will make him proof against such political agitation, such carnal excitement. He that can look upon a suffering Jesus, that can view with eyes of faith an agonizing God, who receives into his soul dewdrops of atoning blood, and manifestations of redeeming mercy, who longs after some secluded spot, where he can hold sweet communion with the risen Lord of life and glory, what interest can he feel who holds the helm of politics, or who stands at the head of the poll? But only so far as faith realizes these eternal realities, and the soldier of the cross holds his weapon fast, can he overcome that intoxicating spirit of political excitement which now makes well nigh every heart to beat and every eye to glisten. Only by faith leading him into some spiritual sympathy and communion with

heavenly things can he view these exciting scenes as an empty pageant, a gaudy show that is passing away with all its actors into an eternity of woe.

So again when Satan comes in with his fierce temptations and fiery darts, what but faith can enable the soul to stand up against them, as the apostle says, "above all having the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). Nothing but faith in God, in his power and presence; nothing but faith in Jesus, in his blood and his righteousness; nothing but faith in the Holy Ghost, as lifting up a standard in the heart by means of his divine operations; nothing but faith in a triune God can enable the soul to battle against Satan's assaults. Therefore see how indispensable faith is to fight a good fight, yea, so indispensable that a good fight is called emphatically "the fight of faith;" "fight the good fight of faith" (1Timothy 6:12), implying that true faith will enable a man to come off more than conqueror through every battle and to survive every conflict.

But the apostle adds another word, and a very solemn word it is, "holding faith," he says, "and a **good conscience**, which" **(that is a "good conscience," the word in the original being in the single number)** "some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."

There is another weapon, then, which the soldier of the cross has, and holds—"a good conscience." We find that, in the apostle's time, there were characters who held faith, or rather what they called faith, and put away "good conscience." He mentions by name, "Hymeneus and Alexander, whom he had delivered unto Satan," that is, excommunicated them out of the church, as heretics and blasphemers. But if to have put good conscience away, stamps a man as unfit for the visible church of God, it behoves us to search whether we have this weapon at our side, and in our hand. What does the apostle, then, mean by "a good conscience?" I believe he means a conscience alive in God's fear, a spiritual conscience, a tender conscience, what he calls, in

another part, "a pure conscience:" "holding faith in a pure conscience," that is, purified from ignorance, from guilt, from the power of sin, "a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Wherever, then, there is living faith in the soul, there will be united with it "a good conscience." The Lord never sends forth a soldier to fight his battles with the weapon of faith only, he puts faith in one hand and "a good conscience" in the other. And he that goes forth with what he thinks to be faith, and casts aside "a good conscience," will manifest himself to be one of those characters, who "concerning faith make shipwreck."

This is a solemn word of warning for you, that despise the workings of conscience, that think it legal, that are all for faith, and scorn all admonitions of an inward monitor. May the Lord apply it to your souls, lest you should prove to be one of those characters, who, having put away "a good conscience," "concerning faith! will make shipwreck."

But why is it called "a good conscience?" Because it comes down from God, who is the author of all good, the giver of "every good gift, and every perfect gift." There is none good but he (Matthew 19:17), and there is nothing good but what he himself implants and communicates. This weapon of a good conscience, that the Lord arms his soldiers with, works with faith, as well as proves its sincerity of faith, and tests its genuineness and reality. Faith, without a good conscience, is dead. It bears upon it the mark of nature, and however high it may rise in confidence, or however it may seem to abound in good works, it is not the faith of God's elect, of which the end is the salvation of the soul.

But it may be asked, how does a good conscience work with faith? What is the connexion between these two weapons, and how do they mutually support and strengthen each other? In this way. What faith believes, good conscience feels; what faith receives, good conscience holds; what faith embraces, good conscience rivets fast; when faith is weak, good conscience is feeble; and when faith is strong, good conscience is active. They grow and they wane together, and like two stems from one root

together do they flourish and fade. For instance, sometimes through cowardice we shrink back from the post to which God has assigned us. How glad should I often be never to mount a pulpit again. How willing should I be, at times, to retire to some sequestered spot, to live a quiet and secluded life, and be set free from all the trying exercises of the ministry, and all the arrows that presumptuous professors and ungodly men shoot at every one who desires to be faithful. But I feel that this cannot be; I have put my hand to the plough and dare not look back. "A good conscience" begins to work. What! to leave the Lord's work, and slink away, because the arrows fly thick and fast! To desert one's allotted post! Why, a sentinel that leaves his beat because the night is cold, or the enemy near, runs a risk of being shot. He has deserted his post through effeminacy or cowardice. He does not "endure hardness," or he turns back in the day of battle.

Sometimes, on the other hand, as I hinted before, there is that in us, which would push us out of the place which God has assigned us, would thrust us forward, when the Lord's inward work would keep us back. Here too, "good conscience" begins to work. It manifests the secret presumption of those steps; its acute ear detects the hollow ground upon which we are walking; its piercing eye discovers the volcano, near the crater of which we are treading; it checks the onward step, and realizing some measure of the displeasure of God against those who slight his word, brings back the soul to its right place, the spot where the Holy Ghost has himself set it down. Thus, if a man goes too forward, "good conscience" pulls him down to his place. If a man slink backward, "good conscience" pushes him forward into the spot which God has assigned him. Thus "good conscience" keeps the soldier at the post where the God of armies has placed him.

So, when the flesh presents its tempting baits, and comes forward with all its allurements, "good conscience" is the sentinel on the watch. "Good conscience" descries the wriggling serpent gliding through the grass; sees the crest and hears the hissing of the adder. Before the rattle-snake springs forward, it hears the rattle, and begins to alarm and warn the soul of the dangers

unperceived by all but itself. Thus "good conscience," as a watchful sentinel sounding the alarm in the soul, pulls the soldier back from the dangers that beset his path. It warns him of the mines that the enemy is working under his feet; points out the hidden stakes on which he might run and destroy himself; gives him notice of the stratagems and ambushes which the enemy is preparing. And thus, "good conscience," sounding its alarm in his ear, keeps him from the snare that is spread for his feet.

So, when the world, that powerful antagonist of the living soul, hangs out its charms, or brings forward its fear, when it comes in this shape, "If you join yourselves to the people of God, you will sink in everybody's estimation, you will lose your character, will injure your property, will offend your friends, will disgrace, as they consider it, your relations:" "good conscience" answers, "I am firmly convinced that those whom you despise are the people of the living God; that the experience which you ridicule is the truth of God; that the things I have received are things to live and die by; and therefore I will cleave to them at any cost, knowing that salvation is in them." Thus, "good conscience" keeps a man from being carried away by the fear of the world. So, when lukewarm professors seek to draw us aside into their smooth, and easy path, "good conscience" is upon the watch; "good conscience" calls to remembrance the sufferings of Jesus; and reminds us of the Lord's dealings with all his saints, and with our own souls in times past the Lord the Spirit drops his admonitions into the ear of conscience, and it testifies against all flowery paths of religion, and sounds aloud, "Through much tribulation must you enter the kingdom of God." So, also, when Satan, the third antagonist of the living soul—the third enemy of the soldiers of the Lord, infuses base imaginations, and hurls his fiery darts, "good conscience," being alive in God's fear recoils with horror from his injections, and calls loudly upon the Lord to bruise him under our feet, and give us help and strength to resist his fearful insinuations. Or when this subtle enemy changes his garb, and transforms himself into an angel of light "good conscience," living under the Spirit's teachings, sees the swarthy

skin under the robe of light, and resists his delusions as firmly as his blasphemies.

He then alone wars the good warfare, who goes forth with faith in the one hand, and "good conscience" in the other; faith strengthening conscience, and conscience strengthening faith; each doing their separate office, but still tending to one end; each accomplishing the work which the Lord had appointed, and yet each fighting the Lord's battles, and bringing the soldier safe and victorious over his enemy.

But there were those in the apostle's time, as there are those in our time, who "put away good conscience." "All they wanted," said they, "was faith; what had they to do with conscience? What need they mind about sin? Sin could not damn them or do them any harm; sin could not blot their names out of the covenant; a child of God could not backslide, "for his new nature, argued they with logical dexterity," could not go backward, and his old nature never went forward, and so, between the two, backsliding was impossible. A true believer always stood firm in the liberty of the gospel, and was not to be entangled in the yoke of bondage. What then had they to do with this legal conscience? These characters are described by Jude (Jude 1:1-2) as "feeding themselves without fear;" and by Peter, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption." Their very language testifies an absence of living faith. They had what they called "faith," but which would more properly be called, vain confidence, presumption, and delusion." Bolstered up by this, they put away "good conscience." They would not have the ballast in the hold, that they might sail the faster. They did not want exercises, temptations, doubts, fears, distresses, and soul conflicts; they wanted to hoist the main-sail to the wind. But this lightening of their ship by casting their lading into the sea, when they loose the rudder-bands, and hoist up the mainsail to the wind, will bring them into the same spot into which it brought the ship in which Paul was a prisoner. "And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained immovable, but the hinder part was broken

with the violence of the waves." (Acts 27:41) That was the fruit of casting the wheat into the sea, and hoisting the mainsail to the wind. And those will meet with the same fate who cast out the ballast, and throw overboard "good conscience" as so much lumber and legality, who heave into the sea this burdensome companion, this moping creature that is always croaking between decks. Many professors in our day put away "good conscience." They want to travel faster than "good conscience will allow. They love a few sins which "good conscience" remonstrates against. They like their strong glass, and a little worldly conversation, and a little merry-making and amusement. A Christian, say they, is to be a cheerful character, he is not to be ever crying and groaning and sighing, and to confine himself to a few poor, moping creatures like himself, but to be lively and agreeable, to go into the world, and let his "light so shine before men," that they may see his good works (Matthew 5:16). 'And' **(say others, of the same cast,)** in business, we must do as other people do. There is no carrying on trade now-a-days unless you do business as it is generally done. You must not be so particular and so nice about drawing bills upon fictitious credit. If there is an advantage to be taken over an unwary customer, why it is quite reasonable to take it, and make the most of your superior knowledge. People,' he says, 'of a scrupulous conscience may indeed call it cheating and swindling, but we call it a matter of trade, all in the way of business. I don't see' he argues, 'why the professor of religion should be debarred from acting as others, or why he should suffer in the world, as he can never rise to be a respectable tradesman, unless he takes such advantages as other people take in the same line of business.' Now what is all this? It is putting away "a good conscience." It is casting aside that which God stamps in his word as a weapon for his soldiers to hold fast. It is manifesting the black mark of reprobation—a seared conscience. It is showing the cloven foot beneath the robe of profession. And what is the consequence? "Concerning faith they make shipwreck." That will be the fearful end, the awful termination of the voyage. And how do they make shipwreck? They strike upon some sandbank, or some hidden shoal, and when they are stuck fast there, the waves of God's vengeance, and the winds which

he has held in his fists, rise in everlasting fury, beat against the ship, and dash it into a thousand pieces. As long as there were no shoals or rocks, they could ride gallantly over the waves, and outsail many a deeply laden vessel, but when they struck upon the reef, and the breakers beat over their heads, they soon went down into the boiling waves. Thus some of these gallant ships run upon the sandbank of open sin, and when they are firmly fixed there, God manifests his wrath in their consciences, the waves of his indignation beat upon them, and down they go to eternal perdition with all their sins upon their heads. Others seem to be making with crowded sails for the harbour. But just as they near the port, a sudden and violent gust dashes them against the pier-head, and they make shipwreck, at the very moment when they think that they are about to enter, with flowing sheet, into the haven of eternal rest. Their false peace gives way on a deathbed, and they die in all the agonies of despair. And why do they make shipwreck? Because they sailed forth in a ship of their own providing; because the Lord never sat at the helm; because "good conscience" was never upon the look-out; because faith was never examining the chart; and because there was no anxiety nor earnest cry, that the heavenly Pilot would steer their bark through the shoals and sandbanks which lay in their course. But, on they went recklessly and carelessly; "sure," they said, to be saved; they never could be lost; they stood so strong in Christ, they had such a scriptural creed, and were so well satisfied with the security of the ancient settlements, and eternal covenant transactions, that they were certain of going to heaven." And thus driven on by presumption, and neglecting all reproofs, warnings, precepts, and rebukes, trusting to the mere letter of truth, and ignorant of heavenly power, they made shipwreck of that very thing in which they put all their reliance—their faith. Now, these characters never had living faith, the faith of God's elect. Had they been possessed of divine faith, they would have had "a good conscience" with it. And therefore, when the apostle says, "who having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck," he does not mean to say, they had made shipwreck of real faith, but in matter of faith, concerning that which they esteemed to be faith, but which, in

reality, was daring presumption, of such faith as they had made shipwreck. That bark to which they trusted their lives, and in which they expected to sail into the harbour of endless bliss, foundered and went down, because it was not built, chartered, steered, and preserved by the hands of God himself.

Now, you whom the Lord, as you profess, has called out of the world, and out of the general religion of the day to stand by the side of the gospel truth, what know you of these weapons? Has God equipped you with his own hands? Has he girt the sword of faith by your side? Has he put this divine weapon into your hands? Examine the blade; look at its temper; mark its edge. Is it of the true Damascus sort? Has it been steeped in the waters of Jordan? Has it been framed in the heavenly armoury? What is the other weapon that accompanies it? Is it "a good conscience," a tender conscience; a living conscience, a conscience that trembles at God's word? We cannot often see our faith, but we can sometimes see our conscience. We cannot always rejoice in the Lord, but we can see whether we fear his great name. We cannot always triumph over our enemies, but we can sometimes observe whether there is a sentinel upon the look-out. Thus, if you want to know whether you have faith, look at faith's companion, see what faith is attended by, and if you find not "a good conscience," write death upon your religion. Throw away your sword; it is useless; it is of human manufacture; it will break in pieces when you have to encounter your enemy, the king of terrors; God's lightnings will shiver it then. But if the Lord has given you "a good conscience," a tender conscience, a pure conscience, he will strengthen your arm to fight "the good fight of faith." You will often think your sword is so short, and your arm so weak that you cannot fight the Lord's battles. But if he has given you "a good conscience," a conscience tender in his fear, he has put into your hands the sword of faith, and he will one day manifest it clearly, that he has himself equipped you with it, by giving you victory over all your foes. Oh, may the Lord raise up in our hearts, some sweet testimony, that we have "a good conscience," and then we shall have this blessed consolation, that concerning faith we shall not make shipwreck.

## Faith, Hope, and Love

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, August 25, 1846

"Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." 1 Thessalonians 1:3

I cannot but admire the affection and tenderness that breathe through the epistles of the Apostle Paul; and especially in those to the church of God at Thessalonica. Largely had "the God of all grace" bestowed the gift of love on his servant Paul; and largely do we see this grace manifested in every epistle that flowed from his inspired pen. But what drew this affection and tenderness forth? It lay in his bosom as the gift of God; but it was drawn forth by the grace that he saw manifested in the Lord's people. This is the case wherever love to the brethren dwells in the heart. Immediately that the image of Christ is seen in another, love spontaneously flows forth. Immediately that we believe there is grace in any person with whom we are brought into contact, a union is felt which love cements. It was so with the Apostle Paul. What drew out of his bosom the affectionate expressions to the church of God at Thessalonica, which we read in these epistles? He himself shall tell us: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." (1 Thess. 1:4.) He knew in his soul that they belonged to the election of grace. And what gave him that knowledge? Had he been up into heaven, and there seen their names recorded in the Book of Life? Had a bright messenger from the Lord of hosts appeared, and told him that the parties to whom he was writing were among God's elect family? It was by no such supernatural revelation that he knew those to whom he was writing to be the children of God. He himself, in this epistle, tells us whence his knowledge sprang: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The Lord had sent him to preach the gospel among them; they had received the word from his lips, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God,

which effectually worketh also in them that believe." (2:13.) They "had turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1:9, 10) They had "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost," (1:6); and became "followers of the churches of God, which in Judea were in Christ Jesus." (2:14.)

It was these things which drew forth the tender affection of his bosom towards them. It was because they were thus taught and blessed that he felt soul union to, and soul communion with them. And it was a feeling persuasion of what God had done for their souls, that drew forth these tender and affectionate expressions of his love to them. In consequence of this love, he tells them that he "gave thanks to God always for them all, making mention of them in his prayers." No sooner did he bow his knee before the Lord, than the churches among whom he had gone ministering came before his eyes, and fell warm upon his heart; and thus he was led—not as a matter of duty or privilege, but by the blessed Spirit laying them upon his conscience, and drawing forth the tender affections of his heart toward them—to make mention of them in his prayers before the throne of grace. And this is the only prayer for others that the Lord really indites. Persons have said to me sometimes, 'Remember me in your prayers.' I have answered, or could have answered them, 'I often cannot pray for myself, and how am I to pray for you?' But as when the Lord lays our personal wants upon our conscience, we lay them before his footstool, so when the Lord brings those whom we love in the Spirit upon our heart, and raises up in our souls a feeling of affection toward them, we pray also for them—not as a matter of duty, nor because they have asked us to pray for them; but it springs up out of our souls, as the spontaneous presentation of our petitions on their behalf. And no other prayer but this, for ourselves or for others, will bring an answer.

There were *three* things mentioned in the text, which the apostle specially remembered; three things that dwelt more particularly upon his mind, and were laid more specially upon his heart:

"Remembering without ceasing your *work of faith*, and *labour of love*, and *patience of hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

You will observe, it was not their *faith*, nor their *love*, nor their *hope*, which rested upon the apostle's mind; but it was the *work* of their faith, the *labour* of their love, and the *patience* of their hope; these being the operations of these three Christian graces, as well as their outward marks, and their inward fruits.

With God's blessing, then, this evening, I shall endeavour, as the Lord may enable me, to trace out these three distinct things in the experience of God's living family—the *work of faith*, the *labour of love*, and the *patience of hope*. And sure I am, if the Lord has bestowed upon us these three graces—faith, hope, and love—we shall find that *faith* has a work, *love* a labour, and *hope* a patience. And if we can find faith, and its attendant work—love, and its accompanying labour—and hope, and its handmaid, patience—we shall have some testimony that indeed we are possessed, spiritually and experimentally, of these three Christian graces.

I.—Until the Lord is pleased to begin a work of grace upon a sinner's conscience, he has no faith. This is the express testimony of God. "Children in whom is no faith." (Deut. 32:20.) "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12:39, 40.) So that, whilst man is in nature's darkness and in nature's death, he has not one grain of living faith in his soul.

But when the soul is divinely quickened, faith is communicated. The blessed Spirit moves upon the heart, and raises up his heavenly fruits and graces. They may be, and indeed usually are, very weak, and perhaps, to the eye of a person himself, scarcely perceptible. But just as a child is born perfect in all its limbs, though weak and infantile; and when the child becomes a man,

there is no additional number, yet each has gained strength and grown up into maturity; so also is it in the kingdom of grace. There is no subsequent addition to the gifts and graces of God's Spirit. The "new man" is perfect in all its parts and all its members; but there is a growth of them—a going on to adult manhood, to Christian maturity. Thus, in the first work of grace upon the soul, the blessed Spirit raises up spiritual faith; as we read, "It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9.) It springs out of the express operation of God the Spirit upon the heart. It is altogether a spiritual, supernatural gift. It dwells in the hearts of God's family alone. But no sooner does faith spring up, under the operation of God the Spirit, in the heart of a sinner, than there is a "work" for that faith to do; immediately that faith is created, it begins to work. Just as when a child comes into the world, it begins to breathe; and the breathing of the child is not only the first mark of life, but it goes on breathing through life, till with life breath ceases; so whenever there is living faith raised up in the soul, immediately faith begins to work, and that faith never ceases to work till it is changed into the blissful vision of the Son of God as he is.

But what work does faith perform? The "work of faith" is, to believe God's word. But what part of God's word? The whole Bible? the complete revelation of divine truth? No; faith does not that. Faith only believes what God is pleased to communicate with his own divine power to the soul. If you have faith, you do not at once receive all God's truth; you cannot take your Bible, and read chapter after chapter, and exercise faith upon all that meets your eye. If you could, it would prove your faith to be the faith of nature, and of the flesh. But the faith which is God's gift, and springs from divine operation, only believes, credits, acts upon, and works towards that which God himself is pleased to drop with power into the heart. We see this exemplified in the case of Abraham. Abraham is called in Scripture, "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11); and his faith is recorded in the word of God as a pattern to which all true faith must be conformed. But did not Abraham's faith act only upon that which God spoke to his soul? The Lord gave him a promise that he

should have a son. This word was spoken by the Lord's own mouth to Abraham's heart; and upon that Abraham's faith fixed. It did not roam up and down I know not where. It did not rove here, there, and everywhere, 'taking God at his word' (as it is called) *here*, and 'taking God at his word' *there*, which, in fact, is not taking God at his word at all. But it fixed upon a definite promise; it acted upon a word which God himself had spoken with his own mouth into Abraham's soul. And you will find, if you watch the actings of faith in your conscience, so far as you are possessed of that grace, that the "work of your faith" is, to believe what is made manifest in the light of the Spirit's teaching and the life of the Spirit's operations in your soul. The experience of every child of God gives the lie to that doctrine, that faith takes God generally at his word; for if faith could take God at his word, whence arise doubts and fears? What makes the poor soul sink under legal terrors? Why does he grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if he had no eyes? Whence come castings down? Whence springs the burden of guilt upon the conscience? Whence arise secret troubles? Why does he not believe the promises? Why does he not take Christ at his word? Why does he not apply his atoning blood to his conscience, and embrace his Person in the arms of living faith? He cannot do it; and the reason is, because faith is fixed—if I may use the expression, it is *pinned down* to what God himself is pleased to unfold to the heart in the light and life of the Spirit's teachings. Thus, there is faith in the heart of the trembling sinner, when the Lord is first pleased to arraign him at the bar of justice. There is faith then in his heart; and that faith firmly credits those truths which the Spirit bears witness to in his conscience. God's justice, that can "by no means clear the guilty;" the holiness and purity of his character that must needs hate and punish iniquity; the certainty of eternal torment against those that die in their sins; the necessity of a living faith in the Redeemer to save the soul from wrath and hell—many of the Lord's people are deeply convinced of these eternal truths, and their faith fixes upon and holds them with firm grasp, because they see them in the light of the Spirit's operation. This is a part of "the work of faith." By this you may try whether you have faith. If you can take God at his word,

believe everything you read, lay hold of every promise, credit every truth, and claim everything God has pledged himself to give to his people, yours is a dead faith; it does not spring from divine operation; it is natural faith, which merely credits what God has said in his word, and believes in Christ as a man believes in Caesar. But if the Lord has created, by a powerful work upon your conscience, living faith, you can only believe just what shines into your soul in the light of the Spirit's teachings, and is experienced in the life of the Spirit's operation. This may at present be very little, but then your faith will work upon that little and will be kept believing it, feeling it, and falling under the power of it, as being firmly convinced it is God's truth. All your feelings will work round this centre, and all the desires of your heart, so far as they are spiritual, will run in this one definite channel.

But after a time the Lord is pleased to enlarge his people's faith. We read, "Your faith groweth exceedingly." (2 Thess. 1:3.) There is then a growth of faith. Just as in nature, the babe's hand is not of the same strength, or of the same dimensions as the hand of the man; yet there is every finger and every nail the same; and as the babe grows, the hand grows and expands till with manly strength it grasps larger objects; and not only lays hold of them strongly, but retains them firmly; so with the grace of faith in the man's heart; it enlarges and grows till it lays hold of larger objects, and retains them with a firmer grasp. Thus, when the Lord has seen fit to exercise his people sufficiently with convictions of sin, a sense of guilt, with burdens that lie heavily upon a tender conscience, with fears of death and hell, with sinkings of soul in the prospect of eternity, and all those terrors that more or less alarm God's people, he is pleased to bring a blessed Saviour before their eyes, and give them some heavenly shinings-in of the glorious Person, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness of this Mediator at God's right hand. The eyes of the understanding are now enlightened to see his glorious Person; the affections of the heart are drawn forth to love him as the "altogether lovely;" and thus faith is strengthened by the power of God to receive this precious Saviour, as "of God made

unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." The work of faith is the same as before; but it acts upon different objects. But even here there are differences. Some may have the pardon of sin manifested very conspicuously; others may have "the blood of sprinkling" applied very powerfully; and others shall hear the voice of God speaking to their souls with sweet unction and savour. But these manifestations shall not be equally strong in every case. Some shall have glimpses, whilst others have a fuller view; some shall have glances, whilst others enjoy a clear manifestation; some shall have a sight of the glory of Christ as a risen Saviour, and others shall have a view of the grace of Christ as a suffering Saviour. It shall in some cases last a few moments, in another a few hours, in another a few days, in another with more or less power a few weeks, or even months. But in all it springs out of the blessed Spirit fulfilling his covenant office, in taking of the things of Christ, manifesting and unfolding them to the soul, and raising up living faith, whereby a precious Jesus is laid hold of, and brought into the heart with divine unction and power.

But no sooner has faith thus embraced a living Lord than it has "a work" to do. And what is this work? Why, immediately it begins to find opposition, contradiction, difficulties, exercises, and perplexities; and it is the work of faith to struggle against these oppositions, difficulties, and perplexities—to "live and labour" under them. For instance: no sooner is faith divinely raised up in the heart, than *unbelief* will begin to manifest itself. You did not know what an unbelieving heart you had, before the Lord was pleased to bring light and life into your soul. It was there—in fact, there was nothing but one mass of it; but its lustings, its heavings, its actings, and all those subtle workings which you have since found, were then hidden from your view. But no sooner does living faith begin to work in a sinner's conscience than unbelief is brought to light, and its tumultuous heavings are clearly seen and painfully felt. In many cases too, *infidelity* is stirred up. Those who never before doubted the inspiration of the Scriptures are troubled with doubts about it now. Those who never doubted the being of God, the deity of Christ, the mystery

of the Trinity, or any of the glorious doctrines of the gospel, are often tried and exercised with infidel suspicions now. But where the Lord has implanted faith in the soul, "the work of faith" is to struggle against them, and by God's help and strength finally to get the victory over them.

By this we may know whether we have living faith in our souls. Dead faith never breathes, never moves, brings nothing in, carries nothing out. Dead faith has no work accompanying it. It is like a toy watch that we sometimes see given to a child, which it hangs round its neck, and fancies to be real. There is the painted dial and the gilded hands; but there are no works within the case. Such is the faith of the dead professor. There is the dial; there are the hours clearly marked; there are the hands plainly pointing; but they never turn round, never show the time of day. And why? Because there are no works within. There is no secret spring in their heart, no wheel within wheel to cause the hands to turn. But wherever there is living faith in the soul, there will be the "work of faith" in the conscience—the strugglings, heavings, actings, and breathings of the believing heart Godward.

But, besides this, *Satan will ever tempt* a living soul. This restless enemy will ever try to seduce or harass the mind where he sees living faith in exercise. But the "work of faith" is to resist and oppose him, and finally, in God's strength, to get the victory over him.

*Sin*, too, will be continually tempting, lusts perpetually alluring, self-righteousness constantly exalting, pride unceasingly puffing, and hypocrisy from time to time entangling. But "the work of faith" is, in God's strength, to labour and struggle against them all. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." (Heb. 12:4.)

And then, there is *the world*, sometimes with its anxieties and cares, and at others with its charms, all seeking to draw the soul away from the strait and narrow path. But the "work of faith" is to struggle and fight, and in God's strength to overcome them all. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is

the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5.)

But what so perplexes many of God's people is, to feel these intense struggles. They think that faith, if it were of the right kind, would be always looking to Jesus, always believing God's word, always enjoying sweet communion with the "Man of sorrows," always maintaining a firm, unyielding superiority over the world, the flesh, and the devil. And there are many professors, yea, ministers, who tell them it is, or it should be so. Thus, when the child of God feels in his soul such strugglings to and fro, such heavings, such workings, such contradictions, such perplexities, such mysterious paradoxes, he often concludes against himself that he is not possessed of the living faith of God's elect. For he argues, 'If I were possessed of true faith, I should not be thus.' But just as when the twins struggled in the womb of Rebekah, it was a proof that she had living children within her; so the very strugglings, heavings, gaspings, and breathings which living souls experience afford a plain proof that the work of God is going on in their hearts; that they are possessed of that living faith which will bring them safe through all, and land them in eternal glory.

II.—"*And labour of love.*" What the apostle fixed his eye upon was, not the profession nor the pretension of love, but the "labour" by which love is accompanied. Wherever there is faith there will be a proportionate measure of love, for faith works by it. The Lord's people in their early days have a measure of heavenly love. Though perhaps they cannot say that Jesus is theirs; though they dare not declare they shall certainly go to heaven when they die; though they sometimes cannot even assert that the work of grace is really begun upon their souls; yet there is love manifested in them to God's word, God's people, God's servants, and God's truth. There is in them, in their weakest and tenderest days, a separation from the world, a casting-in of their lot amongst the people of God, a going-out in the tenderness of their heart and affection towards them. We see

this in Ruth: though she was a poor heathen idolatress, no sooner was her heart touched by the finger of God, than she clave to Naomi.

But divine love can only spring from the teachings and operations of God upon the heart. Our "carnal mind is enmity against God"—nothing but implacable, irreconcilable enmity. But when the Lord is pleased to make himself in some measure known to the soul; when he is pleased, in some degree, to unveil his lovely face, and to give a discovery of his grace and glory—immediately love springs up. He is so lovely an object! As the Bride says, he is "altogether lovely." His beauty is so surpassing, his grace so rich, his mercy so free—all that he is and has is so unspeakably glorious—that no sooner does he unveil his lovely face, than he wins over all the love of the heart, takes possession of the bosom, and draws every affection of the soul to centre wholly and solely in himself.

But no sooner is love felt towards a precious Redeemer, towards his people, and towards his truth, than this love has "a labour" to perform. Like the grace of faith, it does not lie idle in the bosom. It is not merely upon the lips, and upon the tongue, but it has an abiding place in the heart; and it is this labour which manifests its reality, and proves its genuine possession.

Just, then, in the same way as *faith* was tried by *unbelief*, its opposite—so is *love* tried by *enmity*, its opposite. Love is of spiritual birth, of divine origin, a citizen of a heavenly country; and it comes down from the Father of lights, the God of love, to dwell in a sinner's breast. But what does it meet there? It meets there with the enmity of the carnal mind—enmity against God and his Christ, enmity against everything that love delights to embrace. Can these two antagonists meet in a sinner's heart without mortal combat? Christ, on the one hand, communicates love; Belial, on the other, stirs up enmity. Can love, then, heaven's gift—and enmity, hell's flame—meet together in a sinner's breast, without engaging hand to hand in deadly strife? He that knows something of the wretched enmity of his heart

against God and godliness, knows what a painful combat there is within. Is it not surprising to you sometimes to feel the enmity of the carnal mind against God—to find the most infernal blasphemies sometimes shoot through your mind, as with a flash of lightning? And have not these darts from hell sometimes so horrified you, that you would desire to plunge your thoughts into anything to get them out of your mind? Upon your knees they have rushed in, and they have stopped your prayer; in the pew, as you sat to hear God's word, in they came, and stopped everything you were hearing to your soul's profit; at the very table of the Lord, they have flooded in, and destroyed all the comfort that you longed to experience. Yet there was that in your bosom which laboured against them; there was that in your breast which struggled, as burdened by an intolerable load; there was that in your soul which resisted them, and hated them, and cried unto God, "O wretched man that I am!" This was the "labour of love." There was that divine principle struggling against this infernal enmity—the pure water of life seeking to quench the very flame of hell in your carnal mind.

Love will sometimes seem to lie dormant in the heart. And this often tries the Lord's people, that their love is as if asleep. But let anything be spoken against God—how this love is then drawn forth! The wife, sometimes, may not think of her husband for hours; but let him be spoken against, and at once her love becomes manifest. The child may be for hours asleep in the cradle, and the mother be so engaged in her occupation as scarcely even to think of her babe; but let the infant cry, instantaneously maternal love flows forth. We may have lost sight of a dear friend for weeks, and may scarcely even think of him; but let him come into our presence, let our hearts burn with mutual interest in talking of Jesus and his precious truth, and our love is instantaneously kindled. So the grace of love often seems to lie dormant in the bosom; but let something arise to draw it out, and instantaneously it bursts forth.

But love has its "labour." It has to maintain its hold; it has to keep its position in spite of all the enmity that dwells in the carnal

mind.

So it is, also, with *love to God's people*. If the Lord has really begotten your soul unto eternal life, you love the Lord's family; you have a real affection for his saints; and sometimes they are laid upon your heart, and you feel the goings-out of kindness and sympathy towards them. But is it never interrupted? Are there never envious feelings? Is there no jealousy ever at work? Are there no suspicions? Is there no infernal enmity felt? Are there not in your breast, at times, suspicion and dislike toward your nearest and dearest friends, whom you love for the Lord's sake? Now, these call forth the "labour of love." Love has to labour under and against this jealousy, this enmity, these suspicions, these surmises, these hard thoughts and inward dislike. If there be true love to God's people, it will not be quenched by the enmity, jealousy, and carnality of our heart. It will spring up again and again; it will "live and labour" under this and every other load.

If it were not so, love would soon be altogether lost. If the Lord did not, from day to day, revive our love to him and to his saints, our hearts, like a hot iron taken from the fire, would grow gradually colder and colder, till at last every sensation of warmth would be completely extinct. But the Lord in mercy revives the soul. He in mercy rekindles the flame of affection towards himself, towards his people, and towards his truth. But when love is rekindled, the "labour of love" begins. It is in grace as in nature. Man labours all day, and goes home to his bed at night, and there he is refreshed with sleep: but in the morning he rises, and goes out to labour again until the evening. While he is asleep, he is not labouring; but no sooner is he awake, than labour commences. So with love. There are seasons when love lies asleep in the breast; and when love is asleep, there is no labour for the hands of love to perform. But when love is awakened out of its sleep, it goes once more forth to labour until the evening. It has to labour with those things that struggle against it; and by the fruits of this labour it is clearly manifested as the work of God upon the soul.

Has not your mind sometimes been tried whether you have any love to Jesus at all? Has not your heart at times become so cold, so lifeless, so stupid, so unfeeling, as though there were not one spark remaining? And has not your love to God's people, and your love to God's truth, sometimes sunk to so low an ebb, that you feared you never had any real love at all? But yet it came again. There was some communication of grace to your soul to draw forth the goings-out of affection towards a living Lord, and some breathings of love towards the Lord's living people; as the apostle says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." (Phil. 4:10.)

Thus love has its labour. And what a mercy it is that love has such a labour to perform! If you and I, and the people of God, were to know nothing of this inward opposition, these inward strugglings, these inward perplexities, these inward exercises, we might appear to have much love to God's people, when in reality there was not one grain of it. It is thus that the Lord's people are distinguished from mere professors of religion. They are all love in pretension, all love in lip, but there is no "labour of love" in their hearts; there are no changes, no exercises, no fluctuations, no strugglings of love in their bosom to maintain its hold upon God and his truth: all outside, all pretence, all profession—no inward love labouring, panting, and gasping for breath.

III.—"*And patience of hope.*" The grace of hope is that third grace in living union with faith and love in the heart of God's people—"the anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." But what does hope take its rise from? Testimonies from God; evidences of interest in the love and blood of the Lamb; manifestations of mercy to the soul; promises applied with power; the witness of the Spirit to our spirit that we are born of God; believing and feeling the work of grace has been begun, and is going on in the heart; the revivings of God's presence, and refreshing dew and unction of his grace, the meltings of the soul at his feet, and the breakings in of the

Lord of life and glory upon the heart—these things lie at the foundation of a "good hope through grace." Not because you are members of a gospel church; not because you worship at a certain chapel; not because you have received certain doctrines; not because your life is outwardly consistent with the word of God; not because you pray, and read the Bible, and perform a number of duties;—such never can be the foundations of "a hope that maketh not ashamed." The only solid foundation of a gospel hope is, testimonies from God, marks of his favour, the application of blood to the conscience, meltings of spirit under the sweet whisperings of divine love, and a well-grounded persuasion that the work of grace with power has been begun in the conscience.

But wherever this hope is, there will be "patience" attending it. Love has its labour, faith has its work, hope has its patience. But what is meant by the expression "patience?" It means *endurance*; as though hope had to endure, faith to work, and love to labour. Hope stays at home, patiently enduring. If I may use the figure—faith is the active husband who goes out to work with his hands; hope is the suffering wife, who lies upon the bed patiently enduring pain. By this patience, hope in the sinner's soul is manifested. Just in the same way as faith has to work against unbelief, and love to labour against enmity, so hope has to endure every thing that contradicts it, and that would, but for the grace of God, effectually crush it. Would unbelief, without the power of God, effectually crush faith? Would enmity, without the power of God, utterly extinguish love? So would despair strangle hope in its very cradle, unless sustained by the mighty power of God. Each of these graces in the soul has then its separate antagonist. Unbelief fights hand to hand with faith; enmity foot to foot with love; and despair front to front with hope. And as the strength of faith is manifested by the power with which it fights against unbelief, and the strength of love is manifested by the power with which it labours against enmity; so the strength of hope is manifested by the power with which it endures the contest with despair.

But what causes despair or despondency in the sinner's soul? Is it

not because he finds so much in himself that is utterly opposed to God and godliness? If there were no inward adulteries, no secret idolatries, no darkness of mind, no deadness of soul, no hardness of heart, no tempting devil, no alluring world, no body of sin and death—you would not feel despondency set in upon you as a flood. But this is it which causes despondency in a feeling soul—to find in himself so much of everything that is opposite to the work of God upon the heart; so much of everything that is the very opposite to what a saint desires to be, and what he believes every saint should be. But as long as he can see his signs, as long as he can feel the power of God's testimonies, as long as he can believe he is treading in the footsteps of the flock, hope maintains its hold. But no sooner does the Lord hide his face, testimonies sink out of sight, evidences give way, and the evils of his fallen nature manifest themselves, than despondency begins to work. It must be so. If I had no sinful heart, no unbelief, no infidelity, no inward adultery or idolatry, no pride, no hypocrisy, no covetousness, no powerful lusts, no boiling corruptions, no harassing enemy, no alluring world, no wicked heart, why need I despond? But it is because there is such opposition to vital godliness in the sinner's heart, because there is so much in him that he knows and feels to be contrary to grace, and the work of grace, that makes him doubt.

But these very things call forth hope's peculiar work—to *endure*. It is the "patience of hope" that proves its reality and genuineness. Hope does not go forward fighting and cutting its way. Hope is like a quiet sufferer, patiently bearing what comes upon it. Hope is manifested in enduring, as faith is manifested in acting. For instance: when the Lord hides his face, when testimonies sink out of sight, when signs are not seen, when Satan tempts, when the work of grace upon the soul seems to be all obscured, and in consequence a feeling despondency begins to set in, then the "patience of hope" is needed to endure all things—not to give way, but to maintain its hold. It acts in the same way, according to the beautiful figure of Paul, as the anchor holds the ship. What is the main value, the chief requisite in the cable that holds the anchor? Is it not endurance? The cable does

nothing: it simply endures. It does not make a great ado in the water; its only good quality (the only quality wanted in it) is strength to endure, not to break. When the waves rise, the billows beat, the storm blows, and the tide runs strongly, then the work of the cable is not to part from the anchor, not to break, but firmly to maintain the hold it has once taken. And thus with the anchor too. It does nothing, and is wanted to do nothing. To hold fast is all its work and all its excellence. Thus it is with a hope in a sinner's breast. Has the Lord ever shown himself gracious unto him? Has the Lord ever made himself precious to his soul? ever dropped a testimony into his conscience? ever spoken with power to his heart? Has his soul ever felt the Spirit inwardly testifying that he is one of God's people? Then his hope is manifested by enduring patiently everything that is brought against it to crush it, and, if God did not keep, utterly to destroy it.

If this be the mark and stamp which the Holy Ghost has put upon "hope," what shall we say of the hope that knows no changes, endures no trials, passes through no exercises, suffers no strains?

Have I this evening found out any case? put my fingers into any heart? touched any secret spring in a sinner's conscience? There may be those here who are ever doubting, doubting, doubting, whether a work of grace is yet begun upon their souls. They know they must have faith, hope, and love, if ever they are to be with Christ in glory. But they are exercised in their minds whether they are in possession of these three graces. And this chiefly tries them, that their faith is not ever in exercise, that their love is not ever flowing forth, that their hope is not continually anchoring within the veil, and bringing out therefrom sweet manifestations into their conscience. But you perhaps have mistaken its nature. If you expect to have faith, hope, and love at your pleasure, and always stationary, and at one point, you have mistaken the matter; this is not the faith of God's giving, the love of God's shedding abroad, nor the hope of God's communicating. Wherever there is true faith, there will be a work for it to do; wherever there is heavenly love, there will be labour

accompanying it; wherever genuine hope, there will be patience waiting upon it.

Thus, in the heart of a poor broken down sinner, there is more true faith, more real hope, and more genuine love, than in all the dead professors, with all their assurance, put together. They have faith, such as it is, but it has no work; they have love, such as it is, but it has no labour; they have hope, such as it is, but it has no patience. But the Lord's family, in whose hearts these three sister graces dwell, and round whose souls the Lord has entwined this threefold cord that shall not be quickly broken, will find, that in proportion to faith, will be its work; in proportion to love, will be its labour; and in proportion to hope, will be its patience. So that my friends, you are not to expect to arrive at a state where faith has no work, love no labour, hope no patience. Could you or I get there, it would prove that our faith, love, and hope were a delusion. Rather expect the contrary. Is your faith to grow? You will have work growing in correspondence with it. Is your love to be enlarged? You will have more labour accompanying it. Is your hope to be strengthened? You will have more to endure than before. It is in grace as in nature. The child, the boy, the youth, does not perform the work of a strong healthy man. The boy does *his* work, the youth *his* work, and the man *his* work; and the work of each is proportioned to the strength of each. Who would think of setting a boy or a youth to do the work of a man? He has not power to do it if set him. So it is spiritually, with respect to faith in a sinner's bosom. Weak faith cannot do strong faith's work; weak love cannot labour as strong love labours; and weak hope has not the endurance and patience of strong hope. So that, if you desire the Lord to carry on his work in your heart with power, and bring forth these blessed graces in your soul, never expect that you will be brought into a state where your faith will be so easy, so pleasant, and so delightful as to have no work to do; your love so heavenly, so full, and so glorious, as to have no labour; and your hope so strong and so vigorous as to have no patience. No rather, the more faith you have, the more opposition, the more difficulty, the more struggling against it, and the more faith will have to work against them; the more love you

have, the more manifestation of the inward evil of your heart, the more workings of internal enmity, and the more labour of love against these opposing evils; and the stronger your hope is, the more you will have need of patience and endurance to bear the opposition that will rise up against it.

Is not this true in experience? I know it is contrary to all that we once thought of as religion. I know it is contrary to all that is generally considered as religion. Such faith as this will never meet with acceptance, except amongst the tried family of God; such love as this will never be hailed with universal approbation; such hope as this will never be received with a shout of applause by dead professors. But the Lord's own people, who have no more vital religion than God is pleased to work with divine power in their souls, know from experience—sometimes painful, sometimes pleasurable—that they never had a grain of faith without an accompanying work for faith to perform; never a spark of love, without love having a labour and never a grain of hope, without that hope having much to endure. It is "the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope," which prove the genuineness of these graces. And the Lord who has given them, will one day crown their happy possessor with eternal glory.

## **The Faith and Spiritual Baptism of God's Children**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, February 23, 1859

"For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:26, 27

I wish I could say so. Looking around upon this congregation this morning, would to God I could say with any regard to truth and consistency, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But can I say so, taking the utmost stretch of what is called charity, taking the most favourable view of the case, could I dare to say of you all, "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"? Would not the lives of many of you give a point-blank contradiction to such a statement? Nor of a congregation like mine, so large, comparatively speaking, could we even entertain a hope that many were the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. But I am glad to see you here, so many of you, this morning, under the sound of truth. No one knows what God may still have in reserve for your souls. You young people, you who make no profession, I know not, you know not, what God may have in reserve for you in his secret purposes; therefore, I am glad that so many of you should come under the sound of the truth. It may be that God will give that truth an edge and entrance into your heart. But it is impossible for any man who fears God, and has a conscience made tender, so to mix good and evil, so to confound the wheat and the tares, as to say that all his congregation are the children of God. But, is it your desire, the breathing of your soul, the earnest longing wish of your heart to have a testimony that shall stand by you in the hour and day of sickness and death that you are one of those favoured ones—the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus? The Lord enable me this morning to touch upon the real case, and so to describe what his grace does in the heart of a sinner that you may have some sweet evidence for yourselves—you that fear God—that you are

the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

In opening up the words of our text I shall

*First, as the Lord may enable me, show,—How we become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

*Secondly, What is the result of this, a being baptized with Christ.*

*Thirdly, What follows upon that, the putting on of Christ.*

Now we are not to suppose that we become for the first time children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The apostle does not say so,—he does not say "ye were," but "ye are," the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. There is a difference between the two expressions. The child of God, viewed with the spiritual eye, never was anything else but a child of God. How we read by the pen of Paul, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. 2:14.) Here they are spoken of as the children for whom Christ took flesh and blood. Therefore, they were children before any of them were called by grace, and how many of these children are yet unborn, lying in the womb of time, to be brought forth into actual being, and others of these children dead in trespasses and sins to be brought forth and manifested as the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me!" (Isa. 8:18.) They were given him to be the children of God in eternity, before all worlds, and united to him as the members of his mystical body, hence ye *are* saints; not to make you such. Here is the blessedness, that so far as we are the children of God we are so from all eternity by virtue of a union with Christ, our living head. But so far as a sensible realization of it is concerned, any bringing forth in a manifested way, the truth to our hearts in time, to this the Apostle refers in our text, "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." For these children, to whom he thus speaks in these comforting strains, might have had doubts and fears as to the reality of the case. They might have looked up to

their heavenly Father, and beheld his glory and majesty, his holiness and righteousness, and then, looking upon themselves, they might have seen how far they were off that righteousness: and thus they might have experienced a doubt as to whether they were the children of God or no. They might have been comparing themselves with him, and have said,—“If he is my Father and Friend, surely I shall bear some resemblance to him.” They could not enjoy that heavenly relationship. The Holy Ghost had not tuned their hearts to sing the note of praise, nor dropped the spirit of adoption into their soul, whereby they could cry “Abba, Father.” The words might fall on their tongue, but they were unable to look up, drop into his hands, and lay at his feet and cry “Abba, Father.” So he encourages them, though they could not get beyond their doubts and fears, nor could they extricate themselves from the bondage of sin: yet if they believed in Christ Jesus, if they had a living faith in him, that was the ground of their being manifested the children of God, and they were to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, for in him they were the children of God.

With God's blessing we shall go a little deeper into the subject, and see what it is to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. No one can realize at first what God is doing in his soul by his word and grace. When the Lord is at work by the law convincing the sinner of his sins, bringing him to the bar, arresting him before his awful tribunal, how can he believe that God is his Father and Friend? and how can he believe that this is a work of grace upon his heart? He cannot see it in the beginning of the work, he feels sin too keenly and the law too heavily to be enabled to believe it is a work of grace. I have no faith in a man, who, at the time he is under conviction, can cry out he is a child of God. His sins, the law, Satan, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the distresses of his mind, the darkness of his soul,—all these stand as so many witnesses against him; nor is it till after a many bitter struggle, and many a hearty groan, and many a seeking the Lord's face—night and day,—that the Lord sweetly resolves the doubt, and brings peace into the conscience, and makes it known that he is a child of God. For the most part he is going the wrong way to work; he tries to establish his own righteousness, he wants to

become truly religious: to break off old sins, to bring that which God abhors to recommend himself to the favour of God by walking in the right ways; but the Lord resists him. He is a consuming fire, not to be approached in this way. To approach God with creature obedience is to draw down the frown of his solemn displeasure. It is right, because the Lord is showing him the evil of sin; but it is the wrong way to get peace. It is the right way, because he should be humble, because he should be convinced of his being an outcast, and of the bitterness of sin; but it is wrong to come before God with his own righteousness and work, and thereby seek to recommend himself to the favour of God. For instance, here is a hovel, and it is intended to build upon its site a mansion. Well, it is right to remove the old building, to take away the old stones, to dig out the soil, to lay the foundation, but that is not the building. If, when all were removed, the builder were to say, "Here is the building," we should say, "He is wrong." It is right to take away the old stones, and put new ones in their place; to remove the old timbers, and to put new wood in their room; to make a good foundation for the building to stand upon; but that is not the building. So in a spiritual sense it is right to know grief and distress of mind, to give up your own righteousness, to be condemned by the law, to experience the bitterness of sin; but wrong if thereby you are seeking to set up salvation. Therefore it is right in one way, but it is wrong in another. So the child of God, though he may be doing that which is perfectly right in one sense, yet in another he may be doing that which is perfectly wrong. It is right to be wounded, yet it is right to be healed. It is right to know the bitterness of sin, but it is right also to know the sweetness of pardon. It is right to tremble, but it is right to be bold. It is right to mourn over sin, but it is right also to rejoice at different times, as the Lord may be pleased to enable you; you who are so distressed in your mind, suffering under the lashes of your conscience, it is all right; but it is wrong for you to hang upon these things, and think of establishing thereby a plea before God. The Apostle did not say we are all the children of God by obedience to the law, by being distressed on account of our transgressions, but "by faith in Christ Jesus." But what man really believes in Christ Jesus by

living faith, unless convinced of unbelief? Oh! the lessons we are to learn inwardly, feelingly, and experimentally! What a deal of false faith has to be cleared out of our heart! How this false faith of ours, these vain expectations, these empty professions, this rubbish has all to be swept out and carried away to the Valley of Hinnom, and there left to rot and perish. Therefore, no man has a living faith in the Lord—the Lamb—who is not convinced of unbelief. That is the work of the Lord—the Lamb. Some of you may be under that work now: you would believe, but cannot; you try to believe, but find you are powerless; you see precious things in the word, but what are they to you except you can grasp them? You are learning your unbelief, your lifelessness, and your sin and misery.

Now, the Lord, when he has taught you these lessons, will go on to teach you others. We are always learning. You may be in the lowest form, crying over your lessons, a very stupid child, scarcely knowing A from B, now and then for some neglect kept from home, and then you begin to cry and mourn and groan. But the Lord is teaching you all the while. Children naturally don't always prove the most ignorant men because when children they were stupid. Stupid children often turn out very bright geniuses. So in grace, it is not those who take up the truth most quickly that turn out the best Christians. There is line upon line, and precept upon precept. Those who make the greatest progress at the first often lose the truth altogether, and go back to their old ways. Therefore, don't write bitter things against yourself because you are very slow; it may not be the worse for you if you have to cry and shed many a tear over your hornbook, and can scarcely see a letter in the alphabet. In due time all things will be made clear to your mind. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

But by and by the Lord will begin to show you what faith in Christ Jesus is, and make it manifest that you are one of his dear children. Well, as the soul is brought down to see the fall more, and the dreadful malady of sin, and its lifeless state, so that it is ready to give up all; then the Lord makes Christ known to the soul. I don't mean to say that Christ comes into the heart of

every man as Huntington experienced him. That is so evidently. We are not all so favoured as this eminent man was. But all that experience themselves to be the children of God do so by faith in Christ Jesus, and the first glimpse of hope in the soul, the first manifestation of mercy, may be but a single ray. As we see sometimes in nature, when clouds cover the sky, there is a beam that shines through the clouds; the sun may be hidden from view, but there is a beam that shines through an opening in the clouds. So in grace, only a beam of light, only a ray of hope, may gleam through your dark mind; something, it may be, that shows you where the sun is. In nature, when you see the beam, you discover in a moment where the sun is, and you can direct your eyes to that quarter of the sky, and the reason you know where the sun is, is because you are looking where the gleam comes from. So with the soul. You may be reading the word, with your mind full of darkness and bondage, writing the most bitter things against your soul, cutting yourself off from eternal life, fancying yourself the worst hypocrite that walked God's earth, trembling to go into a place of worship, fearing to sit opposite or by the side of a child of God lest you should be the means of preventing good from coming into his soul; you may have all these fears and apprehensions, and think your case so desperate that you can scarcely believe there is any salvation for you. Well, amidst all this dejection of soul,—ah, that it might come into your hearts this morning,—a blessed ray of light comes that sheds its lustre across the dark cloud; the faith of Jesus, his adoring blood, his justifying obedience, his dying love, may burst into your soul—a sweet hope then springs up. You begin to see his suitability to your case; that he is just the Saviour your soul needs—could you get him you want no other—if you had but him you would have all. You feel there is an empty void in your soul which he can fill. You feel that miserable shrinking under a sense of your nakedness, that nothing but his justifying robe can cover. Well, then, that is not to be despised; for to despise that would be casting contempt upon a lost child of God. When the little babe comes into the world is he despised? Does not the mother hug him to her warm bosom? Do not all the family hail the new-comer? Do they take him and throw him over the fence, and say

"What has he come to mar the inheritance for? No; they hail the new-comer, and imprint a kiss on the face of the babe. Well, then, so it is in grace. Here is a child of God, just spiritually born—just come into a spiritual existence. Are we to despise him because he is unable to see things as others see them? Who is the Babylonian who will take this child and dash it against the stones? Who is to cut off this child's head, and like Herod, to slay all the children under a certain age? Surely, no one. The child is rather to be caressed, and kept warm, and nurtured till he has grown into a man. So, who is to despise a child of grace—who is to cast a babe out of the family, and say he has no right to share in the inheritance? Surely none with the heart of a child. He may be very wicked; he may be very deeply sunk in the Adam fall—but you must not cast him out if he has any faith in Christ Jesus. Have you faith in Christ Jesus? It is a great word to say, but search and see; look into the very bottom of your heart and see whether you can find faith in Christ Jesus. You may find doubt and unbelief there. There is no salvation in that. You may find gloom, despondency, and wretchedness. Hang not the salvation of your soul upon that. Can you find faith? Oh! for faith! Can you find faith in Christ Jesus there? What are you looking for? You have lost something; you want to find it. What are you looking for? Are you clear in your own mind as to what you are looking for? Here is a thing lost in a shop or on a farm; something lost; it must be found. Such a thing is lost. All set about looking for it. One says to another, "Do you know what it is that is lost. Could you recognise it? Should you know it if it was brought to light?" Well, then, what is to be found in a spiritual sense? Faith in the heart. Do you know what it is in the feeling experience of it? Has God the Spirit ever blessed you with a single grain or particle of faith in Christ Jesus? *Do you believe that you ever did believe?* There is weight in the remark; I repeat it. *Do you believe that you ever did believe?* You may not believe now. It may be your mind is dark—faith is not in exercise. But can you believe that there was a time when you did believe? for upon faith hangs everything. Upon faith hang the promises, for by faith it is that we are enabled to believe them. Have you felt its power in your soul and believed? Have you seen Jesus by faith? Have you

enjoyed a sweet discovery of his beauty and blessedness, and had a testimony in this, the Spirit bearing witness that then and there you believed in Christ Jesus. Now, if you have got this in your heart you have got something in your heart in which you can trust. Does not the wife know whether she has the wedding ring on or not? Suppose she were to lose the wedding ring—the ring of union between a man and his wife—would she not look for it till she had found it? Well, so with the soul. Have you the wedding ring on your soul? Can you say which was the day when you were married to the Lord? When did he put the ring of eternal love upon your soul, and espouse you to himself? But you have lost the wedding ring. Search then till you find it. See whether you can realize the time, day, hour, or moment when you were married to Jesus—to be his for life and death, time and eternity, weal or woe. Ah! to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus! and what a mercy it is that it is by faith in Christ Jesus! That is all that is required. Faith in Christ Jesus. You say, "What a sinner I am." You are, and you never will be anything else. But you say, "Oh! my heart is so wicked!" Yes, it is wicked, and ten thousand times more wicked than you know anything at all about. So am I. So are all. It was no slight fall in Adam. It injured every member, and scarred every bone in the skin. What a height it was to fall from! Then you are a sinner, face it, look at it, examine it. Do not be afraid of it. It is a fact, whether you believe it or not, that you are a sinner, and that before a holy God. Face the matter. Here is a man—or here are persons, those that would not look you in the face—they persuade themselves they are not so bad as we think, they try to outface light and conscience; they try to make themselves good people; they are very religious; they are sure they are not sinners. Then I am sure they are not saints. They must become sinners, feelingly such, before they can become saints. The truth is they are trying to outface conscience; they are denying what God is working in the heart. This is not looking the matter in the face. Suppose you have put into your hands a long bill. You look at the bill; you have not the money to pay it. It would not alter the bill to say, "I think it is not correct; I thought it was not ten pounds; I thought it was so and so." That would not alter the bill. The bill says it is ten, and you must pay

it, because you have had the articles. It would not alter the figures to make the ten into a five. It is really ten. You may talk as you please, think as you please, but after all your fancying and quibbling, there it stands; and you must then face the figure, look it in the face, and beg of the Lord to pay it for you. Instead of outfacing your conscience, and putting first one figure down, and then another, face it out, and add it up and see whether the blood of Jesus Christ can pay it all. This is the way the child of God acts, as distinct from the hypocrite and Pharisee and self-deceived professor. He accepts the bill. Here is the publican and Pharisee:—The Pharisee counts up the bill. He says, "I am not this or that," striking out figure after figure. Here is the ten thousand pound debtor:—The pen goes straight across the last nought. He doesn't owe a thousand pounds; no, nor a hundred; no, nor ten; no, nor one. He says, "I am free," and there he brings condemnation upon himself. His self-righteousness excusing him does not make the bill one figure less. The publican confesses the bill. He begs God to have mercy on him. The whole sum is paid, the burden is taken off his mind, and pardon sealed upon his conscience, and he goes down to his house justified. Then accept the arrangement, and if the Lord has given you a grain of faith in Christ Jesus, bless him for the mercy, and be ever, as he enables, looking to this most blessed Jesus. If the law brings his heavy charges, take them to Christ, and enjoy the sweetness of his mercy. Oh! the privilege and sweet blessing of being a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Depend upon it, faith in Christ Jesus is the door to let in every other grace; for without faith, no prayer; without faith, no love; without faith, no hope; without faith, no praise; without faith, no spirituality; without faith, no sanctification; without faith, no holiness; without faith, no freedom or liberty. But with faith in Christ Jesus there is holy liberty, sweet freedom, praising his sacred majesty, and every other grace of the Spirit, because through that open door in the soul every grace of the Spirit comes in; so that to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, oh! what a blessing is couched here!

But I pass on to our second part, which is, the being baptized in Christ.

Now you all know that I hold the ordinance of *Baptism* as an ordinance adapted to the Church of God for a type and figure of a higher baptism—the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this case I believe the apostle is speaking of spiritual baptism; for many were not baptized with water, and yet were baptized with the Holy Ghost, as the thief upon the cross; and many are baptized with water who know nothing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. So I take the baptism here spoken of as referring to the spiritual baptism, wherewith we become immersed into the fulness of the Son of God. But taking the ordinance as illustrating the expression we shall throw a light upon it; for by it we shall see how the spiritual baptism is borne out by the latter representation, and more clearly how it gives us a vital union with the Lord the Lamb. Water is a literal figure, representing the spirit of Christ, which penetrates through the clothes we wear to the very pores of our skins, and thus baptism gives us an union with the water. So of spiritual baptism; there is by it an entrance of the Spirit into a man's soul, and thus he is brought into a living union with the Lord the Lamb; thus he becomes immersed into the spirit, the grace and love of Christ. As we read of the children of Israel,—they were baptized in the clouds, that is, the cloud surrounded them. Every drop of that cloud fell upon their bodies and penetrated through their clothes to their skin. So the saint of God is baptized with a sense of Christ's presence and grace, and fulness of Christ's spirit, and this gives him an union with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the cloud was the connecting link between their bodies and him in the cloud. So the Spirit of God envelopes, surrounds, embraces the child of God, and now gives him a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is above the cloud in eternal bliss. The cloud descends from heaven to envelope the soul, and the soul of the child of God immersed in the cloud in the grace and glory of Christ—is baptized with the love and spirit of the Lord the Lamb, and so it is raised up into sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory. The Lord Jesus Christ himself went up in the cloud—the cloud of glory. The cloud of glory was also over the tabernacle in the wilderness. So wherever there is a being baptized into Jesus Christ, there is a being baptized into his

presence. Again, by the cloud raising up the soul there is a being caught up and separated from earth, and the things of time and sense. There is also a being baptized in the sea, for as the children of Israel were baptized in the Red Sea; so the saint of God is baptized in the sea of trouble; this is being immersed in the waves and billows that rolled over Christ's sacred head, and as he walks through this Red Sea, through these great tides, the Lord has promised that he will meet him. Held up by the cloud he has an union with the suffering Lord; he is baptized with him in the garden and upon the cross; and thus he is brought into union with his suffering Head, and thus he is grafted into Christ. He becomes one with Christ, and he, as the apostle speaks, "Puts on Christ." Now, water baptism can never do this, it is but a shadow of a more enduring substance; it is but a type and figure of that which far exceeds it, as the substance exceeds the shadow.

But I pass on to our last point, which is *the putting on of Christ*.

You put on your clothes this morning; they are a shelter from the cold, and they are a covering necessary since the fall, for decency's sake; you wear them as your dress. Now, you know how you put them on. So there is a putting on of Christ. Have you put on Christ? You know your clothes, they lie before you; you put them on, and you clothed your body, and you knew that you were covered when you were clothed. Now, can you put on Christ and be insensible as to how, when, and where you put him on? Is he the clothing of your soul? Have you no hope but in his obedience and love? How can you stand before the awful bar of God unless you have put on Christ, unless you are clothed in Christ's righteousness, and covered from head to foot in his justifying obedience. There is a putting on Christ. My friends, I am glad to see you here this morning; I am glad to meet with so many of you. It is good for you to be under the sound of truth; to read the Bible is good; prayer is good—prayer to heaven; conversation with the saints of God is good; acts of liberality to saints of God are good; but what are these shells compared with the kernel—shadows compared with substances. When you stand before God's awful bar, will this be your plea,—"I attended

chapel, talked with the saints of God, was very kind and liberal as far as my circumstances would allow?" Will you come with a covering like this? No; you would sooner call upon the rocks to hide you from the face of him that sits upon the throne, than come to the throne of God with a covering like this. Do you expect to stand before that awful tribunal except by putting on Christ, so that he may be your covering? "Jesus thy blood and righteousness," as the hymn says, "my beauty are my glorious dress." Is that your plea? How else can we stand before the bar of God, except by putting on Christ? But, how do we put him on? By faith. God the Spirit brings him near; he is revealed to the soul; he is made manifest in his power and grace to the heart. Then the heart embraces him; receives him, puts him on, and he becomes the soul's wedding dress, the robe of righteousness; the soul's acceptance and justification before the throne of God. There is no standing except by putting on Christ, by putting on his lowly image, his holy example, his self-denying ways, and his lovely and suffering image, as our great pattern, our example in all things. As we put our clothes on, never going out of the house without them, so we must put on Christ, and never go abroad without him, never appear before any except Christ be on. When we go to the house of prayer, to have put Christ on before we came. When we hear, to be putting on Christ; when we speak, to be putting on Christ; whatever we are doing, to be putting on Christ. It is the work of the Christian to be putting on Christ, and how? By the power and help of God.

Here is a great error of the present day. People look to anything and everything but Christ. There is no putting on Christ, and if Christ is *not* put on, what can keep us from standing in our own nakedness and shame? Therefore, put on Christ, saint of God, as the Lord enables you.

Here it is—to believe in Christ, to be baptized in Christ by a spiritual work, and to put on Christ, so as to walk with him day by day, and to be clothed with his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, taught by his Spirit, conformed to his image, and following in his footsteps; and if that is not being a Christian, never trust a

single word that comes out of my lips again.—Receive it, lay it up in your heart, and the Lord enable you to enjoy the benefit of it.

## **FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Tuesday evening, June 24th, 1845

"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

In the text John puts two conditional cases; and by them addresses himself to two distinct characters. We will therefore look:

I. At the first case: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

II. And then, if God enable us, we will look at the second: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I. There are two characters who say they have no sin. One is a self-righteous Pharisee; the other, a fleshly perfectionist; both of them ignorant of the teachings of God in the law and in the gospel; both deceived, though each in a different way. In the instance of the self-righteous Pharisee, he says that he has no sin; not that he would be altogether so arrogant as to deny the very existence of sin in his heart or in his life; but that by his obedience, by his righteousness, and by his consistency, he has made such a compensation for his sins that the balance of his good deeds completely outweighs the balance of his evil deeds. Now such a person deceives himself, and how? He is ignorant of the real nature of sin; he looks merely at a few external actions, and is unacquainted with the filth and depravity that works within. He is deceived, because he has not had the application of God's holy law in its spirituality and curse to his conscience, which makes sin known; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin"

(Rom.3:20). The depths of sin have not been discovered to him; the secret workings of it have not been laid bare. He has never seen it held up in the light of infinite, unblemished purity; he has never seen light in God's light. God has never set his sins in array before him. If he had, the man would know he was nothing but sin from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. There is therefore no truth in him. The truth may be in his judgment; but were it in his heart and conscience, it would lay bare the horrible evils of his depraved nature.

On the other hand, there is another character, who thinks he has attained to perfection; that by some exercise of his own strength, and by some cultivation of what he thinks is the grace of God in him, he has attained to such a degree of holiness that he no longer sins. The inward iniquity of a depraved nature is a burden to a living soul; but no burden at all to one dead in sin. If then any say, "We have no sin, we have preserved our lives from every blemish; there is no evil word spoken, no evil action committed by us;" what are we to say? We must answer in the language of the apostle that such a one is deceived; he does not know the plague of his own heart; the core of his corrupt nature has never been laid bare; the inward fountain of iniquity perpetually flowing forth, has never been discovered. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." II. We will pass on, however, to consider the second branch of the subject, which enters more into the case of those who fear God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Before we can confess our sins, we must know and feel them; we must experience their guilt, their filth, and their dominion. Now this is the most painful lesson that a child of God can ever learn in this life. All men have to drink more or less of the cup of natural and providential afflictions; and the children of God frequently drink more deeply of this cup than others; but in addition to these, they have what is far deeper and more cutting. They have to endure spiritual troubles; and among them to see and feel their guilt and sinfulness before a holy and pure God.

i. But what is it discovers to them the wickedness of their hearts, lips, and lives? It is *light*. Light makes all things manifest. In God's light we see light. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph.5:14). Now this light comes from him who is eternal and essential purity, who is infinitely spotless and holy. And more than that; who is not only holy in himself, but who hates unholiness in others; and not only hates it, but is determined to show his displeasure and vengeance against it. A ray of his light must come into our consciences before we can know and feel that we are sinners before him.

ii. But there are times and seasons when there is not only *light* to see, but *life* to feel. These two go together, as the Lord himself says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). They are twin sisters; they are like the rays of the natural sun: though each ray consists of seven colours, all the seven colours meet together, and form one beam. So light, life, faith, and all the graces of the Spirit come into the heart at the same time, and yet may be divided into distinct branches, though all are blended harmoniously together. Life then is needful to feel; and as this life works more powerfully, we feel more deeply; as this life works more feebly, we feel less deeply. Why is it that the very same sins that sometimes cut us up, and fill us with the greatest self-loathing, at others we can scarcely feel at all? Why is it that sometimes what is called a "little" sin will cut us more than at other times what is called a "greater" sin? Why; it is just in proportion to the working of divine life in the soul. It is pure, because it comes out of a pure fountain. It must therefore always testify against sin, must always groan under it, must always hate everything opposed to its pure nature.

iii. But besides light and life in the soul, we must have *faith*, in order that we may believe the testimony of God in our consciences. If I had no faith to believe the eye of the holy God was looking down into my heart, and that he was solemnly displeased with transgression, I should have no feeling. So that

light, life, and faith are all intimately blended together to produce feeling. Every groan and sigh, every sensation of distress, trouble, and bondage that a soul feels on account of sin, is a testimony that it is possessed of living faith. Those who are dead in sin do not believe that God is angry with them; they do not believe that God by sending his dear Son into the world and nailing his sacred body by the hands of wicked man to the cross, gave a most solemn testimony of his displeasure against iniquity.

iv. But again, besides faith we want *power*. We may feel sin deeply, and yet not have power to confess it. "If we confess our sins," the text declares. If I justify myself, there is no confession; if I am vain-confident, there is no confession; if I am shut up in sullen indifference, there is no confession; and if I am overwhelmed with despair, there is no confession. In order that confession should come, there must be power given to the soul, a softening, melting, humbling, and breaking down of the hardness of the heart. Sin will not bring confession. Nay: what says the Scripture? "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb.3:13). The tendency of indulged sin is to harden a man's heart; and then there will be no confession; for confession implies a melting and humbling of the soul before God. In fact, there is no real confession till God touches the conscience with his finger, and thereby melts and breaks it down. *Then* indeed there will be confession; but the power to confess all will never take place but under the application of pardoning love. It is atoning blood felt in the conscience that makes a soul unreserved in confessing. There is no free unbosoming of the heart, there is something kept back, till free pardon flows into the soul. At the same time, I wish to observe that confession is necessary as a preliminary for pardon, as well as experienced after pardon. Though when pardon comes, it gives power to make greater confession than before, yet confession is a needful preliminary. We cannot expect to have our sins pardoned, if we do not confess them. Confession first, and pardon after.

But *how* do we confess our sins? Is it a mere acknowledgment with our lips that we have sinned? That is not *confession*; that is

*acknowledgment.* Confession is something deeper; it is mingled with sorrow, with contrition, with penitence, with self-loathing, with real trouble of heart, that we have been entangled in the sins that we confess. None but God can give this. No man ever confessed his sins unreservedly before God gave him the power. But when the soul is enabled to confess its sin it is not one sin it confesses, nor two sins, nor twenty sins; it confesses all that are brought to its remembrance. You will find that God in making his people confess their sins will even lay on their conscience sins well-nigh buried in forgetfulness, sins of years past, sins well nigh swept out of the memory. When the Lord indulges a soul (and I am sure it is an indulgence, though often a very bitter one) with power to confess, it is no burden. There is a sweetness, though a bitterness in it, a sorrow mingled with joy. But what are the sins that pain us most? Those which we have committed since we have known the grace of God in truth. The sins we committed before he called us out of darkness into light, the Lord does not usually, after pardon received, lay again on the conscience; but it is the sins we have committed after we have known the God of all grace; the backslidings and lustings of a depraved nature; the base workings of a wicked heart; the many foolish actions that we daily commit; the wandering desire, the roving, the polluted imagination, the evil thoughts, this is what grieves, and distresses a conscience made tender in God's fear. These sins will be confessed. Repentance cannot be put on one side. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Paul preached "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). There must be sorrow felt in the soul for sin; there is no pardon except preceded by confession. God that cannot lie has said by the mouth of his inspired apostle, "If we confess our sins." If we are enabled to put our mouths in the dust, acknowledge them, and bewail them, and bewail ourselves for being entangled in them; if we, then, confess our sins he will forgive them. Will he then taunt us with them? Will he make use of our very confession to stab us with more deeply? No! His promise runs thus, and O what a promise it is! "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Look at the words, "our sins." He does not say how many, he does not say

how few; he does not say how long, he does not say how deep must be our repentance; but "if we confess our sins," what we have felt, what have been laid on our conscience, what we have groaned under as sin, "if we confess our sins," acknowledge them, and lament over them and spread them and ourselves with them at the footstool of mercy, and supplicate forgiveness for them, "He is faithful and just to forgive us" them all. But let us with God's blessing look a little into this clause: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" for there is a fund of infinite sweetness and blessedness in the words. "He is faithful." God does not rest his promise of forgiveness upon his mercy merely; though the forgiveness of our sins does in fact flow through the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But the Lord the Spirit in the text has not put it on that basis, but on God's faithfulness. That takes a wider sweep than his mercy. I will tell you how. Every act of vengeance that God has executed is a display of his faithfulness. Every lost spirit, and every undone soul in hell is a mark of God's faithfulness; but they are not marks of God's mercy. If we are to have a heavy door, we must not have a slight hinge for it to swing upon. We must have a hinge as ponderous in proportion as the door. Apply this to the subject. What a basis it is on which the forgiveness of sin rests, the faithfulness of a covenant-making, covenant-keeping Jehovah! It is as though it ran thus: God has promised to forgive the sins of those that confess them. Can he deny his word? Can he forego his infinite veracity? Has he not promised in his eternal covenant to receive as sons and daughters all whom his dear Son should die for? To forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more? To that covenant he will be faithful. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not one jot or tittle of that covenant can pass away.

He is faithful also to his own dear Son, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb.1:3); faithful to his pledged word that he would pardon sin for his sake; faithful to his atoning blood, when he viewed the sacred stream that washed away all sin on Calvary; faithful to his obedience to the law, whereby it was satisfied both in doing and suffering; faithful to his resurrection, and ascension, and present

intercession at his right hand, as the great High Priest over the house of God. So that not merely God's mercy (though that cannot fail, for it is to be built up for ever, Psa.89:2), but his faithfulness, his promises, his perfections, the purity of his own spotless holiness are pledged to forgive the sins of every one that confesses. What a broad foundation is this for a poor, lost sinner to stand upon! What an ever-flowing fountain for him to come to and slake his thirst at! What "a large room" (as David speaks)! "Thou hast set my feet in a large room" (Psa.31:8). What a large room it opens for a poor sinner to take shelter in the covenant faithfulness of a covenant Jehovah! We expect man to be faithful. Does not grace make a man honest and faithful? And shall the God of all grace, who gives the reflection merely of his grace in the heart of a sinner to make him faithful—shall the God of *all* grace not be faithful, if those who have a *little* grace are faithful? He has promised, and will he not perform? His very perfections are pledged to do so. What a broad foundation, then, it is for a poor sinner to stand upon who confesses his sins that God is faithful to forgive them!

But the apostle adds another word, a word that, if anything, is more surprising, more astounding, to reason than the word which precedes it: "and just." It is a wonderful thing that faithfulness should be on the side of forgiveness. It is a still greater thing that justice should be upon its side. What would not justice be out of Christ? Would not justice out of Christ be wrath, vengeance, and destruction? But through the wonder-working atonement, through the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, through the astonishing scheme of salvation by redeeming love and blood, justice is now on the side of forgiveness. It is as though the apostle argued thus: Justice has been completely fulfilled, and all its demands accomplished to the very letter. It demanded punishment, and it has had punishment; it required vengeance, and it has had vengeance. It called for complete satisfaction to all its requirements, and it has had it; and not merely had it sufficiently, but had it super-aboundingly. As grace superabounds over the abounding of sin, so justice has superabounded over the claims of the law.

Look at the infinite dignity of him who obeyed the law, that God should become also man, and as man obey his own law. What dignity does it put upon it! What an infinite fulness does this put upon every act of obedience! The law was given to man; and if man could have fulfilled the law, it would have been amply satisfied. But when God- Man fulfilled the law, he not merely satisfied it, but he gave it infinite dignity. I will endeavour to illustrate it thus. Suppose there were some office which could be adequately performed by a nobleman; but instead of that nobleman performing it, the sovereign performs it. Will not that give dignity to the office, make it shine more brightly, than if the nobleman had performed it? So spiritually; if Adam had obeyed the law, the law would have been satisfied; if the creature could render it obedience, as it was given to the creature, it would have been enough. But when the Creator obeyed it, when Immanuel, God with us, performed what the law demanded, then his obedience gave it infinite merit and stamped it with everlasting dignity. As we read, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa.42:21); that is, by clothing it with his own divine obedience. So that God is not merely faithful to his word, but also just, infinitely just, scrupulously just, perfectly just, in forgiving sin; because he can forgive it by virtue of the obedience which his only-begotten Son has paid to the law. O what a view is this! What an ample scope it offers, what a large room it sets before a poor sinner! That God is not only faithful, but also just to forgive us our sins! How we forget this! How ignorant we are of it! We sin, we feel it a burden; it presses the conscience; the soul falls down before God and confesses it. But, yet in all this how little eye there is to the spotless obedience of the Son of God! How much more we look at our confessing, our humbling, our self-loathing, than to the spotless obedience of Jesus! We are such self-lovers, such self-conceited creatures, that we are more enamoured of our own polluted doings than of the spotless obedience of the Son of God. Yet if there be any forgiveness, it is only extended to us on the footing of Christ's obedience. Our confessions cannot draw it forth; and yet God will have us to confess, that we may have forgiveness poured into a clean

vessel. We must be humbled in order to be raised up, and know the bitterness of sin in order to know the sweetness of pardon.

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." What? All? Every sin that we have committed? Sins of thought, sins of look, sins of action, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins in infancy, sins in childhood, sins in youth, and sins in old age? All the base lusts, all the filthy workings, all the vile actions, all the pride, all the hypocrisy, all the covetousness, all the presumption, all the envy, hatred, and malice, all the aboundings of inward iniquity, forgive them all? If God forgives one, he forgives all; if he retains one, he retains all. Either the whole weight of a man's sin will be tied about his neck as a mill stone, to sink him into perdition; or all his sins will be as completely blotted out from the remembrance of God as though they had never been committed. The Scriptures therefore compare it to a cloud: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isa.44:22).

But some will say, "Does God forgive *no more sins* than we confess?" I want to know what the proportion of the sins that you confess bears to the sins that you do not confess? Or the proportion of the sins you recollect to the sins you forget? Have you not committed thousands of sins that you have forgotten, which God has not? Do we not sin with every breath that we draw? Is not every lustful desire sin? And is not every proud thought sin? And is not every wicked imagination sin? And is not every unkind suspicion sin? Every doubt sin? Every act of unbelief sin? And every working of a depraved nature sin? How often do we remember and confess to God the sins thus daily, hourly, minutely, and momentarily committed? We might as well think of counting the stars in the midnight sky, or the sands that strew the coast of the sea, or the waves that come dancing to the shore, as to think of confessing all the sins of heart, lip, and life, that we have committed. We committed sin when we sucked our mother's breast; we committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word; and as we grew in body we grew in sinfulness. Is not this the Scripture testimony: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen.6:5).

Will God, then, only forgive those sins that we confess! Woe to us! Woe to us! If those sins only are remitted which we acknowledge. One sin banished angels from heaven, and turned them into devils. One sin drove Adam out of Paradise. One sin involved the whole human race in one universal condemnation, and would have sunk all into the depths of perdition, had not the Son of God come forth as a Mediator. Then every sin must be forgiven to a child of God, or he could not stand before infinite Purity. He must be covered from head to foot with a robe of spotless obedience before he can sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "He is faithful," then, "and just to forgive us" all our sins, if he do but give us grace and power to confess them.

But it adds, to sum up the whole: "And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Cleansing applies not only to the purging away of the very existence of sin from the eyes of God, through the blood and obedience of his only begotten Son, but also to cleansing the conscience from the filth and guilt of it. I believe that the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," refer not only to the cleansing of the persons of the elect from sin by Christ's blood and obedience, but also to the cleansing of their consciences from its guilt. Observe the words: "If we walk in the light," that is, in the light of his countenance, in the light of his manifested forgiveness, "as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). It is when we walk in the light of God's countenance, in the light of pardoning mercy, in the light of superabounding grace, that the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled upon the conscience experimentally cleanseth from all sin, from its filth, guilt, and dead works.

But some may say, "I have confessed and acknowledged; I have lamented and bewailed my sins; but God has not pardoned me." Do you think your confession has been from the bottom of your heart? Do you think it has been with godly sorrow? With real self-abhorrence? Has there not been some secret justification, some hidden self-righteousness working at the bottom? Has it been full and free? If so, it may account for the delay. But the Lord may

see fit to delay even where confession is full and free. Our part is to wait in quiet submission. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope" (Lam.3:26-29). And yet "he is faithful and just." He keeps the time in his own hands, for he hath reserved the times and seasons in his own power (Acts 1:7). But as sure as a poor soul is enabled to confess, in God's time pardon will be sealed in his heart. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa.130:4); and God will fulfil these words to the very letter: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

## THE FALLING RAIN AND THE BUDDING EARTH

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 29, 1849

"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: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:10, 11

I wish three things this evening. First, that this chapel was larger so as to accommodate the people who have come to hear. Secondly, that the Lord would fill my soul with life, light, liberty, and love, and enable me to preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And thirdly, that he would accompany the word with a divine power to your heart, and seal it with his own living witness on your conscience. My first wish is clearly impossible to be granted, and, therefore, you must put up with a little crowding; but if we have the two last fulfilled, we shall not have met altogether in vain; and if the Lord do not grant them, I shall speak and you will hear to little real purpose. May we then be enabled to lift up our hearts to the Lord, that he would be with us, to bless us indeed, so that good may be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

God has spoken great things in the scripture concerning his *word*. We read, that he has "magnified it above all his name;" that is, he has exalted his truth and faithfulness in revealing and keeping his word above all his other manifested perfections. Upon this word all things depend in nature and in grace. By it came *creation* itself. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). By the same word comes *preservation*, as Peter tells us, "But the heavens and the earth,

which are now, by the *same word* are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7). By the same word is the *supernatural creation* also effected in the regeneration of the soul, and the creating of it anew in Christ Jesus. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). By the same "word," *wounding* comes; for "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). By the "word," too, comes *healing*. "He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

In our text, we find the Lord still speaking very highly of his word, and illustrating it by a very sweet and blessed figure. This figure, I need hardly remind you, is that of the rain and snow from heaven, with their fertilizing effects on the earth. In endeavouring, then, as the Lord may give me strength and ability to open up the mind and meaning of the Spirit in the words before us, I shall not adopt any formal division of my subject, but shall make as it were a running commentary upon the text, explaining the natural figure, and shewing its accomplishment in the word of his grace.

The figure that the Lord here makes use of is very simple, obvious to the meanest capacity, exceedingly suitable, and, when spiritually realized, above measure sweet and blessed.

He compares his word, whether as revealed in the scriptures, or as spoken by the mouth of his servants, to the *rain* and *snow* that fall from heaven; and the *effects* which the rain and the snow produce on the earth, he compares to the effects and fruits that are produced by his word applied to the soul.

I.—The first leading idea of the natural figure is the *descent* of the rain—"it cometh down from heaven."

In this we may well admire the *wisdom* of that wonderful

provision whereby rain is stored up in what the Lord himself in Job calls "the bottles of heaven." What tons of water are suspended in the clouds that float over our heads! What were the earth but a dry, parched rock, unless fertility were stored up for it in these floating reservoirs? "Thy paths" (that is, the clouds, the tracks, as it were, of his chariot wheels in the sky) "drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side."

The *sovereignty* of its descent is another marked feature of the natural rain. God challenges Job to stay "the bottles of heaven" when opened, and he might have challenged him to open them when stayed. Whatever juggling tricks "the rain-makers" at the Cape may practise, no magician can lift up his wand to the sky, and command the clouds to break down in showers upon the earth. It falls as God would have it to fall. The sovereignty of God is displayed as much in the weather as in any other way. "And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: 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" (Amos 4: 7). So with the word of God. Just as in the exercise of divine sovereignty he causeth rain to fall, or not to fall; so, in the exercise of the same sovereignty, he blesses the word to one and not to another.

Again; the *suitability* of the rain to the earth is as much a marked feature in the provision of God as the wisdom and the sovereignty of this wonderful contrivance. And we may observe the admirable adaptation of means to end and of end to means. How suitable is rain to the soil, and how suitable the soil to rain! Without rain earth would be a waste. Without a soil to absorb it, rain would bring but a deluge. Without rain earth would be worthless; without earth rain would be useless. So with the word of God and the soul of man. If there were no soul of man to be saved, the word of God would be of no use; if there were no word of God, the soul of man would be of no worth. What the rain is to the soil, what the soil is to the rain, the word of God is to the soul, and the soul to the word of God. This mutual fitness runs through the

whole work of grace. Thus there is a suitability between the distressed mind and the promise; between the guilty conscience and the blood of Jesus; between the naked soul and Christ's righteousness; between spiritual hunger and the bread of life.

Again; there is no procuring cause in the earth, *no merit* in it to obtain rain from heaven. The earth does not first fertilize itself, and thus attract the clouds to discharge upon it their treasures. Nay, the longer that rain is suspended, the drier the earth gets, and the farther from fertility. So there is nothing in man to procure or deserve the grace of God; nay, the longer that we are without it, like the parched earth without rain, the less do we deserve it; for increasing age brings increasing hardness, as increasing drought brings increasing sterility.

The rain, too, comes *freely*, copiously, ungrudgingly, neither asking the earth when it should fall, nor when it should stop. It comes down as a free gift from God. It falls when needed, and it stops when needed, preserving an exact balance between drought and deluge. In all these particulars there is an analogy between the rain from heaven and the word of God's grace.

II.—But the Lord in the text speaks of "*snow*," as well as of rain. Snow is but frozen rain; yet there are certain points of difference which make it a striking emblem of the word of God: It falls in *winter* from a dark and gloomy sky. So there is a *wintry* experience of soul when the heavens are spread with dark and threatening clouds.

Snow *chills* in its fall every living object. So the cutting reproofs and rebukes of the word of God chill with fear and alarm the conscience on which they drop. Did not the word of the Lord by the infant Samuel chill with dread Eli, and that by Nathan chill David, and that by Isaiah the soul of Hezekiah?

And how *penetrating* snow is. So the rebukes of God penetrate into the very vitals. When "he casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?" (Ps. 147:17). But besides these

wintry and piercing properties, snow possesses two beneficial effects. It *shields* the earth as with a mantle from the rigorous frosts and piercing winds, and thus preserves vegetation alive. Thus the chilling rebukes of God's word are a real protection to the soul; they preserve the tender life from those awful blasts of eternal displeasure which will one day sweep over the face of the earth. The rebukes of God brought David to repentance, Hezekiah to submission, Peter to weeping bitterly, and the incestuous Corinthian to godly sorrow. The rebuke of the Saviour's look covered Peter with the mantle of repentance. For want of this robe the blast of God's displeasure froze the naked soul of Judas into despair.

But snow is said to *fertilize* the soil on which it falls and lies. When melted by the genial rays of the sun, it is said to mark its former presence by increased fruitfulness. So spiritually. Hezekiah was chilled by the snow storm that attended the prophet's words, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live;" but when the snow which had lain heavily on his soul was melted by the rays of returning mercy, a crop of fruit sprang up from the mellowed soil. He would thenceforward walk softly all his years in the bitterness of his soul. The snow had softened and fertilized the soil, and a crop of humility and praise sprang up. In his song of praise he acknowledged the benefit of the snow storm. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit" (Isa. 38: 16) was his thankful acknowledgment of the benefit and blessing of the wintry sky. Have you never had reason to bless God for every conviction that cut up your creature righteousness? For every reproof, every painful sensation of guilt, every pang of distress that chilled you at the time with horror? People are crying out for *comfort*, as if the word of God contained nothing but promises, and as if they were always in a situation to need cordials and restoratives. *That* were a poor medicine chest which had only tonics and tinctures. He were a poor gardener that could use no tools but the dibber and the waterpot. "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind"—all, all are alike "fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148:8), and all, all conspire to sing his praise.

III.—But, we read, "it returneth not thither," that is, *not* in the same form. It does return by evaporation; but not in the shape of rain and snow. After a copious shower of rain, or heavy fall of snow, the earth in a little time is dry. Where is it all gone? A part has sunk into the soil, but not all; a part is again drawn up, to discharge once more its bounteous blessings upon the earth. But it does not return in the same precise form in which it came down, in the gross material shape of snow and rain. It is exhaled in a subtler, finer form. So when the Lord is pleased to chill, yet fertilize the soul, with the snow of his rebukes, or water and refresh it with the rain of his promises, his word of conviction or his word of consolation returns not to him in the same form. But does it not in another? Is there not the return of praise, gratitude, love, thanksgiving; a yielding of fruit in heart, lip, and life?

And as the sun draws up these unseen vapours, and calls into being this harvest of fruit, so does the Sun of righteousness draw up the affections of the heart, and bring forth those fruits which are to the praise and glory of God.

But have you not wished sometimes that you could make God some return? I mean, some return in kind. In fact, this is what I may call the natural wish of the mind, which we see issuing in a variety of superstitious forms. Why have men built in popish times our splendid cathedrals? Why have thousands gone on pilgrimage? Why do many men in our day contribute large sums to religious objects? Is not this the secret spring of much of what is called religious service? Its language is, 'We ought to do something for God, as God has done so much for us; if he has given us money, we will give him money back.' This is making the rain and the snow return to heaven as it were in kind, which God does not want, and will not accept, when thus yielded from superstition and self-righteousness. Many will bestow money on tombs, crosses, windows, monuments, churches, and restorations of what is called mediaeval architecture, who abhor the truth and persecute the saints. Thus the pharisees of old, who crucified Christ and stoned Stephen, built the tombs of the prophets. But

to come to ourselves. Has it not sometimes tried your mind that you could not do more for God, as it is termed, in the way of active service? But what is the real revenue which God would have you to give him, and which he looks for, if he has blessed your soul? Gratitude, praise, thanksgiving, faith, hope, love, and patience—the fruits and graces of his Spirit. Love and affection, too, to his saints, kindness and liberality to the poor members of his body, to visit them in sickness, sympathize with them in trouble, pray for them and with them in sorrow, and walk with them in the interchange of every friendly office.

IV.—The next leading feature of the rain and snow mentioned in the text, is, that they "*water* the earth." This is its main object; for this purpose was it specially provided, and to this end it is continually sent. Water is the grand solvent; and as the pores of all vegetable productions are too minute to take in solid matter, it must be dissolved before it can become food for plants. By the rain too, and melted snow, is the soil softened so as to become a seed-bed in which the grain may swell, germinate, and grow. We all know what a hard, barren, useless thing earth would be without rain. Such is the soul of man without the word of God's grace—hard, dry, barren, an unprofitable desert waste. The Lord has promised that the souls of his people shall be "like a watered garden," and that "his word shall drop like the rain and distil like the dew." It is the word of God's grace that softens the heart and dissolves the soul. How in nature the clods get harder and harder the longer that the drought continues! The farmer may break them with clubs, or roll them with heavy rollers but he cannot soften them. Let the showers gently fall; how they penetrate into the pores of these rough and rugged clods, till they crumble to the faintest touch! So with the soul and the word of God's grace. Till that falls, there is no melting of soul, softness of heart, or brokenness of spirit.

V.—But the rain and the snow not only water the earth, they also "make it *bring forth and bud*." In fact, without this, especially in hot climates, there is no fruit brought forth at all. A man may have a consistent profession of religion, may have a sound, well-

compacted creed, may be a member of a Christian church, may attend to all ordinances and duties, may seek to frame his life and walk according to the precepts of God's word, may have his family and private prayer, may be a good husband, father, and friend, may be liberal and kind to God's cause and people, and yet with all this bear no fruit Godward. This is produced only by the word of God's grace falling into the heart, watering and softening it. Without this there is not one gracious feeling, not one spiritual desire, not one tender thought, not one heavenly affection. But the snow is useful here, as well as the rain. By it the grubs and caterpillars are killed, and the soil made porous and open. By the chilling blasts of God's displeasure, the reproofs of his mouth, the threatenings of his law, and the terrors of a guilty conscience, the grubs and caterpillars of pride and self-righteousness are starved, and a preparation made for the receiving of mercy and peace.

And thus, when the Sun of righteousness begins to shine upon the soul, when the winter is over and gone, when the warm days of spring, and the showers of mercy fall upon the heart, then it brings forth and buds. It brings forth faith whereby the truth is received in the love of it; brings forth hope which clasps around the Lord Jesus Christ, his blood, obedience, and salvation, as the ivy clasps around the oak; brings forth love which cleaves to the Lord with full purpose of heart; brings forth patience to endure afflictions, and contentment under the various dealings of God in providence or in grace. And indeed, real gospel fruit is produced in no other way. A man may be scolded, threatened, tied up, and flogged; but you can never by these means bring forth gospel fruit. You may produce a monkish obedience; you may elicit a kind of starved religion, which withers as soon as born; you may drag out the forced service of a bond slave. But to have the fruits of the Spirit brought forth in the soul; faith, hope, love; humility, gratitude, resignation, godly sorrow, prayerfulness, and every other God-glorifying grace, you must have the rain and snow to come down from heaven.

How often, perhaps, have we tried by self-culture to bring forth

such fruits! We could not do it; with all our best attempts the issue was, as the church complained of old, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" (Isa. 26:18). No living progeny was brought forth. We have tried, perhaps, as many have, to make ourselves holy; we have watched our eyes, our ears, our tongues; have read so many chapters every day out of God's word; continued so long upon our knees; read one book on Monday, another on Tuesday, a third on Wednesday; and so tried to work a kind of holiness into our own souls. I used, many years ago, to try to pray for the better part of an hour; and I am ashamed to say, I have been glad to hear the clock strike. What was this but a monkish, self-imposed rule, a rule of St. Benedict, or St. Dominic, to please God by the length of my prayers? And yet I ought to have known better; for when the Lord was pleased to touch my conscience with his finger, he gave me a remarkable spirit of grace and supplication; I wanted no rule of St. Dominic then. But it was all to bring forth out of the heart something of which I could say, 'Now I have religion; now I have something that God is pleased with; now I have made some advance in holiness; now I have got a step nearer to God.'

But what is all this pitiful self-holiness, as I think Bunyan calls it? Why, before we can look at it, it is gone like a dream of the night. It is "as the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up" (Isa. 28:4). As to any real satisfaction, it is "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite."

But our text speaks of the earth "budding" as well as bringing forth. In grace, as in nature, there are stages of progress; seed, blade, stem, and ear mark degrees of growth. In many the graces of the Spirit are but in bud. In some, faith, for instance, like the crocus out of the snow, is scarcely visible; we can but

just discern it peeping out of the chilly mantle of convictions. The Lord himself says, "First, the *blade*," and this may be hidden under the wintry snow. Christians are not made in a day. They are not like Jonah's gourd, which "came up in a night, and perished in a night." In some of the Lord's family grace is but a tender bud just swelling into life. This may be the case with some here this evening. They cannot say positively, "I know in whom I have believed." "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." There is a check in their conscience when they would use the language of assurance. Nor can they firmly say, 'I feel confident that my hope will never fail.' But if they cannot use these words, yet they may have the buddings of heavenly life. The bud, you know, is generally very tender; it can scarcely bear the cold wind: when about to expand its bosom, there comes perhaps a fall of snow, or a frosty sky, and shuts it up at once. Such are the first buddings of divine life in the soul. There is in them a peculiar tenderness; they shut up at the first chilling blast, and only open as the warm rays of the sun beam in upon them. Those who have but faint and feeble marks of grace well know, that it is only at times and seasons that faith, hope, and love peep forth, shew their heads, and lift themselves above the dark soil. Sometimes in secret prayer, sometimes in hearing the preached word, sometimes in conversation with a Christian friend, there is a coming forth of a sweet confidence in the Lord.

VI.—But what is the grand aim and object of the all-wise Creator in sending rain and snow upon the natural earth? "That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." Two objects are here mentioned for which rain and snow are given. We not only want corn to be ground into bread to feed the body, but to provide seed also with which to sow the ground for a future year. Under the fertilizing influences of snow and rain, the earth brings forth so abundantly as to supply not only bread for the present, but seed for the future.

Let us see the spiritual meaning of this. First, we have a distinction made here between the *eater* and the *sower*. The "*eater*" is the child of God, who eats the bread of life; as the Lord

said, "He that *eateth* me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). His provision is the finest of the wheat, and he is one of those to whom the Lord says, "Eat,  friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly,  beloved" (Sol. Song 5:1). See the links of this wondrous chain. Rain and snow are sent to fertilize the earth; it is thus made to bring forth and bud; but its produce is employed in two different ways. There is seed for the sower, and bread for the eater. Now see the spiritual analogy. The word falling from its divine Author upon the heart, going, as he says, out of his mouth, either in the snow of conviction, or the rain of consolation, fertilizes the soul. It buds, and brings forth the fruits and graces of the Spirit. "Christ is formed in the heart the hope of glory." He is fed upon by faith as the bread of life.

But not only is there this bread for the eater, there is also seed for the sower. By "the sower," we may understand a servant of Christ, a minister of the gospel, according to the well-known parable, "A sower went forth to sow" (Matt. 13:3). From this we gather, that as corn in the grain differs from corn in the loaf, so the seed of "the sower" differs from the bread of "the eater." The sower must have bread to eat; but he has seed in the basket as well as the loaf in the pantry. There are many eaters, but few sowers. When the Lord is pleased to raise up a man, and sends him into his vineyard, he not only gives him bread to eat for himself, but he also puts seed into his seed-basket for others. By this "seed" we may understand those portions of divine truth which are applied to his soul, which spring up from time to time in his heart in meditation and prayer, those texts and passages which are specially given him for the benefit of God's people.

This is a point which private Christians ought well to consider. How many there are, who because God has done something for their souls, think they must immediately rush into the ministry, as though, because the Lord has made them Christians, he had also made them ministers. He may have given bread to them as eaters; but has he put a seed-basket around their shoulders, and stored it with seed for them as sowers? Does he open to them the scriptures, raise up spiritual ideas, bring forth out of their hearts

life and feeling, give them "acceptable words" (Eccl. 12:10), and enable them to scatter with a skilful and liberal hand the seed of the word? And bear in mind, that *bread* is one thing, and *seed* another. We do not sow bread, but corn.

If you are a minister, you must have something beyond a good experience. You must have a spiritual gift, as Timothy had; and when you put on your seed-basket to step among the furrows, you must have good sound grain put into it by the Lord of the harvest. The same bounteous Benefactor, who makes "the earth bring forth and bud, so as to give bread to the eater," is not unmindful of the sower. But let no man envy him who carries the seed-basket. It is no slight work, no easy task, to be tramping up and down in the furrows, "to cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place." To do this aright "his God must instruct him to discretion, and teach him" (Isa. 28:25, 26). No man need wish to carry the seed-basket, to have all eyes fixed on him, all arrows aimed at him. Every one who is appointed to scatter the word of life will have many things to try him, and make him wish again and again that he never had been thrust into such an arduous post. As far as ease and comfort are concerned, it is much more pleasant to eat bread in the pew, than to stand up with the seed-basket in the pulpit. It has been my experience in dark and trying moments, again and again to envy anybody and everybody who has not to stand up and preach. Sometimes a sense of my unworthiness and unfitness, sometimes a natural repugnance to appear in a public capacity, sometimes deadness and darkness of mind, sometimes a feeling of my many wanderings and general unprofitableness, sometimes powerful temptations and fiery darts, and sometimes the persecutions I have endured, have made me feel the lot of a preacher to be of all the most hard. There are but two seasons when I feel any satisfaction in carrying the seed-basket: 1. When I have bread to eat, and corn to sow; and 2. when I hear of instances that I have not carried the seed-basket in vain.

VII.—But we pass on to consider the promise which God has

given relative to his own word: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void." What a blessing it is that all success is of God! Sometimes it makes my very heart ache to think—here I am labouring under an exercised mind and a weak and wearied body, trying to bring forth something that may be made a blessing to God's family. Whether it be a temptation or not, I cannot say; but it seems sometimes as if I laboured in vain. The people look hard and dead; and to judge from present feeling, little real blessing seems to attend the word. I think it must be a temptation; for I have afterwards heard of blessings received, when I have thought there could be none. But what a mercy it is, that we have nothing to do with the matter; that the whole blessing is from God! It is not what *I* may attempt to do, or the work *I* may try to perform. Were I to preach with the eloquence of an angel, if God did not bless the word, all the eloquence I could exert would be in vain! How this takes the load off man, and puts it on those shoulders which support the world! He says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." It shall be as sovereign, as free, as suitable as the rain and snow which come down from heaven. A minister can no more command the Lord to bless his word to this or that soul, than he can go abroad, and say, 'Clouds, clouds, drop down rain on this particular field.' He may, and indeed ought to pray for the blessing, but *command* it he cannot. The sovereign good pleasure of God gives it how, when, and where he will.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "It shall not return unto me void," that is, destitute of the purpose which I have designed to accomplish by it. Those whose heart is in the work will complain sometimes: 'I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought. I have tried to address myself to people's consciences, but in vain; their hearts are as hard as flints; they will not receive my testimony.' Ministers may so complain, whose soul's desire is the people's good, and as the prophets of old did before them; nay, hearers too, in a similar fit of unbelief, may say, 'What is the use of my going to hear? No

blessing, no power, no life, no feeling attend the words to my soul; why need I go? I may just as well stay at home to-day.' Thus, ministers and hearers often hang down their heads because so little visible good seems doing by the preached word. But the Lord still says, "It shall not return unto me void." There are but few to be saved, and therefore there are but few to be blessed. But some are. The Lord still by his word quickens, delivers, comforts, strengthens, and encourages his own family. It is God's own promise, who cannot lie, that his word shall not return unto him void. It shall return to him here in thankfulness and gratitude, and hereafter in an eternal revenue of praise.

This is an encouragement, then, to ministers to go on preaching, through evil report and through good report, that God's own word shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases; and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. The Lord has a certain work to carry on by the preached word in the hearts of his people, and that work he will accomplish by it. Thus, we find, that the preached word is attended with various effects; nay, the very same sermon, or it may be the same sentence in a sermon shall produce opposite effects; and yet both be of God. For instance, there shall be some experience traced out in harmony with the word of God, which shall come with a blessing to one who has passed through it. It shall especially comfort and encourage his soul. But to one sitting side by side with him in the same pew, it shall come with cutting conviction. Rain to the one is snow to the other. The question arises within: 'If that be an experience needful to be known, where is your religion? Have you ever experienced *this*?' Or some sweet manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be spoken of, and various parts of scripture brought forward to prove it as a thing needful to be experienced. To him who has enjoyed it there shall be a sweet reviving of the work of God, and a kindling up afresh of the mercy, goodness, and love of Christ to his soul. But it shall come with conviction to another: 'This is what you never experienced.' This seems therefore to cut him off, works conviction in his soul, sends him home with a burden, raises a cry in his heart, makes him feel that he comes short, and he is anxious, restless, till Christ is pleased

to reveal himself to his soul. Thus, the very same word shall produce what may seem to be opposite effects, yet both be of God, both a blessing.

Or, perhaps, you may be in some secret snare, and hardly know how you got into it; the trap had been laid so craftily, that you fell into it before you were well aware. You shall go to hear, and the minister is led to speak of that very snare in which you have been entangled. It is now opened up to you; you see how Satan laid it, and how you have been entangled in it. Thus the word shall be made use of to bring you out of the snare, make you confess to the Lord how you have been entangled, seek his pardoning mercy, and in due time experience his delivering grace.

Or, you may have had a real work of grace upon your soul; Jesus Christ, the foundation, may have been rightly laid in your conscience; yet wood, hay, and stubble may have been built upon it; you may have gone aside into carnal ease, into vain security, and fallen asleep in Zion. But in this state you may go and hear, as might be thought almost accidentally, a certain minister; you may hear a doctrinal religion exposed, a letter faith described. You begin to tremble; a secret conviction is fastened in your conscience; you can go step by step with the description; you feel it true as he declares, that this letter religion, this doctrinal confidence brought no peace in your conscience, never gave you liberty of access to God, never broke to pieces idols, never delivered you out of temptation; but under the cover of this smooth, easy profession, you could indulge in sin, walk loosely, and give a rein to the evils of your heart. An Antinomian spirit, you find, had been secretly creeping upon you. This opium draught by little and little had lulled you to sleep, and under its influence you have said in your dreams, 'It is all well; I know that I have felt in times past the goodness and mercy of God; I know too that I have wandered from him, been slack in prayer, gone much into the world, neglected his word, not been so strict as I used to be in my general walk and conversation; but, but (now see the opium working) it does not alter my eternal state, nor

affect my interest in Christ.' You may have come with this Antinomian torpor upon you, to dream out in the pew your laudanum doze. But a word from the pulpit suddenly arouses you; "an interpreter" arises to interpret your dream, and shew you the miserable state of soul into which you have fallen. As you listen, the words sink with power into your conscience, and distress and trouble fill your mind.

Or, you may have been very slack in the things of God, fallen into a worldly spirit, got among companions who may be doing your soul sad injury, and through them be entangled in temptations from which you have no power to deliver yourself. You come and hear these temptations described, which you may have thought no child of God ever was entangled in; nay, could not believe any one with the grace of God could have felt the power of sin as you have. God makes it the means of setting your soul free from that snare. Or, you may have been entangled in self-righteousness, been cutting at the exercised people of God, despising his experienced family, not knowing yourself the path of tribulation. You come to hear, conviction may be fastened upon your conscience of your shortcomings, and send you groaning home. Through that wound in your conscience, a whole army of terrors may flood your soul, set you to search and examine the groundwork of your religion, and bring you to roll upon your bed in agony of mind, begging of God to have mercy upon you.

Or, you may have come with a heavy burden, not seeing anything like grace in your soul, tried in mind, depressed in spirit, harassed by the devil, and despised by worldly professors. You come to hear; your state and case is described; the word of God is applied to you, comfort is spoken to your soul, and your heart is melted within you by a sense of God's goodness and mercy. The promise then does not fail: "It shall accomplish that which I please."

God knows in this congregation the hearts of all; what their experience is, what their desires, what they are seeking, how they are entangled or tempted. He knows everything concerning

them; and can, if it be his gracious will, apply the word to each as is needed. Ministers, for the most part, little know what good they are doing. They stand up to preach; they come praying, and go home begging the Lord to bless the word; but they know not what arrows have entered the conscience; what convictions have pierced the soul; or what comfort and consolation have been administered—all this is left in darkness. But where there is a real work, solid good done, it will spring up sooner or later to the glory of God; for, he will accomplish all that he has purposed. If God set a man up, no man can put him down; if God put him down, no man can set him up. If God has sent his word to do a certain work, it shall prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. If sent for conviction, it shall prosper; if for consolation, it shall prosper; if for encouragement, it shall prosper; if for deliverance, it shall prosper; if to strip, it shall prosper; if to clothe, it shall prosper; if to wound, it shall prosper; if to heal, it shall prosper. See how the Lord takes the whole matter into his own hands!

It is an unspeakable mercy for preachers and hearers, that the Lord has tied himself, so to speak, by his own promise that his word shall prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. Were it not for this, how could I stand up before you this evening with any hope of profiting your souls? If it were left to me to make a divine, lasting, spiritual impression upon your heart, what hope should I have of effecting it? I might perhaps, if I dare, touch your natural feelings; I might, if my conscience permitted me, attempt to work upon your fleshy passions. Were I possessed of natural eloquence, I might turn this place into a theatre, myself into an actor, and you into weeping spectators. But would that be "the rain and snow from heaven?" Would that be "the word that goeth out of God's mouth?" Would that issue in a crop of "righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations"?

But how grievous it would be, that I should have come and spoken among you this evening, and no blessing to have attended the word; nothing that will stand the last trump; that the word from my lips, instead of falling as rain and snow upon the field, should have fallen as showers upon the pavement,

without entrance or penetration, dried up in a few minutes, and all left hard, cold, and stony as before! But you will say, 'What is the blessing that you want to rest upon the preached word?' I will tell you. To have the work of grace begun, carried on, or strengthened; to be humbled into the dust of self-abasement; to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; to have manifestations of God's mercy and love; to see the beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory that is in Christ Jesus; to have a sweet persuasion of our interest in the blood and obedience of Immanuel; to be separated in heart, spirit, and affection from the world; to mourn over the evils of our nature; to be kept from every evil way, work, and word; to have a tender conscience, and a watchful, prayerful spirit; and to have the affections in heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. And, besides these inward fruits, to live the gospel, as well as profess the gospel; to be Christians not merely in lip and tongue, and by hearing the truth; but in every department of life, as masters and servants, husbands and wives, children and parents; to manifest the grace of God in our trade, business, occupation, or profession; however situated, however placed, to shew forth the grace of God, and to yield to him those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to his praise and glory. I believe, that solid blessings will always produce these solid fruits, will bring forth a crop in heart, lip, and life; and where this crop is not in some measure brought forth, well may we say, such a religion is vain.

## The Farewell

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, August 10, 1843

"Brethren, farewell." 2 Corinthians 13:11

I cannot say that Anniversary, Funeral, or Farewell Sermons are much to my taste; and whenever I have attempted to preach with a view to such occasions, it is but rarely that I have had any liberty of soul or of speech. I learnt a lesson on this subject not very long before I left the Establishment, which has much prevented me from even making the attempt. The circumstance I allude to was this. Easter Sunday was drawing near; which is, as you know, in the Church of England, the Anniversary of the resurrection of Christ. On the Saturday evening immediately preceding it, I took a walk, as I was accustomed to do; and was led to meditate on the coming Lord's Day, when these words fell with some weight upon my mind: "The power of his resurrection." I thought the words were very suitable for the occasion, and I seemed led into a train of sweet and comfortable meditation upon them; so that I fully expected I had a text for the following day, from which I could speak with some liberty and feeling. But when the morrow came, the text was entirely taken away; in fact, scarcely a single idea upon it remained, so that I was obliged to speak from some other words. A few Lord's days afterwards the text returned to my mind, and I was then enabled to speak from it with some sweetness. From this occurrence I gathered that it was not the will of the Lord that I should preach sermons suited to particular occasions; and from that time to this, I have very rarely attempted it. But after the great attraction with which you have heard me, and the full assemblies which have gathered together, during my visit in this place, I think I should be lacking in right feeling, if I left you without expressing in some way or other my wishes and desires in bidding you "farewell."

My text is a very short one, as it contains only two words; but in speaking from it, I mean to make it shorter still, and take only

one word; but in so doing, I feel if the Lord shall lead me into the experimental meaning of that *one word*, "*Farewell*," we shall have enough to occupy us during the time we are assembled together this evening.

Though it is but one word to which I have restricted myself, yet in fact, it is composed of two, "*fare*" and "*well*." To fare well, spiritually understood, is to have every thing that God can make us happy in. The simple, or I should rather say, the compound word "*fare-well*," if indeed it is a spiritual faring well, comprehends all that we can desire for time or for eternity.

But while there is a faring *well*, there is such a thing also as faring *ill*. And as oftentimes we see truth better by contrast, we will, with God's blessing, speak first a little of what it is to *fare ill*; and then of what it is to *fare well*.

I.—What is it, then, to *fare ill*? In examining what it is to *fare ill*, we shall look at it in two points of view.

*First*. At the characters who *fare ill throughout*; and secondly, at the children of God, who at certain times and seasons are in the same predicament, and *appear to fare ill*.

1. We will look at *the characters who fare ill throughout*. Who are they? We may describe them in one word, as the *enemies of God*. For whatever worldly prosperity may attend them; whatever their carnal hearts may enjoy of pleasure, and so-called amusement; whatever riches they may heap up to themselves, or whatever they may gain of this world's applause, being the *enemies of God*, they must *fare ill*.

But let us come to particulars. Who are these enemies of God? They are all those who are "dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, all who live and die in that state, and who will ultimately descend into the gulf of eternal perdition. They are all those whose hearts are altogether buried in the world, whose whole mind, soul, and affections are occupied with the things of time and sense. These

universally may be said to *fare ill*, for they have not a single thing in them of which God approves, nothing whatever that can take them safe out of time into eternity; but, on the contrary, they have everything in them against which God has proclaimed his eternal displeasure, and everything which will one day hang like a millstone round their necks, to sink them into an awful eternity.

Again; All who are attempting to establish their own righteousness; all who are looking to anything in self to recommend them to the favour of God; all who are despising the blood of the Redeemer, and scorning Christ's imputed righteousness: all of these, however high they may stand in a profession of religion, will surely *fare ill*; for they mock the only true God, reject the only way of salvation, and have not fled to the only refuge and hiding-place set forth in the gospel.

Again; All *professors of doctrinal truth*, who have never spiritually felt the power of truth upon their hearts, *fare ill*; and they will fare ill to all eternity, unless God is pleased to work a change in them. There is nothing so deceitful as having "a form of godliness," while the "power" of it is denied; nothing so delusive as having a name to live, while the soul is dead before God. If there is one hypocritical character more than another, whom the man of God should point out, it is he that, with a profession, is destitute of vital godliness; that has the form of doctrinal truth in the judgment, but who never has experienced the power of that truth in his soul, humbling him in the dust, and raising him up to a spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Again; All who profess the truth *that live ungodly*; all that with a seared conscience walk in fleshly lusts, and through their misconduct bring a reproach upon the name and cause of Jesus Christ, *fare ill*, for they clearly manifest that they know nothing of "the grace of God," which teacheth us, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Titus 2:12.)

2. But *secondly*. The children of God, though they cannot fare ill

as to their eternal safety; though they are secure in Christ Jesus, and bound up in "the bundle of life" with the Lord the Lamb, yet may and frequently do in this time-state *fare ill*. And when do they fare ill? Sometimes they fare ill thus. Their hearts get buried in the things of time and sense; the world comes in with its charms or its business, and draws away their thoughts and affections from better things. Instead of their souls going after the Lord, in unutterable pantings, to enjoy a sense of his love and blood, their carnal mind goes after created things, madly seeking to derive some pleasure or profit from them.

My friends, many a tree outwardly flourishing has dust and touchwood inside; and so, many a child of God, though he may not have deviated from the outward observance of things that he once knew in power, and may seem to occupy his original position; yet he has lost the sweetness, unction, and savour of them in his heart. His affections are not now in heaven; the world has laid a secret hold on him; and instead of the life and power of God's word being felt in his soul, the dust of carnality, idolatry, and earthliness occupy his heart. But directly we lose the power and savour of divine things in the soul, we *fare ill*: nothing can make up for the unction and savour of divine truth in the heart. The clearest experience, the soundest creed, the most consistent conduct, the most regular attendance on the means, will never make up for the life, feeling, power, and presence of God in the soul. So, however a man (a child of God I am speaking of) may not appear outwardly to have backslidden from God, yet if his heart is secretly going out after idols; if he has lost the unction and power of the blessed Spirit on him, he *fares ill*, though none but God and his own conscience, or a discerning soul here and there, may perceive the difference.

Again. The people of God *fare ill*, when they substitute a *sound doctrinal creed for the experimental teachings of the Spirit in their hearts*. And this is a very possible case: it is not confined to those who are dead in a profession, but it is an evil that even God's people may be drawn into. They have had sufficient experience to separate them from those who are dead in a

doctrinal profession; but having lost the savour and sweetness of that experience out of their heart, and not being able to go back into the world, or herd with dead professors, they have been led to substitute the *doctrine* of truth for the *power* of truth, and walk in the outward light of the word instead of coming to the inward light of God's countenance, to live under his smiles, or breathe their souls out after his manifested favour.

In a word, God's people *fare ill* whenever they do not experience *the power or presence of the Lord in their hearts*. They *fare ill*, when anything religious or irreligious, inward or outward, in the church or in the world, affords pleasure or satisfaction short of and independent of the Lord. Directly they sit down or take rest anywhere, or in anything but at the feet of Jesus, and in his blood and love, they evidence a loss of spiritual health, and fall sick of that lethargy or paralysis which is the disease of those that are at "ease in Zion."

II.—But we pass on to consider the other branch of the subject, and to show what it is to "*fare well*." All God's people will eventually fare well. They all stand complete in Christ: nothing can touch their eternal safety; for they are all complete in him, "without spot, or blemish, or any such thing." In this point of view, they must all in the end and for ever *fare well*.

But when we come to the matter of experience, we often find that those very times when God's people think they are *faring ill*, are the seasons when they are really *faring well*; and again, at other times, when they think they are *faring well*, then they are really *faring ill*. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble, it often seems to them that they are *faring ill*. God's hand appears gone out against them: he has hidden his face from them; they can find no access to a throne of grace; they have no sweet testimonies from the Lord that the path in which he is leading them is one of his choosing, and that all things will end well with them. This they think is indeed *faring ill*; and yet perhaps they never fare better than when under these circumstances of trouble, sorrow, and affliction. These things

wean them from the world. If their heart and affections were going out after idols, they instrumentally bring them back. If they were hewing out broken cisterns, they dash them all to pieces. If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery, affliction and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes, take away their gods, and leave them no refuge but the Lord God of hosts. If you can only look back, you will often see that your greatest sweets have sprung out of your greatest bitters, and the greatest blessings have flowed from the greatest miseries, and what at the time you thought your greatest sorrows you will find that the brightest light has sprung up in the blackest darkness, and that the Lord never made himself so precious as at the time when you were sunk lowest, so as to be without human help, wisdom, or strength. So that when a child of God thinks he is *faring very ill*, because burdened with sorrows, temptations, and afflictions, he is never faring so well.

2. Again. A child of God *fares well* when he is enabled, in whatever circumstances and under whatever trials of mind he may be, to carry his case to the Lord, and spread it out at his footstool. We know, from painful experience, that the spring of prayer seems at times well nigh dried up in our hearts. We feel at times as though we never knew what it was to possess "a spirit of grace and of supplications," or to have access to God; as though we never knew what it was to pour out our hearts before him, or tell him our trouble. Whenever, therefore, we are enabled to take our case to the Lord, and spread it out (whatever it may be) at his footstool; not to resort to any unlawful means; not to go down to Egypt, or lean upon Assyria; not to trust to an arm of flesh; but under all circumstances, to lay our case simply and perseveringly before the Lord, looking to him alone to appear, we fare well. The darkest clouds in due time will break, the most puzzling enigmas will sooner or later be unriddled by the blessed Spirit interpreting them, and the darkest providences cleared up; and we shall see that God is in them all, leading and guiding us "by the right way, that we may go to a city of habitation." (Ps. 107:7.)

3. The children of God *fare well* when they have a *spiritual*

*appetite* and relish for divine truth, when they are really in earnest for divine things, and "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks," so their souls pant after the Lord. When they experience these hungerings and thirstings after the Lord's presence and manifested favour to their souls, they *fare well*. But we know that many times it is otherwise with us. We have often no more appetite or relish for the truths of the gospel than if we had never tasted anything of their sweetness, nor felt anything of their power. How often the Bible is to us a sealed book, and the truths of the gospel veiled in the thickest darkness! How often the testimony of the word concerning Jesus and the way of salvation are as completely hidden from our view as though there were no God, no Jesus, no heaven to desire, no hell to fear! So that when eternal things are really present to the mind, and we feel their solemn weight and power in the conscience; when the world is under our feet; the presence of God earnestly sought; the Bible opened up with some sweetness and power, and the blessed truths of the gospel relished with a keen appetite, we may *then* indeed be said to *fare well*. And thus the Lord's family, who have travelled long in the wilderness, and know by painful experience what a parched desert it is, when they come to some stream, bubbling unexpectedly forth, find that their long and wearisome journey only makes the water dearer and sweeter to their taste.

4. We *fare well* when in all things we *can resign ourselves into the hands of God*. There are many times when we cannot so resign ourselves; when we have a will of our own, some darling idol to grasp, some loved aim to accomplish, some object in view which is contrary to God's will and word. But when we are enabled to yield ourselves up into the hands of the Lord that he may work his will in us, when we are brought solemnly to say, "Not my will, but thine be done;" and resign ourselves as clay into the hands of the Potter, desiring to feel his heavenly fingers moulding us, so that we may be vessels of honour meet for the Master's use, we then *fare well*; for this is to walk in the footsteps of Christ, and follow his blessed example, when he said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," yet bowed his head to the will of his Father, and said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as

thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39.)

5. *We fare well* when we are dead to the world, and the world is dead to us; when it loses its hold upon our affections; when the perishing objects of time and sense do not interweave and intertwine themselves around every thread of our heart; when we can look on the world, and say in the expressive language of the apostle, "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.) What a representation is this! That the world had no more charms for him than it would have for a person on the cross, expiring in agony; and as we would naturally turn away our eyes with loathing from a malefactor writhing on a cross, so he spiritually turned away his eyes from a perishing world. But who of us can come up to this experience? How rarely are we even in this state, to find our hearts really separated from the world, and drawn away not merely from its company, but also from its wretched spirit. But when we feel ourselves in some measure drawn away from it, and our heart and affections fixed where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, we may then be said to *fare well*.

6. When we are enabled in any degree to *walk in the footsteps of Christ*; when, instead of returning railing for railing, we contrariwise return blessing; when one cheek is smitten, to turn the other; when we can bear injuries and insults, and instead of resenting them, we feel our hearts drawn out to forgive them; then indeed we may be said to *fare well*. But, alas! we find, on the contrary, so much of that other spirit in us, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;" blow for blow, word for word, look for look; as though we could not bear the slightest measure of reproach, or anything approaching to contempt. Yet how sweet it is, when instead of this miserable spirit, we have the least measure of the mind of Christ; when instead of envy, jealousy, wrath, and every cursed and devilish working, even against the people of God, our hearts are so melted down into love and affection to them, that we can bear with those things that most cut our flesh, and are most contrary to our natural feelings.

7. We *fare well* when *faith* is in exercise; and this we learn by knowing the power of unbelief. When unbelief is powerfully at work, then indeed we *fare ill*; we can overcome no temptation, resist no sin, forgive no injury, bear not a straw to lie across our path, nor the weight of a thread upon our mind. But when the soul is favoured with a living faith, and the Author of that faith is pleased to draw it out into blessed exercise, *that* indeed is a *faring well*. This blessed faith overcomes the world, purifies the heart, brings a sweet sense of heavenly realities into the soul, and draws upwards, all the affections of the soul.

8. We *fare well* also, when *hope*, that sister grace with faith and love, is in spiritual exercise; when gloom and despondency do not possess the mind; when the clouds of darkness and doubt, which hovered over the soul are dissipated, and some blessed gleams of life, light and love shine out of the Mediator's fulness into the heart. The mariner would *fare ill* did he go out to sea without his anchor; for when the storm came, and blew on a lee-shore, he would have nothing to hold his ship from running aground. But if he had cast anchor, as long as that held fast in the ground, he would *fare well*, whatever storms might rise, or winds blow. So, with the soul that is enabled to cast anchor on Christ, to rest on his covenant engagements, love, blood, and glorious righteousness, as long as the anchor holds, it will ride out every storm.

9. Again. When *love* is spiritually felt; when it flows out toward the blessed Lord, and is fixed upon him, then indeed the soul may be said to *fare well*. When instead of having the heart divided, and so found faulty; instead of having a thousand roving imaginations, and oftentimes base lusts, hovering over us like birds of prey, and snatching off in their talons every spiritual feeling, these vultures are driven away.

10. And when, too, in spite of all the darkness that may have abounded in the mind, all the difficulties of the narrow path, all the backslidings committed, and all the snares in which the feet have been entangled, the soul feels all right for eternity, then

indeed it may be said to *fare well*; for it is bound for a blessed eternity, for a land where tears shall be for ever wiped away from all faces.

The Apostle's short and simple prayer to God for those to whom he was writing was, that they might "*fare well*." It was the desire of his heart, that they might enjoy those rich spiritual blessings that God alone could communicate; and in uttering this parting word, he breathed out with it the genuine wish of his soul. And its being couched in the form of a petition and not an exhortation, shows that there is not anything in us that can cause us to *fare well*; that it is not to be produced by any good deeds or good words of ours, not to be brought about by our own prayers, not merited by our own exertions; but that it is wholly and solely the gift of God, for he only can make us, under every circumstance, and in every time and place, really to *fare well*.

The living family, then, will not be attempting to cause themselves to *fare well*; but will be continually looking up to the Lord to make it fare well with them; they will be seeking his blessed face, and casting themselves from time to time at his footstool, that he would cause all things to work together for their spiritual good, that it may fare well here and hereafter with their souls.

But what different views persons have of faring ill and faring well! If I were to go into the street, and ask the first man I met with what it was to fare well, he would tell me, no doubt, that to enjoy health of body, to have riches and respectability, and be surrounded with worldly comforts, would be to fare well; while at the same time he is, in the sight of a holy God, only filling up the measure of his iniquity, and will at last, if grace prevent not, sink into an awful eternity. But were I to go to some poor child of God, who is depressed by poverty, suffering under ill health, afflicted with grievous trials, exercised with sore temptations, harassed by the devil, and continually plagued and perplexed by his own corrupt heart; and ask him, "What it is to fare well?" he, I believe, would answer, "To fare well would be to enjoy the life, light and love of God in my soul; to have testimonies from the

Lord that I am his; to find Satan put under my feet; to experience the blood of sprinkling on my conscience; to taste a sense of pardoning love; to walk in the light of God's countenance; to find the Lord with me in all my sufferings; to feel that I am safe in his hand, and that at last he will land me safe in a blessed eternity." Now these two persons would give a very different answer to the question; and yet perhaps to the eye of sense, one of them might be enjoying the height of prosperity, while the other might be in the depths of adversity; the one possessing health, and all that the world could offer, yea, as the Psalmist says, "His eyes standing out with fatness, and having more than heart could wish;" while the other might be pitied as the most miserable wretch alive; and yet really be the man whom princes might envy, and kings delight to honour, and a jewel that shall one day shine brightly in the kingdom of God. But suppose the Lord himself were to put the question to your hearts (instead of my putting it) in some solemn manifestation, as he came to Solomon by night, and ask you, "What you most desired?" if he were to come to us spiritually in that manner, and say, "I will answer thy petition and thy request, what is it thy soul most desires? Thy body perhaps is afflicted with disease; shall it be health? Thou art distressed with poverty; shall it be riches? Thou art despised and contemned; shall it be honour? If ignorant and uneducated; shall it be learning? Is everything in providence against thee; shall it be everything in providence for thee? Shall all these things be given to thee, and all summed up and concentrated as an answer to thy petition?" If God has touched your heart with his finger, you would answer, "No, Lord; I cannot be satisfied with these. Rather give me poverty and affliction with thy blessing: only give me a sufficiency to carry my poor body through life, and I am contented, whatever else thou deniest me. But do not deny me spiritual blessings; give me a manifestation of thy presence; deny me not the guidance and leading of thy hand; deny me not a sense of thy love and of thy power; deny me not a testimony that thou art leading me safely through the waste howling wilderness, and will present me faultless before thy face for ever." You may say, when I thus put the question, "These are my desires, these are the objects which my heart is

really fixed upon, and the things which I sincerely feel I want to have." But let me now put another question, and that is, "If so, are these things what you breathe out from time to time into the bosom of God?" It is very well, when the question is put, to answer, "These are my desires:" but you know we read, "The sluggard desireth, and hath not." Whenever God implants them in the soul, you will not be content with merely expressing a few desires; but there will be solemn pantings and breathings of your heart into the bosom of God that he would lead you effectually into the experience of the truth; there will be in your conscience from time to time "a spirit of grace and supplications;" and you will be restless, discontented, and dissatisfied with every thing short of God's manifested presence. There will be a turning from the creature, and all that the creature can present, and a cry and a sigh rising up into the ears of the Lord, telling him that nothing but himself will content your soul; that his favour in providence will not content you; that you must have *Himself*, and that nothing but himself can really satisfy your heart. If a man is here, he is *faring well*, whatever may be his exercises, temptations, or distresses, for the Lord is guiding him in the footsteps of the flock, and opening his heart to receive the truth in the love and power of it.

But when the Lord is really leading our souls in this path, every thing seems to be against us. True religion is such a mystery. When we think we are faring well, we are often faring ill; when we think we are faring ill, we are often faring well; when we think that now we have got into an easy, smooth, and comfortable path, it is then leading us wrong; and when we say, 'The path is so rugged and intricate; we are so perplexed, and so little able to see the way that we fear we are out of the track altogether,' *that* is the very time when the Lord is leading us in the right way. Sometimes when we say, 'Now the Lord will appear,' the Lord does not appear at all; and when we are saying, 'The path is so dark that we can scarce hope the Lord can appear;' in a moment he will take away the cloud, and make his appearance. When we are ready to say, 'The case is so desperate, we can hardly expect a remedy,' *that* is the very time for the remedy to come. When

we may say, 'This is just the eve of a deliverance,' the deliverance is put farther back, and the soul sinks deeper into a sense of guilt and misery; and when we may say, 'We are so black and polluted, such awful sinners, such horrible creatures, that the Lord cannot look on us,' that is the very moment when he may smile into the heart. When we may think we are getting on at a rapid pace in spirituality and holiness, making wonderful advances in the divine life, and getting almost to the pinnacle of creature perfection, we discover through some terrible inward slip, that we are on the wrong scent, and have been drawn aside by self-righteousness and pharisaical pride. So that at last we seem brought to this point, to have no wisdom of our own to see the way, and to have no strength to walk in the way when seen, but that we must be guided every step by the Lord himself; and thus we sink down into creature nothingness and creature emptiness, and feel no more merit in our heart, lip, or life, why God should save us, than there is in Satan himself; and thus we sink so low that none but God himself can lift us up. And this is the very time when God usually appears, and most singularly displays his mercy, love, and grace.

Now, it is by walking in this trying path that we learn our utter ruin, and learn to prize God's salvation. The power of saving truth is only prized by those whom God is thus teaching. Others are satisfied with shadows, but those that are deeply exercised in their mind, must have the substance. Those who have had their false refuges destroyed, their lying hopes broken, and a thousand difficulties and perplexities surrounding them, as the Lord opens the eyes, and brings his truth before them, want the power and application of this truth to their heart. Nothing suits or satisfies them but the unction of the Spirit, and the dew of God's power and presence resting on and felt in their souls. They can no longer be satisfied with the mere form, no longer rest for salvation on a few notions, no longer hang their eternal all upon the good opinion of the creature.

And thus, by this painful work in their souls, they learn that they have no more religion than God works in them; that they can

only know what God teaches them; that they can only have what he communicates to them; and that they are wholly and solely dependent upon him to guide and keep them every moment of their lives. Worldly men indeed despise them, professors hate them, the devil harasses them, their names are generally cast out as evil, and universal charity, which has a good opinion of all, has not a single, good word for them. That they are such a mystery to others is no wonder, when they are such a mystery to themselves. How they hold on they cannot tell; but they find they cannot move unless God moves them. How they pray is a mystery, yet at times they feel the spirit of prayer alive in their bosoms. How their souls are kept pleading and waiting for the Lord at the footstool of his mercy is a mystery, yet they cannot deny that this is the experience of their hearts. So that when they come to look at the way in which the Lord has led them, from first to last, it is all an unfathomable mystery. Why God should have chosen them in Christ is a mystery; why he should have quickened their souls when "dead in trespasses and sins," is a mystery; why he should have wrought a sense of contrition in their hearts is a mystery; why he should have given a sense of his love to them is a mystery; why he should have preserved them from error, while thousands have been entangled in it, is a mystery; and why he should keep them day by day, and hour by hour, without suffering them to disgrace his cause, deny his truth, turn their back on God, or go into the world, is a mystery. And yet they find that they have and are all these things; so that the greatest mystery of all is, that they are what they are.

Thus, do they *fare well*, because God takes care they shall fare well; he manages all their concerns, he watches over them by night and by day: he waters them continually, and he guides and leads them till he brings them to his heavenly kingdom.

But, in the full sense of the word, they will never entirely *fare well*, until they drop their mortal bodies into the dust, till the "old man" is completely annihilated, the root of sin for ever perished, and their immortal souls united with their glorified bodies before the throne of the Lamb, shall sing to all eternity the high praises of their God. Then they will *fare well*, because they will have

nothing then to make them fare ill; sin, which is now their burden, will be known no more; all their sorrows and pains will be turned into joy; and the tears, which now often run down their cheeks, will then be all wiped away. They will then *fare well*, because they will see him as he is in whom their hearts are fixed, and will be swallowed up in the eternal enjoyment of his bliss and glory.

With what better word, then, can I conclude than "Farewell?" And in uttering that word, I desire to breathe it from my heart, "*Brethren, fare well.*" May your hearts be kept alive to divine things; may you never wander from the truth; never seek for happiness from the things of time and sense; never lean on an arm of flesh; never trust to your own righteousness; never get into an openly backsliding state, and go after idols; never be entangled by secret lusts and besetting sins; and never bring a disgrace upon the cause of God and truth.

May you, then, fare well; I will not add the word "*finally,*" in the words of the text, "finally, brethren, fare well." I will not then say "finally," though the Lord only knows whether we shall ever see each other again in the flesh. But I simply breathe forth the desires of my heart for your temporal and spiritual welfare; and conclude with the words of the Apostle, "*Brethren, farewell.*"

## **A Father's Expostulation and Enquiry**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 14, 1844

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Hosea 6:4

I know not any part of Scripture more difficult to understand than the book of Hosea. It is difficult to understand it literally; and it is more difficult, if possible, to understand it experimentally. It is difficult, literally, because we know so little of the historical circumstances of Ephraim (or Israel), under which these prophecies were delivered; and it is difficult to understand it spiritually and experimentally, because the different traits of Ephraim's character are so scattered up and down this book, that it is very hard to bring them together so as to form out of them a complete description. And yet a few words upon the literal meaning of the book may be preparatory to entering into the experimental meaning of it.

Under what historical circumstances, then, were the prophecies of Hosea written? They were addressed, for the most part, to Israel; that is, to the ten tribes who separated under Jeroboam from Judah, and who, a short time after Hosea's prophecy, were carried into captivity by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. It was therefore to the ten tribes known under the name of Ephraim (that being the most important tribe of them all), that Hosea, a short period previous to their captivity, delivered these prophecies.

But when we look at the spiritual meaning of the book, we find a deeper signification in it than any mere literal address to the ten tribes. We see in it a character, a spiritual character, set forth and described under the name of Ephraim; and who and what this spiritual character is, we may make the subject of some enquiry.

One thing, at first sight, I think is evident, that a child of God is set forth under the name of Ephraim: for the promises are so great and glorious, that none but a living soul can be addressed in them; and yet a child of God under peculiar circumstances and in a peculiar state.

Let us endeavour, then, to gather up a few of the traits of Ephraim's character.

1. The grand distinguishing feature of Ephraim seems to be this, *that he was "a backslider."* We read, for instance, "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer;" (4:16) and we find the Lord addressing to him a promise in that state, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." (14:4.)

2. This backsliding of Ephraim was the real root of all his other sad evils; we find therefore, that he was also *an idolater.* "Ephraim is joined to idols." (4:17.) Idolatry is the source of backsliding. No sooner do we depart from the "Fountain of living waters," than we "hew out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water;" no sooner do we run in our desires after idols than backsliding begins; and when backsliding begins, rapid is the progress that it makes.

3. Another feature of Ephraim's character traced out in this book, was, that he was *mixed up with the world.* "Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people." (7:8.) He had become entangled in the world, had forsaken the company of God's people, and got into close connection with those who feared not the Lord. Thus his heart had become hardened, and his conscience deadened; and he was as "a cake not turned." What a striking figure is this! It was not all dough, so as to be moulded by the divine hand; it was not all bread, so as to be good food; but it was burnt on one side, and dough on the other; neither fit for God nor man; neither suited to the world, or the church. "Strangers" too, we are told, "have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not." (7:9.) There was, if we may use the expression, a secret drain upon his constitution; he had got so entangled in the world and so buried

in the things of time and sense, that these strangers, as a disease in his vitals, had "devoured all his strength." "Grey hairs" too, were "here and there upon him." He had lost the vigour of youth, and the wrinkles of age were seen spreading themselves over him, and yet "he knew it not."

Now these traits, and I might, if time allowed, notice others, show that the distinguishing feature of Ephraim's character was, that *he was a backslider*. Like many of the Lord's people, his heart had become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What little feeling he had was momentary and transient, like "the morning cloud and early dew." So that all God's providences and all God's judgments had little effect upon him. And therefore, in the words of the text, the Lord says to him, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?"

Here the Lord takes the language of a tender father. A parent, perhaps, has a very wayward child: say, a son, grown up, who will follow his own ways, and over whom the parent has lost his original control. To regain his authority, he treats him with the greatest kindness, but that does not succeed; next he tries harsh measures, and these have no effect; sometimes he is distant, but that does not alter his course; sometimes friendly, but that does not change his conduct. And though, at times, the son may have some workings in his heart towards his father, "like the early cloud and morning dew," and has transient determinations not to go on in his wayward and rebellious course: yet kindness and severity equally fail. The father, therefore, sometimes says, "What shall I do with him? What shall I do to him? Whatever course I take, whatever means I employ, all are alike fruitless; he is just the same wayward creature, and all that I do does not seem in the least to mend him."

Now, in that sense, we may say, the words of the text are words of *expostulation*, as if reasoning with Ephraim, arguing the matter over, putting the case before him, and saying, "What plan next shall I adopt! What is the next course I shall pursue!"

But there is another meaning of the word, which I think I may take without violently straining it from its original signification, and that is, *an enquiry*: "What shall I do unto thee?" "Tell me what it shall be, and I will do it."

If we look, then, at the question, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" *first*, as an *expostulation*; and *next*, as an *enquiry*, if God the Spirit shall throw a light upon it, and bring it with power to our heart, it may be for our edification to consider the text in these two points of view.

I.—*First*, then, by way of *expostulation*. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Now, the Lord does not ask this question as though he were ignorant what course to take, for he knew perfectly well all that he meant to do. But he expostulates as a man might reason with his neighbour; for this is the way in which God sometimes speaks. He condescends to take into his lips the language of man. As we find him speaking of his arm, or his hand, or his ear, parts that only belong to the human body; so here he adopts a language of a man, as though he were in doubt, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?"

But alas, when we get into a backsliding state, (and O! who does not get into a backsliding state, I should like to know?) it seems as though nothing that the Lord said could move us. Perhaps, we have heavy afflictions; but these do not bring us nearer to him; they only stir up rebellion, make us peevish and fretful, and increase our natural perverseness. As we read, (Isaiah 57:17), "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Like a sulky child, the more the parent strikes, the more sullen it is; the parent may break the rod on the child's back before he breaks the child's heart. And so God in his providence may break us to pieces by afflictions, but not break our hearts into contrition and godly sorrow. So on the other hand, the Lord may show us great kindness temporally, may shower down upon us providential favours, give us our natural heart's desire, and prosper every plan. But these favours will not bring us out of our

backsliding state, wean us from idolatry, or make us say, "What have I any more to do with idols!" Thus, whether the storm of adversity blows, or the sun of providence shines, the backslider still goes on in the frowardness of his own heart, and the perverseness of his own way.

II.—But we may take the words of the text in a *way of enquiry*; and to that meaning I shall chiefly confine myself. It is as though the Lord had said, "Come to me, come to my throne; tell me, tell me, all that is in thine heart; tell me, tell me, all that thy soul wants to have accomplished; tell me, tell me, all the desires that heave and ferment in thy bosom." "O Ephraim, *what* shall I do unto thee?"

When the base backslider gets a little softened (and the Lord does soften him sometimes, as we read, "I will be as the dew unto Israel," Hosea 14:5); when the dew falls into the backslider's heart, it softens, melts, and breaks him down; for when the Lord heals his backslidings, it is sure to break his heart all to pieces. When, then, he calls up Ephraim before him, and says, "What shall I do unto thee?" what a long list of petitions does Ephraim then bring. For now that he can get the King's ear, he pours out his petition before the King's throne. Having the privilege of pouring out all his soul and telling out all his desires, what a list, what a catalogue of petitions is he enabled to spread before his divine Majesty. And is it not sweet to have some access unto the Lord in prayer? If you know anything of access to God, you have felt the secret of vital godliness in your soul. Is it not, then, sweet to enter the throne-room, and be admitted into the very presence of the King? There are times and seasons when we can open our hearts before the Lord, and tell him every desire and want that heave and ferment in our minds. They are indeed very rare seasons, but very sweet and blessed when granted. And if ever the Lord give us a heart to plead, he has an ear to hear; and if ever he give us access to himself, he will grant every petition we are enabled, under the teachings of his Spirit, to spread before his throne.

Let us, then, take the words in a *way of enquiry*: "O Ephraim, what is it thy heart longs after? Tell me, and it shall be granted?" We will go, then, with the poor backslider to the throne; and with him, we will, if the Lord enable us, simply, humbly, and sincerely tell the Lord what we want him to do with and for us.

1. *Pardon of sin by the healing of his backslidings* is one of the things Ephraim would ask of the Lord, if he gave him an open mouth before his throne; for the Lord has said, "I will pardon them whom I reserve." (Jer. 50:20.) Ephraim, therefore, says (Hosea 14:2), "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Now when we feel what we are and have been; when we have a solemn feeling in our conscience what base wretches, what vile rebels, what filthy monsters we are and how polluted with everything black and horrible from day to day, and hour to hour; and when we feel shining upon us the purity and holiness of God's nature, how we long to have the manifested healing of all these sins sealed upon the conscience. And if the Lord does but speak into the heart, and say, "What shall I do unto thee? what is it thy soul most earnestly desires?" the answer would be, "That my backslidings may be healed, that my sins may be forgiven, that my aggravated crimes may be blotted out, that my transgressions may be cast behind thy back, and that my soul may be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." And as the soul is enabled to spread this petition before the throne, the pardon is in a measure given. No sooner does the soul ask in faith, than it receives in faith; and the power to plead in faith brings down the gracious manifested answer. How strikingly was this the case with Isaiah (6:5-7) and Daniel (9:20-23). Thus, the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord: make thy petition deep and large. "Ask it either in the depth, or the height above" (Isaiah 7:11); and tell me what thou wantest?

Now, my friends, take this as a piece of counsel. I speak it not in a legal way; I trust I know something spiritually and experimentally of what I am saying. When the Lord favours your soul with sweet access at a throne of grace, make the most of it.

What should we think of the master of a vessel coming up the river, if, when the wind was favourable and the tide served, he would not heave her anchor, or hoisted but her fore-sail to the breeze, and would not take full advantage of wind and tide? Now it is so sometimes with our souls; a gale blows, a gale of grace on the soul, and the tide of faith rises. Is it not our wisdom, and is it not our mercy, at such a rare season, to make the most of it? If the Lord deign to give us an ear, is it not our mercy to tell him all that our souls desire? Do you recollect what the Prophet said to the king who only struck his arrows three times on the ground, and then stayed? "The man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." (2 Kings 13:19.) Had he continued to strike his arrows on the ground, so many more victories would have been obtained; the prophet therefore was angry with him because he stayed his hand.

Sometimes it is so with us. When the Lord gives us some little access unto himself, we do not make the most of it. Satan casts in some fiery dart, some worldly circumstance distracts our mind, some filthy imagination rises up in our bosom; and instead of resisting the devil that he may flee from us, we give way to him; the opportunity is gone, the sweet moment is lost, and it may be months before we get the ear of the King again. It will, therefore, be your wisdom and your mercy, when the gale blows, and the tide rises, to spread every sail, and to get as far as you can on your course to the haven of eternal rest and joy.

2. But again; when the Lord says to the soul, "What shall I do unto thee?" would not the petition be, "*Lord, that thou wouldest manifest thyself unto me; that thou wouldest reveal thy glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and dying love in my heart?*" When the soul has known something of the love of Jesus, does it not want the veil to be removed, that it may without interruption behold the Object whom it loves? He that has seen anything of the beauty, preciousness, and glory of the Lamb of God, does he not want nearer and dearer, sweeter and more

frequent communications and revelations, of his gracious and blessed Majesty? And if the soul be privileged and enabled to come before his throne, and the Lord should say, "What shall I do unto thee?" "Tell me what thy heart most earnestly desires;" will there not be some filial breathings to the Lord, that he would manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world? Would not the language be, "O that I might have such a sweet discovery of thy glorious Person, and such a blessed manifestation of thy dying love, as shall give me union and communion with thy glorious Self, and bless me now and for ever?" Sure am I, if the soul gets the King's ear, it will want to see the King in his beauty; sure am I, if ever the soul is indulged with access to Jesus, it will say, "Lord, do discover thyself to me, that I may see thee in all thy beauty and all thy loveliness."

3. But the King is not tired with listening; his almighty ear is not weary of the many petitions presented at such times. He still says, "What shall I do unto thee?" If, then, we get the King's ear, we shall feel ourselves under the Spirit's inward leadings, teachings, and guidings; and we shall have a great many wants, and a long list of petitions to spread at his feet. One will be, *that he would make our conscience tender in his fear*. Where the conscience is tender, we shall fear to offend him, shall want to please him, shall desire to walk in his footsteps, to be conformed to his image, and long to have his likeness stamped upon us; we shall want to abstain from all that he hates, and cleave to that which he loves. And when he brings us near to himself, and says, "What shall I do unto thee?" "Make my conscience tender," answers the soul; "let my heart be softened and meekened;" let the fear of the Lord be in perpetual exercise; let me see the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness; let me perceive the snares that Satan is spreading for my feet, and let me, through thy mercy and thy grace, avoid them; let me never do anything to displease thee; and let my walk, conduct, and conversation be consistent, and such as is well-pleasing in thy sight." Sure I am, if the Lord only say, "What shall I do unto thee?" and we feel that he is able and willing to do what our souls need, to have a conscience made tender in his fear, will be one of the first and foremost requests.

Was not this the prayer of Jabez? And God has seen fit to write it down for our instruction. "O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and *that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me?*" (1 Chron. 4:10.) And was not this one of the petitions which God heard and granted?

4. But again. If the Lord say to the soul, "What shall I do unto thee?" It would answer, "*Lord give me communion with thyself;* let me know what it is to walk with thee and talk with thee, as a man talketh and walketh with his friend; let my soul mount up into holy fellowship with thee, and know what it is to have sweet and heavenly communion with the King of kings." What intercourse is to be compared with this? We go into the world; and what does intercourse with the world do for us? It defiles our conscience, hardens our heart, pollutes our minds, and fills us with everything sensual and carnal. We go among professors; and what does intercourse with them do for us. It either puffs us up with pride and presumption, or sends us away dead and barren. We go sometimes among the children of God; and have we not found lightness and frivolity too often in them? (I will not say always, for sometimes we get light and life, power, strength, and consolation from the people of God.) But what do we frequently get? Perhaps, from some dear friend we get wounds, have our minds pained, or imbibe carnality and death. But what do we get from the Lord, if ever we are enabled to commune with him? Some conformity to his image; some power from his presence; some communication of light and life from him in whom light and life eternally dwell. And if your soul knows anything of being brought out of the world, as the Lord says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee" (Isaiah 26:20); if you know anything of going into the chambers, and closing the doors about you; if you know anything, in solemn moments, of breathing your souls out before the Lord; you will feel, that five minutes' communion with the Lord of life and glory is more profitable and sweet, than an hour's intercourse with the most holy and highly favoured of his people.

5. But again; for we have not yet exhausted our list of petitions: if the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" We shall reply, "*Lord, break every snare my soul is entangled with; deliver me from every temptation that catches and entangles my roving feet; remove every idol that interposes between thyself and my soul; take away insincerity, hypocrisy, and superstition; purge and cleanse me from self-righteousness, and from the hateful dominion of every idol.*" And the Lord will not be angry with us, if we ask him to do these things in us and for us. He himself first implants the desires which he means to answer; he first kindles the prayer that he means to grant; and therefore he is not angry with us for asking him to do those things that he means to bestow; he loves to hear the cry of the humble before his throne. And as the Lord brings us into some measure of union and communion with himself, he dethrones these idols, breaks these snares, overcomes these temptations, makes us honest and sincere before him, and purges out that wretched hypocrisy of which our hearts are full to overflowing.

6. Again. If the Lord says, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" another petition will be, "*That I may be the clay, and thou the Potter; and that I may feelingly and experimentally be the work of thy hands; that I may know thy will, and do it; that I may be moulded into a measure of conformity to thy likeness; that I may feel thy gracious fingers working in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure; and find and feel myself a vessel of mercy made meet for the Master's use.* When a man is brought here, it is the death of pride in him; free-will gives up the ghost, when human exertion utterly fails, and the soul lies helpless and powerless before the Lord. And until free-will, self-righteousness, creature exertions, and human merit are dried up and withered away, till they all give up the ghost, we can never come into that spot where we are the clay, and God is the Potter. Can the clay make itself into a vessel? Can it mould itself into shape and form? Can it start from its bed, and work itself up into a vessel for use or ornament? Nor more can we make ourselves fit for glory, or mould ourselves into vessels of honour. If the Lord do but give us the feeling in our souls, our sweetest privilege, our dearest

enjoyment, is to be the clay. Free-will, self-righteousness, human wisdom, and creature strength—we give them all to the Pharisees; let them make the most of them. But when the Lord indulges our souls with some measure of access to himself, and brings us in all humility and brokenness to lie low before his throne, we feel that we are nothing but what he makes us, have nothing but what he gives us, experience nothing but what he works in us, and do nothing but what he does in and for us. To be here, and to lie here, is to be the clay; and to find the Lord working in us holy desires, fervent breathings, secret cries, and the actings of faith, hope, and love; and to feel these things freely given, graciously communicated, and divinely wrought, and to know the Lord is doing all this for us and in us, is to find him the Potter, and is to be brought to the sweetest, lowliest, and happiest spot that a soul can come into.

There may be some here, perhaps, who think they shall get to heaven by creature piety, native holiness, human exertion, and natural wisdom. I solemnly tell you, that you will find it all a blank and an awful deception; and believe me such a way of getting to heaven is nothing else but a delusion of the Devil, and the spawn of our own self-righteous hearts. We have no natural power, no creature wisdom in the things of God; for we are and have nothing but as God gives and spiritually works it in us. Nor will the knowledge and experience of man's misery and of God's mercy lead a man to sin; but it will make him heavenly-minded, dead to the world, full of love to God and to God's people, to which the creature with all its exertions never could possibly attain.

7. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee!" Most of the Lord's people have some peculiar thing that they want to have granted. Most living souls have some peculiar temptation from which they want to be delivered. If some of the Lord's people could sum up all their desires in one petition, it would be to *have the pardon of their sins sealed upon the conscience*. If others of God's people could crowd up in one sentence all the wants of their soul, it would be *to be brought into the enjoyment of gospel liberty*. If others could condense in one short prayer the chief desire of their

heart, it would be *to be delivered from some powerful temptation, or be preserved from some peculiar besetment*. And if others could get into one request the longings that heave in their bosom, it would be *to be relieved from some special trial or trouble* that at times seems as though it would weigh them down to the dust. When the Lord, then, does but enable them to come before him, and tell him what is working in their hearts, it is as though he said, "Be not afraid to tell me; I know it already; I have the power to grant thy request; I have the will to bestow the desired answer. 'What shall I do unto thee?' Tell me what it is?" The Lord encourages and enables every one that he thus draws near to himself to tell him what he most needs; and when he is enabled to lay them before his throne, it is half answered. The needed blessing is on its way; like Gabriel, it has left the palace, and is speeding its course to the soul.

But in what path must we travel before we can tell the Lord what our soul chiefly desires to have granted? Before we can come here, we must see an end of all perfection; we must be brought off from depending on or looking to creature righteousness; our strength must have become weakness, our wisdom folly, our knowledge ignorance; all we once proudly thought we were must have faded away, and become like a vision of the night. We must sink down into the ruins of the creature, before we rise up feelingly and spiritually in Jesus; we must come to the end of all creature religion, creature exertions, creature refuge, creature help, before in godly sincerity and spiritual simplicity we can come before the Lord, and ask him to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Now this is the main reason why so few of us know what it is to have manifest answers to our prayers. How we go on, many of us, year after year, praying and desiring, and do not get a clear answer! Why is this? Because these prayers and desires are half-hearted. They are like Ephraim's cake; they want turning; they do not come from the heart. Our fleshly religion has not been thoroughly broken, turned upside down, brought to confusion, reduced to beggary and thorough insolvency. How we read, "When they had nothing to pay," (O what a qualification!) "he frankly forgave them both." Now too

many of God's people are like the servant in the gospel, who said to his master, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Most of God's people try at first to make some composition with their great Creditor; as a man sinking in the world, sooner than be a bankrupt, will compound with his creditors for five shillings in the pound. But as long as we have a penny in the pound to pay, the whole debt remains against us. As Hart says,

"'Tis perfect poverty alone  
That sets the soul at large;  
While we can call one mite our own,  
We have no full discharge."

But many of God's people who have not been brought to this spot are afraid to come here. How many a sinking tradesman dare not look into his accounts! He will borrow money at immense interest, give bills, or do anything to shore up his sinking credit: but at last, down he comes with tenfold more ruin to himself and others than though he had broke at the first. Some of God's people are like this sinking tradesman; they will shore up their rotten credit by borrowing good opinions from others; will make vows, promises, and resolutions, and use every exertion and attempt to avoid beggary. But, sooner or later, the bills come back on them; they are all dishonoured; God will not accept them; and down they go, where they should have gone at first, into thorough ruin, complete beggary, and utter insolvency. And when they are brought here, there is a full acquittance; the debt is paid; and when the Lord brings his dying love into their consciences, they get full discharge. As in nature, so in grace; to have nothing and to be nothing but a beggar and a pauper, how it lowers the topsails of human pride! To have nothing in self to rest and hang upon, leaves but a step between hell and the soul. To pull down everything in self is to take away the wall that keeps us from falling down the precipice. But the truth is, that till self is dethroned, till creature righteousness, creature piety, creature exertions, and creature strength are brought to nought, we do not enter into the power, blessedness, and reality of Christ's kingdom; we are not fit guests to sit down at the marriage supper

of the Lamb. We cannot enter into the treasures of pardoning love, see the riches of atoning blood, and feel the glory and beauty of justifying righteousness, till that idol, religious self, is hurled from its pedestal. Whilst full of pride and self, we cannot follow Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane, nor see, by the eye of faith, the suffering, groaning, agonizing, bleeding Son of God; we cannot take our station at the foot of the cross, and behold the wondrous mystery of Immanuel, the God-Man, bleeding and dying there. While we are engaged in looking at our own pharisaic religion, our own piety, our own exertions, our own doings, we have no eyes to see Jesus, no ear to hear his voice. We are so enamoured with ourselves that the King of kings has no beauty in our eyes; he is to us as "a root out of a dry ground, and there is no form nor comeliness in him that we should desire him." But when we begin to see, shall I say, the ugliness, the depravity, the dreadful workings of self, we see how impossible it is that self can ever stand before God. And when we feel the ruin of self, then we begin to feel what a glorious salvation has been accomplished, according to the counsel and mind of God. We see the Lord of life and glory stooping down to save wretches who could never climb up to him, pardoning criminals that have no righteousness of their own, and opening up the treasures of his dying love and risen glory to those who without him must utterly perish. As this is revealed to faith, faith embraces it as the great "mystery of godliness;" hope casts out her anchor, and enters within the veil; and love flows out to Jesus, and embraces him in the arms of affection for such dying love as that which the Son of God manifested on the cross of Calvary. Now this experience puts the sinner in his right place; it debases him in his feelings, humbles him in his soul, and breaks him to nothing. And at the same time, it exalts the Lord Jesus in his affections, and he becomes manifestly in his conscience as his "all in all." So that he lives for nothing else but so live unto him, and he dies for nothing else except to be with him; and he thus feels the power of that Scripture, "whether we live we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. 14:8.)

Just suffer me, then, by way of summing up and bringing these things into a narrow compass, to lay down these two broad lines of truth; and may the Lord in his mercy seal them upon our consciences. There are two grand lessons to be learnt in the school of Christ, and all divine teaching is comprehended and summed up in them. One is to learn by the Spirit's teaching, what we are by nature; so as to see and feel the utter ruin and thorough wreck of self, and the complete beggary, weakness, and helplessness of the creature in the things of God. This is the first grand branch of divine teaching. And we have to learn this lesson day by day, "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Through this branch of divine teaching we have almost daily to wade, and sometimes to sink into very painful depths under a sense of our depraved nature. And the other grand branch of divine teaching is, "To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." To know *who* Jesus is, and to know *what* he is; to know the efficacy of his atoning blood to purge the guilty conscience; the power of his justifying righteousness to acquit and absolve from all sin; the mystery of his dying love to break down the hardness of our heart, and raise up a measure of love towards him; and to see, by the eye of faith, his holy walk and suffering image, so as to be in some measure conformed to him, and have his likeness in some measure stamped upon our souls.

By these two branches of divine teaching does the Spirit make and keep the children of God humble. And all our various providences, trials, temptations, and deliverances; all we pass through in nature, and all we pass through in grace; in a word, the whole course of circumstances by which the child of God finds himself surrounded, all tend to lead him into these two paths—either into a deeper knowledge of himself, or a deeper knowledge of Christ; and under some form or other to humble him, and exalt the Lord of life and glory; thus eventually causing "all things to work together for the good" of his soul, and every event in providence and every dealing in grace to terminate in God's eternal glory. To this point all the dealings of the Spirit tend, and in this channel all the teachings of the Spirit run. And every

teaching (or what we think is teaching) and every experience (or what we think is experience), that does not run in this channel, and does not tend to this point—to abase us, and to bring us down to the dust; and at the same time exalt the Lord of life and glory, and put the crown on his blessed head—all experience, or fancied experience (for there is a great deal of fancied experience in the church) that does not run in this channel, or tend to this point, does not spring from the teachings of God the Spirit in the heart; for his covenant office is, to take of the things of Christ, and make them known to the soul, so as to exalt and glorify Jesus. Thus all his dealings, leadings, guidings, and teachings are for this purpose, and to this end; and will eventually terminate in the consolation and salvation of all the redeemed, and to Jehovah's glory, who, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is worthy of all adoration, honour, power, praise, thanksgiving, and glory, both now and for ever.

## The Feet of the Saints Kept

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 31, 1845

"He will keep the feet of his saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The person that uttered these words knew their meaning spiritually and experimentally—the only way whereby divine truth can be known. I need scarcely observe, that they were uttered by that deeply taught and highly favoured child of God, Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel. There is scarcely any saint whose experience is recorded in the Scriptures that I have felt more communion with than this afflicted handmaid of the Lord; for she was led in a peculiar path of trial and temptation; and had to mourn over her natural, as I have had to mourn over my spiritual barrenness. She knew too the only place to which she could go for the removal of this barrenness—the throne of grace, where she could pour out her heart before the Lord. And she knew too by personal experience, what it was for "the poor to be taken out of the dust, and the needy to be lifted out of the dunghill, to be made to sit with princes, and to inherit the throne of glory."

Speaking then by divine inspiration, she utters *a promise* in the text. This promise, like all other promises dropped from the mouth of Jehovah, is absolute and unconditional; and yet, though absolute and unconditional, is limited—that is, to the children of God. But you will observe, the limitation is not so pointed, nor so particular as in some other promises. For instance; it is not confined to the "poor and needy;" it is not limited to the "hungry and thirsty." In a word, it is not restricted to the various marked and definite characters among the family of God; but it unfolds in its ample bosom, and embraces in its widely opened arms all the living family. It is not, then, a promise limited to any definite experience; but it is one absolute and irrespective of all conditions; and yet manifestly embraces the whole of God's elect people. "He will keep the feet of his saints."

With God's blessing, then, I shall endeavour this evening to unfold the mind of the Holy Ghost in the text by describing *first*, who the "saints" are, for whom the promise is intended; and *secondly*, how the Lord fulfils his promise, that "He will keep their feet."

I.—With respect to the sanctification of God's people, each Person of the Trinity has a distinct share in that mighty work. The family of God are sanctified by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. And with respect to this sanctification by the Three Persons of the Triune Jehovah, is the remnant according to the election of grace called in the word of God "saints."

1: First then, they are sanctified by God the Father; that is, they are consecrated, or set apart, which is the original meaning of the word "sanctified." They were set apart in the original decree of election; as Jude speaks, "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Here, you will observe, sanctification by God the Father precedes preservation in Christ, and calling by the Holy Ghost. In this sense we are to understand the words which God spake to the prophet Jeremiah (1:5): "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet to the nations." Now this is the root and spring of all sanctification. If God the Father has not sanctified us by his own electing choice in Christ Jesus from all eternity, not all the profession in the world can ever make us saints before him.

2. But God the Son has also a part and a share in the sanctification of his own dear people. They were sanctified in him before all worlds, as having a vital union with him. He is their holy covenant head, in whom all the members being united by an eternal union are sanctified; as the apostle speaks, "If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom. 11:16.) If Christ the root be holy, the branches that spring out of the root are holy. If Christ, the first-fruits, is holy, then the whole lump also is holy, being sanctified

by the first-fruits. Therefore, the Apostle speaking of Christ, says, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, *sanctification*, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)

Again. The Lord Jesus Christ sanctified them also, in time, by his own blood; as we read "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 8:12.) He shed his blood for them; he laid down his life on their behalf; and by the pouring out of that sacred stream from his holy body, he washed away their sins; that sanctified and cleansed they might stand holy before God; "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.)

3. But God the Spirit also has a share in the sanctification of the people of God. And until they receive the teachings of the Holy Ghost and his secret operations in their heart and conscience, they are not vitally sanctified. They are sanctified originally in the purpose of God; they are sanctified actually by the work of Christ; but they are not sanctified vitally and experimentally, till they are brought under the teachings and leadings of God the Spirit. When that gracious Teacher visits their souls with his divine operations; when he begins a work of grace on their hearts; when he begets them anew unto spiritual life, and implants a holy principle, radically and thoroughly holy, in their hearts, then by the implantation and possession of this new, holy, and divine principle, this "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," they become living saints.

Now, no sooner do they become saints by the operation of God the Spirit in their hearts, and by his secret indwelling in their souls, than they have conflict. All the Lord's people who are so, not merely by election and redemption, but also by the calling of the Holy Ghost, are a tried people. All the Lord's saints are, more or less, a tempted and a suffering people; for they are chosen in the furnace of affliction; they are "the third part" whom the Lord brings "through the fire."

II.—Now this may cast a light upon the words of the text, that "God will keep the feet of his saints." We see that God's people are a tried, tempted and afflicted people; and therefore that they need to be "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

But you will observe, that the text speaks of the Lord keeping "*the feet* of his saints." There is something spiritual and experimental intended here. It is by our feet that we have a *standing*; it is by our feet that we are enabled to *walk and move forward*. When the Holy Ghost, then, in the text, declares, that "God will keep the feet of his saints," he seems to have reference, *first* to their *standing*, and *secondly*, to their *walking*.

Now in both these points will Satan, the great enemy of their souls, direct all his arts and arms against the saints. And so weak and helpless are they, that it is only so far as the Lord puts forth his power, that the feet of the saints are kept.

i. The saints, as I have observed, have a *standing* in Christ, a standing before all worlds, a standing out of which and from which they never can be driven. And we may believe that the Spirit has some reference to this eternal standing in Christ, when he says, that God will keep the feet of his saints.

Have you ever observed how the Lord dealt with Satan in the case of Job? He gave him two separate permissions; one was, to touch Job's goods, his family, and his all; but upon *Job himself* he was not to lay his hand. Now as long as that restriction was laid down, Satan, however he afflicted Job in his property and his family, could not afflict him either in body or soul. This was a hedge set round about Job; a defence of God, through which Satan could not pierce. But this was not enough. It was not enough to hinder Satan from shewing his hellish malice; it was not enough to try Job; and it was not enough to prove a standing example to all ages what man is when tempted, and what the grace of God is to keep him under temptation. So God moved the hurdle, so to speak, a little more inward. He took down the outward hedge that kept Satan from touching the person of Job;

he thus narrowed the space, and put the fence in a little nearer. But there was still a limitation to "save his life;" he might do what he would to his body, but he was not to touch the life of his soul. Thus God kept the feet of his servant Job. Had this restriction not been laid upon Satan; had he not been tethered by this chain, he would have soon hurled Job into despair; and let the life blood not only out of his body, but the life-blood also out of his soul. But God kept Job's feet. Satan could not touch his standing in Christ; he might tempt, try, and distress him, and drive him to his wits' end: but he could not touch his eternal standing. What a mercy it is, then, that all the temptations of Satan, all the snares he spreads for their feet, and all the violent assaults that the people of God are exercised with, cannot drive them from their standing in Christ! They were given to Christ by the original act of God the Father, and are preserved in him; so that Satan cannot drive them from their *standing* in his Person, blood and righteousness.

ii. But there is another meaning of the word. It is by our feet that we *walk* in the ways of the Lord. Every movement of the soul; the whole progress from grace to glory; every step in the love and fear of the Lord, is taken by the spiritual feet of our souls. So that when the text declares, and the promise spreads its ample arms, that "He will keep the feet of his saints," it has reference not merely to their *standing* in Christ, but also to their *walking* in this vale of tears, their feet being upheld by Omnipotent power in this waste howling wilderness. Now, as long as a man's feet are kept, his whole person is kept. He may totter, he may stagger; he may turn to the right hand or to the left; but as long as his feet are kept upon the firm ground, he falls not. But if his feet are tripped up, he falls instantly. So that when the promise runs, "He will keep the feet of his saints," it has reference to their being kept altogether. For if their feet are tripped up, or slide, or give way, instantly must they measure their length upon the ground.

1. Now Satan is always endeavouring, in some way or other, to trip up the children of God. Sometimes, for instance, he endeavours to trip up their feet by *the inward power of sin in*

*their carnal heart.* O, how Satan can work, when permitted, upon our depraved nature! What powerful lusts he can kindle into a flame! What vile imaginations he can raise up in our carnal minds! What sins he can stir up in our polluted heart! So that, if left to ourselves, we must utterly fall a prey to them.

There is one thing which I have felt, which seems in some measure to be a mystery. It is the co-existence of two things in my heart, which seem contradictory. One is this, to feel myself every day worse and worse. There was a time when I thought I should be holier and holier: but now every day I seem viler and viler; nay, I feel the workings of sin more sensibly manifesting themselves, so as to be kept from actual evil only by the skin of my teeth. And yet what seems surprising, co-existing with all this fountain of abominable evil, I find my conscience more tender in the things of God than it was when I was not so tempted by the besetments of the enemy. When I was advancing, as I thought, in the path of holiness, I could do many things which I cannot do now. It puzzles me, to feel so distinctly the working of sins I was once not tempted to; and yet the workings of a conscience in some measure made more tender than before. That sin should become more strong, as the conscience, in some points, becomes more tender, is to me a mystery.

But when we feel the workings of sin in our carnal mind, endeavouring perpetually to entangle our steps, it makes us cry and groan to the Lord that he would keep our feet; and, through mercy, he does more or less keep them, though *how* he keeps them, we will endeavour to shew as we proceed onward.

2. Another way by which Satan seeks to trip up our feet, is by drawing us aside into *presumption and vain-confidence*. I believe many of God's people are here unknowingly. They have never been sifted down to the very bottom of their religion; their hearts have never been laid naked and open before the eyes of him with whom they have to do. They have the life and fear of God in their heart; but they want soul exercise. For want of being put into the fire, for want of a deeper work of grace upon their hearts, they

often mistake what they have for what they have not, and what they have not for what they have. In other words; they are often wrapped up in a measure of presumption and vain-confidence, which they mistake for faith, and think their confidence proceeds from the operations of the Spirit, when, for the most part, it is little else but a delusion of the Wicked One. Now if Satan can trip up our heels by getting us into presumption and vain-confidence, he has carried a great point. Presumption and vain-confidence eat out the very life of God in the soul, stop the mouth of prayer in the heart, entice us into a thousand snares of the devil, take us off our watch, and leave us to wander into paths that we should not otherwise think of walking in. Had the fear of God been more powerfully on the alert, we should not sink into the lap of ease; but through thinking we have faith that we have not, we are drawn away and entangled in the snares of Satan before we are aware. The Lord, therefore, keeps the feet of his saints by exercising them, and leading them into a deeper knowledge of the filthiness and depravity of their fallen nature; or by suffering Satan sometimes to fall upon them, and shake their religion to its very centre; or by letting down piercing convictions into their consciences; or by sending a whole army of doubts and fears that put to the rout all their vain-confidence and presumption; or by showing to them the fearful train of difficulties that lie in their road. By these and various other means he strips them of their vain-confidence.

3. Though Satan can trip up the feet with vain-confidence, yet he can also trip them up with *despair*. Some of the Lord's people are more entangled with vain-confidence, while others of them are more entangled with despondency. The one is a precipice, and the other a ditch, which have destroyed thousands. The Lord's people often seem staggering between the two like a drunken man. You have seen a drunken man: he cannot keep an even path, staggering sometimes to one side of the road, and sometimes to the other. So it is with the Lord's people; as the prophet says, "they stagger, but not with strong drink." They stagger sometimes to the height of vain-confidence, and sometimes to the quagmire of despair. One hardly knows which

takes us most out of the road, which leads us most away from the Lord of life and glory. The spirit of vain-confidence eats up the life of God in the soul; the spirit of despair drowns the life of God in the soul. The spirit of presumption shuts up the mouth of prayer; the spirit of despair also shuts up the mouth of prayer. They are two extremes; but each of these extremes is such as tends much to stop the crying and groaning soul from pouring out its desires before the Lord. But Satan will not more succeed in driving the saints into despair than he will succeed in drawing them into vain-confidence. The Lord knows exactly how to time his remedies; he knows how to suit his healing medicines to the state and case of the patient. Thus, is he lifted up with vain-confidence? God sends the arrow of conviction into his conscience. Does he see him well-nigh swallowed up in despair? He lets down a word of consolation into his soul, giving him some reviving testimony, or sweet smile. Thus, he lifts up the soul from despair by a smile of his countenance, as he brings it down from vain-confidence by the arrows of conviction. Satan does not care which evil we fall into. He has toppled down thousands from the lofty heights of vain-confidence, and has swallowed up thousands in the deep quagmire of despair.

But the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints." They shall never utterly fall down this dangerous precipice, never be wholly swallowed up in this awful quagmire. They may stumble on the brink, and stagger on the very edge; but the Lord will lay his arms underneath them, so as to keep them from being altogether swallowed therein. Have you not found it so? When you have been reclining on the lap of ease, has there not been an arrow of conviction that has roused you from your sleep? When you have feared you should fall headlong into despair, has there not been some gentle word, some precious testimony, some sweet promise applied, whereby you have been kept from falling into that gloomy whirlpool?

iii. But again. The feet may not only be tripped up, but they may also be *beguiled*. If our feet are tripped up, we fall altogether. But, without being tripped up, we may wander from the right

road; therefore we are warned (Prov. 4:26, 27), "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." We hear what the Lord says of the strange woman, that "her paths incline to the dead." Therefore he solemnly warns us, (Prov. 7:25,) "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths."

The promise, then, that the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints," not merely implies that he will keep their feet from being tripped up, so that they shall not fall utterly, but that he will also keep them from declining from the right path.

1. For instance; there are *paths of delusion*; and these paths of delusion apparently run side by side with the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. One of the things I most dread is to be left to a spirit of delusion; for I see how Satan can impose upon a man's mind, if not preserved. As an angel of light, he can come under such subtle forms, can cast such mists of error over the eye, can so insinuate his lies into the mind, and so dress out delusion, making it appear to come from God himself, that, next to falling into sin, I dread falling into a spirit of delusion. Satan knows exactly the persons he has to deal with. Our natural constitutions vary; our minds are cast in different moulds; and our education and habits materially differ. But Satan, who is intimately acquainted with the state of our minds and constitution, and what is congenial to our disposition, like a skilful angler, who has a fly and a hook for every fish, knows exactly how to suit his temptation to our natural state and case. Some he sees superstitious, easily drawn aside, soon elated, readily entangled by craft and subtlety; and upon these he will come as a spirit of delusion, puffing up their minds with pride, deceiving them with some novelty, and imposing his own lies and errors upon them as though they were the solid teachings of God the Spirit.

But the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints." There is in the living soul a divine principle, which tastes heavenly food, savours heavenly fragrance, hears heavenly sounds, sees heavenly

objects, and feels heavenly sensations. The spirit of delusion is always alien from, and opposed to, these spiritual senses of the soul. When the spirit of delusion, then, comes to the child of God, there is that in his bosom which secretly rejects it. "The voice is of the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." It does not come into his soul as from the Lord; there is no breath of the sanctuary in it, no divine influence communicated by it, no holy affections drawn upwards, no meltings of heart, no softening of spirit, nor any of those divine realities which living souls experience. But it puffs up the mind, sears the conscience, hardens the heart, inflates and lifts up the soul with vain imaginations, takes away the Cross of Christ, and sets up an idol. This delusion, then, coming into the heart of a child of God, meets an antagonist there, that has eyes to see the feet of this witch; that has ears to hear she does not speak in gospel language; that has a nose to smell her ill-savour; that has hands which when they touch her do not feel the same sensations as when they touch the Lord of life and glory. And thus, when the spirit of delusion comes before a child of God, there is that secret indescribable feeling in his soul which rejects it, and is not overcome nor entangled by it. How many have I seen, in my day, entangled in some delusion or other that has come over the religious world! What blasts of delusion were continually blowing when Irvingism first came abroad; and how many thousands were entangled in that delusion! Let the devil come with any spirit of delusion, he is sure to catch some—but not the living soul. For he has that internal principle, that spiritual understanding, that heavenly light in his judgment, that peculiar discernment in his conscience, that divine apprehension within, which, as if instinctively, detects delusion. It does not produce in his soul those divine sensations which the Spirit of the Lord does; therefore he rejects it as the spirit of delusion. I admit that he may be entangled for a time; but sooner or later he will be brought out; for the Lord "keeps the feet of his saints."

2. But there is also a turning into *the path of error*. There are many "bye paths," that, as Bunyan says, "butt down upon the strait and narrow way." If the path of truth runs to the right, the

path of error runs to the left. Satan, who is continually sowing tares in the Church, perpetually flying about upon the wings of novelty, introduces errors just as he sees opportunity; and raises up cunning and crafty, though apparently religious men, for the purpose of propagating them abroad. There is a principle in the natural heart which embraces error, and there is a principle in the spiritual mind which rejects error. I have never yet heard of any error abroad, however awful, that I have not felt something in my heart to cleave to *it*; and I have never heard any truth spoken of, that I have not felt another principle in my heart to cleave to *it*. I feel distinctly the workings of the two principles. When error comes before me—the vilest error—I feel a cursed principle in my heart, that closes in with it, and forms a fleshly union with it. But then, I feel, through mercy, another spirit, which hates it, rejects it, and dares not embrace it, through the workings of a conscience made tender in God's fear. You and I have in our hearts a principle of unbelief, which would drink down every lie of the devil, and reject every truth of God. We have a principle of infidelity that doubts every revealed truth, and yet can believe every one of Satan's lies. But if God the Spirit has quickened your soul into spiritual life, you have another principle—the principle of living faith which loves truth, clings to it, receives it into the heart, and approves of it in the conscience. Thus there is a constant conflict betwixt these two things—the principle of unbelief, which believes nothing but the devil's lies; and the principle of faith, which receives, loves, and cleaves to the truth of God.

But, besides this, there is a *reasoning principle* in our mind, which falls in with the subtle insinuations of Satan and Satan's agents. A man may reason, till he reasons himself out of every truth, and reasons himself into every error. He may reason about the Bible, till he believes the Bible to be a fiction. He may reason about the being of God, till he believes there is no God. He may reason about the deity of Jesus, and the personality of the Holy Ghost, the existence of the Trinity, and every revealed truth, till he reasons himself into thorough infidelity. Thus, we have not only a depraved principle that cleaves to error, but we have a reasoning

mind, that would reason itself out of truth into error. And this awful adversary of the faith of God's elect is always at work in our minds, to bring us into Satan's snares. But yet, through mercy, there is another principle—an understanding heart, a believing spirit, a feeling soul, a tender conscience, in the breast of a child of God, which rejects error, because error always comes to it distinct from the truth of God. Error hardens—truth softens. Error sears—truth melts. Error blinds—truth enlightens. Error deadens—truth quickens and revives. Error lifts up—truth lays low. Error leads the heart *from* God—truth leads the heart up *to* God. Now as in our right mind we know what softening is, and what hardening is—what being led *to* the Lord is, and what being led *from* the Lord is—as we can trace in our souls the working of these two distinct things (as in our right mind we love to do), we turn away from error, because it leads us from God, and we cleave to truth, because it leads us to God. And thus the Lord keeps the feet of his saints. Error shall not entangle them. They may go on the very borders of it; they may, for a while, drink into a measure of the very spirit of it. But there is that in all error, Unitarian, Arian, Arminian, Pre-existerian, or Antinomian, which never finds a lodging in the tender conscience, never finds a resting-place in the renewed heart. But there is in truth something so vital, so sweet, that so drops into the heart, and (if I may use the expression) feels itself so at home in the soul, that the child of God cleaves to it at any price, any cost. The Lord keeps the feet of his saints. They shall never become Arians, Antinomians, Socinians, or Arminians. They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

2. But they may not only decline into error; they may also turn aside into *idolatry*. What says the Spirit by the Apostle John? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Some of the Lord's people are not tempted by a spirit of delusion—others of the Lord's children are not tempted by a spirit of error. But how many who are exempt from these bye-paths, are not exempt from declining into idolatry! And O, what a burden idolatry is to a child of God! To feel there is that in his heart which at times he loves more than God himself—that there is that in his bosom which he

nurses, hugs, and embraces, though it has stung him a thousand times as a viper! What a base wretch man is! what a depraved creature, nursing in his bosom these filthy idols! We wonder at the depravity of the heathen. We see their hideous idols, and wonder that a reasonable man can bow down to such disgusting images. But do we not find a parallel in our own hearts? Did Hindoo or Otaheitan ever sculpture an idol so hideous as that which we embosom and enshrine in our breasts? Theirs is, after all, but a hideous log of wood or stone; but our filthy desires, our corrupt imaginations, our bosom idols, are ten thousand times more hideous in the sight of God. But the Lord will keep the feet of his saints. They may have their idols; he will keep them from being altogether entangled. He will sometimes convince them of the sin of idolatry, by laying the guilt of it upon the conscience. He will sometimes, when they hug the idol very closely, take it out of their bosom; and at others make that idol to be their torment, and turn that from which they seek lively gratification into a source of pain and misery. And thus, in one way or another, he will keep the feet of his saints from declining into the path of idolatry.

3. But there is also the path of *fleshly ease*. Do we love trials? Are we fond of being exercised, plagued, and tempted? Why, we know what a coward flesh we have—how glad we are to slip our neck out of the collar of sorrow and suffering—how unwilling we are to walk in the strait and thorny path before us—how fond we are of a little ease, though it be but, as Job says, "to swallow down our spittle!" We are very glad to get into this smooth path, this laying down of our arms, this settling of ourselves in our arm-chair, this resting upon past experiences, this slinking out of the battle, this going into the rear with the baggage. We are very liable to get into this path of carnal ease; so the Lord keeps us out of it by afflictions, temptations, and trials. But the church of God, in this age and generation, is much in a path of fleshly ease; almost, like the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot; like the people of Laish, dwelling carelessly; like Ephraim, "a cake not turned; grey hairs are upon him, and he knoweth it not." But the Lord will not allow us to take our ease. We may try to make our

nest comfortable, but there will always be a thorn at the bottom of it. We may attempt to settle down upon our lees, but there will be a shaking of the vessel. We may try to slink out of the engagement and creep into the rear; but there will be the "thunder of the captains, and the shouting" even there. We may try to rest our heads upon the baggage-waggon, but even there we shall hear the roar of the artillery. The Lord will visit his people with some severe and cutting affliction, some sharp rod, some heavy stripe, when they have turned out of the right track into the path of fleshly ease, and thus bring them back.

iv. The promise is absolute—"The Lord *will* keep the feet of his saints." But how, for the most part, does the Lord keep them, *instrumentally*?

1. The grand instrument whereby the Lord keeps them is, by implanting *his fear* in their hearts. It is the new covenant promise, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) The Lord puts his fear into the hearts of his people; and this becomes in them "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." This is their bosom companion all the journey through. This is that holy principle in their breast, whereby instrumentally their feet are kept. Would they stray into sin? The fear of God in their bosom checks. Would they rush into vain-confidence? The fear of the Lord in their bosom forbids. Would they fall into despair? The fear of the Lord in their bosom upholds them. Would they become inward idolaters? Would they fall into the entanglements of Satan? Would they get into the path of fleshly ease? The fear of the Lord, as a fountain of life, gushing up in their souls, and watering their hearts with its blessed streams—this fear of the Lord, which is their "treasure," preserves them from the ways of the destroyer, and thus keeps their feet in the paths of the gospel.

2. But the Lord also uses his *word*. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," was the prayer of the dying Lord. By

opening up his word to their hearts—by causing his precepts to drop with power into their consciences—by applying his truth to their souls, sometimes cutting, sometimes consoling, but always penetrating—he keeps their feet. Would they break every hedge? The word of the Lord forbids it. Thus he keeps the feet of his saints through his truth, by opening up that truth in their consciences, and applying it with power and savour to their hearts.

3. He keeps them too, every now and then, *by intimations from above*—by dropping in the dew of his grace—by secret meltings of heart—by softening the spirit—by raising up this question, "How can I do this thing, and sin against God?"—by raising up tender emotions and loving sensations towards himself. As Ephraim, "after he was instructed, smote upon his thigh," so the Lord's people, when he looks upon them, smite upon their breasts. By these secret intimations, their feet are kept in the ways of the Lord. Have you never felt it so? When you have been tempted to do something that your carnal heart loved, and to which Satan was urging you with all his might, has there not been some intimation, some word, some check from God? When an impetuous word was bursting forth, when anger rose in your bosom, was there not a secret restraint, that kept down the rising wrath? When the lust of the eye entangled you, and you would fain walk in the paths of the dead, was there not some feeling Godward, some check, some admonition, some opening up of the Scripture, some touch of God's finger upon your conscience, some secret emotion in your soul, that kept you from the ways of destruction? And when delusion came before you, did no word from God drop, to open it up, and show you it was a delusion? If error crossed your path, and your carnal mind embraced it did no word come into your heart, to show you how contrary it was to the revealed word of God? And when the world spread out its snares, and allured you to its arms, was there not some secret admonition, something from the Lord's own mouth, that kept you from being entangled in the snare, and walking in the path of the dead?

4. And sometimes the Lord keeps us by his *providence*. There is a snare spread for us—he will send us in a path where the snare is not spread. Satan lays his snares, as poachers do in what is called "the run" of the hare. The spring is set just in the hole of the hedge through which the poor animal runs. So Satan, that cunning poacher, lays his snare just in our very "run." But the Lord determines otherwise. We have perhaps fixed to go down this street; had we gone, we should have fallen into a snare. An impulse comes to take another turn; by obeying that impulse, we are kept from falling into that trap. Could the Lord's people see how he has kept them from falling into snares, by his wonderful interpositions, how it would raise their admiration of his wisdom!

The promise is absolute—"He will keep the feet of his saints." What tenderness there is in it! The Lord sees his poor scattered pilgrims travelling through a vale of tears, journeying through a waste howling wilderness, a path beset with gins, traps, and snares in every direction. How can they escape? Why, the Lord keeps their feet, carries them through every rough place, as a tender parent carries a little child; when about to fall, graciously lays the everlasting arms underneath them, and when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip, mercifully upholds them from falling altogether. Thus the Lord keeps the feet of his saints. But do you think that he has not different ways for different feet. The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike; and will he cause all his people to walk in precisely the same path? No; we have each our path, each our besetment, each our trials, each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet. And the wisdom of the all-wise and only-wise God is shown, by his eyes being in every place, marking the footsteps of every pilgrim, suiting his remedies to meet their individual case and necessity, appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good; watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of his affection were bent on one individual and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm. What a mercy it is there is such a promise in the Bible! "He will keep the feet of his saints," that they shall not be

utterly tripped up, utterly cast down, utterly wander away from God and godliness. He will keep their feet in this vale of tears, amidst all the springs, traps, and snares laid for them, in the narrow path that leads to life, and bring them eventually to see his glory, and be with him for ever, where all tears shall be wiped away from off all faces.

## **FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford. on Lord's Day afternoon, December 13, 1857

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Ephesians 2:19, 20

I admire and love the grace of God; and the longer I live, the more do I love and admire it. My sins, my corruptions, my infirmities make me feel my deep and daily need of it; and as its freeness, fulness, suitability, and inexpressible blessedness are more and more opened up to my heart and conscience, so do I more and more cleave to and delight in it. What, in fact, is there which you can substitute for it? I assume that you have some concern about religion; that the solemn realities of eternity press with more or less weight on your conscience, and that you are awakened to see the evil of sin and your own evil case as sinners.

I speak not to stocks and stones; I speak to you who desire to fear God and to have your hearts right before Him. If you have no concern about the salvation of your soul, you will love many things far beyond free grace. Money, dress, amusements, the pleasures that present themselves on every side, though hollow as the tomb, and vain. as a drunkard's mirth, will so charm your mind and occupy your thoughts that Christ and His gospel will have no place in your conscience. But if you have any anxiety about your eternal condition, and are brought to cry "**What shall I do to be saved?**" then I ask you, what can you put in the place of free grace? Surely, you cannot be so foolish as to put your own words in its stead. Surely, you cannot be so ignorant of your ruined condition before God, and of what is revealed in the Scriptures of the way of salvation, by the atoning blood of Jesus,

as to substitute the words and works of man for the words and works of the God-man?

You may doubt your own interest in His atoning blood; but you do not doubt that salvation is all of grace, and that if saved, your soul can be saved by it alone. And why not **you** be saved? What countless trophies has grace already laid at the Redeemer's feet! What hosts of ruined wretches, of souls sunk beyond all other help or hope, has free grace sought out, rescued from their destructions, plucked from the jaws of hell, and ransomed from the hand of him that was stronger than they, so that they have come and sung in the height of Zion, and flowed together to the goodness of the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:11,12)

Look at Paul. Where can we find among the sons of men a parallel to the great Apostle of the Gentiles? What a large capacity! What a powerful intellect he naturally possessed, but how subdued and subjugated it became by grace, and how devoted to the glory of God and the advancement of the kingdom of His dear Son. How grace arrested him at Damascus' gate, cast him down body and soul at the Redeemer's feet, translated him from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and changed a bloodthirsty persecutor of the Church of Christ into a minister and an apostle, the greatest ever seen. As such, what deep humility, thorough disinterestedness, noble simplicity, godly zeal, unwearied labours distinguished him from first to last—a course of more than thirty years. How in his inspired writings he pours, as it were, from his pen the richest streams of heavenly truth! With what clearness, power, and savour he describes and enforces the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God, the blessings of free grace, the glorious privileges of the saints, and the things that make for their happiness and holiness! How in every epistle it seems as if his pen could hardly drop a line without in some way setting forth the infinite grace, the boundless mercy, and unfathomable love of God, as displayed in the gift of His dear Son, and the blessings that flow to the Church through His blood and love.

But look not at Paul only. View the jewels on every side that grace has set in the Redeemer's crown out of the most depraved and abject materials! Who, for instance, were these Ephesians to whom Paul wrote this wonderful epistle? The most foolish and besotted of idolators, so infatuated with their image which fell down from Jupiter—most probably some huge meteoric stone, that had fallen from the sky—that they spent two hours until they wearied out their throats with crying "**Great is Diana of the Ephesians!**"—men debased with every lust, ripe and ready for every crime, and to whom perhaps we can only find a parallel amongst those wretched Hindoos whose atrocities have recently filled every heart with horror. How rich, how marvellous the grace that changed worshippers of Diana into worshippers of Jehovah, brutal howlers into singers who made melody in their heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19), and magicians, full of "curious arts" and Satanic witchcraft, into saints built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Now cannot the same grace, that did so much for them, do the same or similar things for us? Is the nature of man now less vile, or is the grace of Christ now less full and free? Has the lapse of 1800 years raised man out of the depths of the fall, eradicated sin from his constitution, cleansed the foul leprosy of his nature, and purified it into holiness? Let the thin sheet of decent morality and civilisation be taken off the corpse, and there it lies in all its hideous ghastliness.

Human nature is still what it ever was—dead in trespasses and sins. Or has time, which changes so many things on earth, changed things in heaven? Is not God the same gracious Father, Jesus the same compassionate Saviour, the Holy Spirit the same heavenly Teacher? Is not the Gospel the same glad tidings of salvation, and the power of the Gospel the same to every one that believeth? Then why should not we be blessed with the same spiritual blessings as the saints at Ephesus? Why may not the same Jesus be to us what He was to them, the same Spirit to do for us and in us what He did for and in them—and the same grace

save and sanctify us which saved and sanctified them? Here and here alone is our strength, our help, our hope, our all.

In opening up the words of our text, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to show—

I.—First, what it is to be a **stranger and a foreigner**; whence I shall take occasion to show how the saints of God are brought to be "**no more strangers and foreigners.**"

II.—Secondly, what it is by grace divine to be made "**a fellow citizen of the saints,**" and brought into manifested membership "**of the household of God.**"

III.—Thirdly, what it is to "**be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.**"

IV.—And lastly, how "**the Lord Jesus Christ**" Himself is "**the chief corner stone**" of this glorious and immortal building.

There are three lessons of heavenly instruction which the Holy Spirit must and will write with His own divine finger upon every gracious heart, and which the same blessed Spirit must ever keep in constant remembrance there. First, **our base original**; in other words, the Holy Spirit must show us what we are by nature as sunk into sin and guilt, death and destruction, enmity and alienation from God, by the Adam fall. **Secondly**, what **Jesus Christ has done and suffered** that He might redeem us from the lowest hell, that we might bear about with us a constant remembrance of His finished work, of His blood and righteousness and dying love. And **thirdly**, what are **the fruits and effects of a work of grace**, and especially as making us experimentally acquainted with what we are as fallen sinners, and what we are as saved by the blood of the Lamb.

I: The Apostle in the text assures the saints of the Most High that they are "**no more strangers and foreigners.**"

1. Such, then, they were before quickening grace brought them out of that miserable condition. Let us examine the meaning of these expressions separately; and **first**—

**(i).** What is it to be a **stranger**? We see some morning a person walking in the streets of this town. Knowing by sight most of the inhabitants, and noticing how he looks about him, as if every object that meets his eye is new to him, we instinctively perceive that he is a stranger. He knows no one; no one knows him. His very appearance and manners tells us at once that he is a stranger, and that he himself feels and knows it. But if in our time and country the state of a stranger is so different from an inhabitant, how much more so in those ancient days when to be a stranger was to be an enemy and an alien, with whom there was no friendly intercourse by land or sea. How expressive the figure as descriptive of our state by nature!

A stranger, then, in a spiritual sense, is one who knows not God, and one whom God does not manifestly own or recognise. He has no acquaintance with the throne of grace: he is, therefore, a stranger to spiritual prayer and supplication. He has no knowledge of his need of mercy: he is a stranger, therefore, to any sense of his lost, ruined condition. He knows nothing of the way of salvation: he is, therefore, a stranger to Jesus, as the new and living way unto God. he never walks in a way lined with blood; he never traverses a road spread with the robe of righteousness, as the multitude spread their garments in the way of Jesus (Matthew 21:8).

As in our town a stranger does not know the streets nor where to find places which are quite familiar to us; so in the things of God, a stranger knows not the streets of Zion or the courts of the sanctuary; he cannot find his way to the garden of Gethsemane, to the cross of Calvary, to the sepulchre where Jesus was laid, to the Mount of Olives whence He ascended on high. He is a stranger to the dealings of God with the soul, so that he knows nothing of repentance for sin, of faith in the Lord Jesus, of hope as an anchor within the veil, or of love as shed abroad in the

heart by the Holy Ghost. He is a stranger to the evil of sin as charged home upon a guilty conscience, and a stranger to the way whereby guilt is removed by the application of atoning blood, he is a stranger to "the covenants of promise," for the covenant is shown to those only who fear God (Psalm 25:14), and the promises were never applied to his heart with a divine power. He is a stranger to the exercises and distresses of the family of God, for, not fearing God, he knows no changes (Psalm 55:19); and is a stranger also to their joys, for theirs is a joy that the stranger intermeddleth not with. He is a stranger to their hopes and a stranger to their fears; to their castings down and liftings up, to their temptations and deliverances. He is a stranger to God the Father, for he neither worships Him in spirit and in truth, nor has he received the Spirit of adoption to call him Abba, Father; he is a stranger to God the Son, and to any holy intimacy, sacred intercourse, or heavenly communion with His gracious Majesty; a stranger to the word of His lips, to the smile of His face, to the touch of His hand, to the love of His heart. He is a stranger to God the Holy Ghost as a divine Teacher, a heavenly Comforter, an inward Intercessor—to His influences and operations, to His anointing, sealing and indwelling. In a word, he is a stranger to true religion, to vital godliness, to present grace, to future glory.

Are you this stranger? When you hear the things of God described and enforced as matters of vital experience, without which there is no evidence of being a partaker of everlasting life, is this the secret language of your heart, "We do not know what you mean? You bring certain strange things to our ears; but we do not understand what you are talking about nor what you are aiming at. Your arrows reach us not, the things you speak of we are utter strangers to, and, what is more, we neither want nor care to know them, as they seem to us unintelligible mysteries." If this be the secret language of your heart, does it not clearly prove that you are a stranger to the covenants of promise, and, if so, are most certainly from God's own testimony "having no hope and without God in the world?" (Ephesians 2:12)

**(ii).** But the Apostle speaks of their being no more "**foreigners.**"

A foreigner seems, if I may use the expression, a more lost being than a stranger. A stranger comes into the town: he can speak English; he can ask questions of the persons whom he meets; he can obtain for himself the necessaries of life; he need not be without food or lodging, from not knowing how to make himself understood. But a foreigner is one who, in most cases cannot speak our tongue, is ignorant of our laws, habits, manners, and customs, has no right to any of our privileges as Englishmen, and is an alien in blood, lineage, allegiance, and language.

So in a spiritual sense: a foreigner is one "alienated from the life of God," and as such, an alien in blood, for he is not of the royal priesthood; in lineage, for he is of the seed of the bondwoman; in allegiance, for he serves the prince of this world; in language, for he is unable to speak the language of Canaan to God or man; or if he endeavour to use the tongue of the holy city, he talks it as a foreigner speaks English, with a barbarous accent, and with so many mistakes and errors, that it is at once evident that he did not learn it by divine tuition, as the utterance of a feeling, believing heart. But a citizen of Jerusalem which is above, that is free, and the mother of all the saints of God (Galatians 4:26), knows the language of the heavenly city. When God speaks to him, he knows what God means; when he speaks to God, he knows what he utters before Him. He understands the Scripture in its spiritual, experimental meaning, for he is taught by the same Spirit who inspired it. He understands the dealings of God with the citizens of that heavenly country, for he is at home in that holy land, and, like Abraham, may, as led, walk through the length and the breadth of it. (Genesis 13:17)

2. But this view of a foreigner leads me to the point that I chiefly wish to dwell upon—for upon that the apostle lays the chief emphasis—that the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus "were no more strangers and foreigners;" in other words, by a work of grace upon their hearts, they had been brought out of this state that I have been describing into another condition which is its exact opposite, and which I shall now open up.

(i.) What, then, is it to "be **no more** a stranger?"

[a] **First**, it is to be no more a stranger to a **sense of your lost condition**. There was a time in your experience when you knew nothing of your ruin and misery, as a sinner condemned by the holy law of God; or if now and then a thought about heaven and hell crossed your mind, or a conviction of sin gave a momentary pang, it was soon relieved by some self-righteous resolution of future amendment. But a time came—a time never to be forgotten—when you could not thus put away your convictions; when they laid hold of you too fast and too firm to be removed. Before, you were like a person with a slight cold, which could very soon be got rid of; a warm bed or a brisk walk would take it away, or it would go off of itself. But now you are like a person upon whom disease has fastened itself with so firm a hold that it cannot be shaken off. It is a consumption in your lungs, a cancer in your breast, an abscess in your liver. Such is the difference between a few flashing convictions that but graze the skin, and a real work of grace that lays hold of a man's conscience with killing power, and, like the surgeon's knife, cuts deep and true into the very substance of the quivering flesh. You are no longer then a stranger to your state as a sinner, to a deep and daily sense of your lost condition, as condemned by the law and your own guilty conscience. You feel that unless saved by sovereign grace, saved you never can be at all, and that the same hand which wounded alone can heal.

[b] Nor are you a stranger **to the throne of grace: you** are found frequently there; you know the way unto God—that Jesus is "the way," and that "no man cometh unto the Father but by Him." This truth is too deeply lodged in your conscience for unbelief to deny or infidelity effectually to assail, for you cannot live without drawing near unto God, and out of Christ, you know, He is a consuming fire. It is true that often, though you know the way to God, you feel condemned because your poor cold, dead heart, or your unbelieving frame, seems for a time to keep you from the throne of grace. Yet you know the way there, and are no

more a stranger to pleading the merits of atoning blood and venturing nigh through Jesus' righteousness and intercession.

[c] Nor are you a stranger **to the way of salvation** by sovereign, distinguishing, superabounding grace. It is a way very clearly opened up to your understanding; it is a way very much commended to your conscience; you see at times great beauty and blessedness in salvation by grace, as worthy of God and suitable to man, as harmonising all the attributes of Jehovah, reconciling mercy and justice, satisfying the law and glorifying the gospel, communicating happiness and ensuring holiness, guiding the feet on earth and ensuring heaven at the end of the race.

[d] Nor are you a **stranger to Jesus**, nor is He a stranger to you. You see in Him at times a beauty, a grace, a glory, a sweetness, a suitability which, in a very special manner, attract your heart to Him; and His blood and righteousness spangle and glisten before your eyes as having something blessed and beautiful in them that you cannot describe and yet see and feel. You feel that you love Him, that He is precious to your soul, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. You can use at times a holy familiarity with Him, can tell Him all your trials and troubles, and seek relief by lying at His feet or leaning on His bosom. A word from Him is enough. By it you can live and die, fight and conquer, endure afflictions, face a frowning world, resist Satan, and come off more than conqueror over every foe.

[e] Nor are you a stranger to **testimonies from God** They have been times when He has dropped a promise into your soul, applied a word with power to your heart, made an invitation sweet, or melted it down into contrition and love by some unexpected discovery of His goodness and mercy.

[f] Nor are you a stranger **to the fruits of the Spirit**—to actings of a living faith, for it has purified your heart from the love and practice of sin, united you to Christ as a living branch in the only true vine, and overcome the world by separating you in heart and affection from it. Nor are you a stranger to **a good hope**

**through grace**—for you find at times that it is raised up in your soul, and you can cast it forth as an anchor into that which is within the veil. Nor are you a stranger to **a feeling of love** to the name of the Lord and to His saints: for there are times when your heart is melted down in love and affection towards them, because you see the image of Christ in them. Nor are you a stranger to the **chastisements** that God inflicts upon disobedient children; nor to the **afflictions** strewn in the path of those that fear God; nor to the **temptations** and snares that beset the road; nor to the **assaults of Satan** nor to the evils of your heart that make you daily sigh and groan; or to sweet visitations upon your knees, to blessed meditations upon the Lord, and to openings up at times of His blood to your heart and conscience as cleansing from all sin.

[ii.] Nor, again, if taught of God, are you any more a **foreigner**. The Lord Himself has taken you into His own school to teach you the language of Canaan, to instruct you how to pronounce the words of that heavenly tongue correctly, and to get rid of that barbarous accent which you had as a foreigner; for "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth" (Prov 6:23), and "the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." (Isaiah 32:4) He has taught you, it may be, to say "Abba, Father"—a word that none can pronounce properly except citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; and He has enabled you to speak a language that His saints can receive. They can soon tell whether you are a foreigner or a native; whether you talk the language of Canaan as a citizen or as a barbarian; in other words, whether you speak out of your heart from a living experience, from gracious, tender feelings, and a conscience wrought upon by the power of God; or whether as a foreigner speaks English, so you speak what you have merely learnt in your judgment, by dint of natural intellect, without any divine teaching or gracious influence on your soul. O the unspeakable privilege of being no more a stranger and a foreigner, but to be introduced, as only love and blood and grace can introduce us, into the state of which the apostle speaks, and to which I now come, namely—

## II—To be **"fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God."**

1. The very word **"saint"** has become, through man's perverseness and wickedness, a word of reproach and contempt. But God will honour it, let men dishonour it as they please. God has put a crown of glory upon it, let men despise it as they may. There is no privilege or blessing that God can confer, so great and glorious as to crown you with the crown of saint. He might have given you titles without number; he might have showered riches upon your head in the greatest profusion; rank, fame, talent, beauty, health, all might have been poured at your feet; but what would all these be compared to making you a saint of God? All earthly titles end with the grave; grim death, that relentless executioner, spares no rank or age; beauty, wealth, youth, and fashion, where are they, what are they, when earth claims its own and the clods fall heavily upon the coffin? But to be a saint gives you a title to heaven, to an immortal crown, and a throne of unfading glory. Then be not ashamed of your badge; only prove that you are worthy of it. When men tauntingly call you a saint, say to yourself, "O that I may be one indeed! I want no other title; it is better than a peerage." Take then the reproach upon your shoulders, and bind it as a crown round your brow. (Job 31:36) Only take care you prove yourself worthy of the name.

But what is it to be a saint? It is to be sanctified by God the Father (Jude 1:1), set apart for Himself to show forth His praise. It is to be washed in the atoning blood and clothed in the justifying righteousness of the Son, and to be regenerated by the Spirit of God. It is to be introduced into the new world by being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. What heart can conceive or tongue express, the state of blessedness to which the despised saints of God are advanced even in this time state! They are sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; jewels in Jesus' mediatorial crown; members of His mystical body, and as such united to Him by indissoluble ties; pillars in the temple of God which shall go no more out; sheep redeemed by precious blood; virgin souls

espoused to the Lord the Lamb (2Cor. 11:2; Revelation 19:7) They are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, and mansions of glory are prepared for them beyond the skies. There they shall sit as overcomers with Christ on His throne (Revelation 3:21), and there they shall sing upon harps of gold the praises of a three-one God to all eternity. (Revelation 5:8; Rev. 15:2)

The blessedness of the Ephesian believers was that they had become "**fellow citizens with the saints.**" They became thus invested with certain rights, and advanced to the enjoyment of certain privileges. What are these? Assume, then, that this stranger of whom I have been speaking wished to come and live in this town; or assume that a foreigner was willing to renounce his foreign allegiance to give up all the claims that his former country and sovereign had upon him and wished to become a fellow citizen with the natives of this isle. When he was once legally and properly naturalised, would he not have all the privileges enjoyed by those born in the land? Not a single thing would be withheld which longed to them, for he would have a similar right to everything which they had a right to. Is not this the exact position of our Queen's husband—the Prince Consort? Born a German, he has become an English citizen; but although advanced to almost regal dignity, by his union with the Sovereign, it is only his being legally naturalised that has made him a fellow citizen with us.

Now grace does this in a spiritual sense for a child of God. You were by birth and descent a stranger and a foreigner. You were born in sin, therefore were by nature an alien and an enemy; but grace has quickened your soul—grace has planted the fear of God in your heart—grace has made you a partaker of spiritual and therefore of eternal life. By doing this, it has made you a fellow citizen with the saints. Nor is there a saint named in the Bible with whom grace has not made you a fellow citizen. Righteous Abel, the first martyr; Enoch, who walked with God; Noah, saved in the ark; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David, Samuel and the prophets; all the glorious army of martyrs, with all the blessed company of saints that have lived

and died under the Old Testament and New; all the glorified spirits in heaven, and all the suffering family of God on earth: you, even you, who were once a stranger to the things of God; you, even you, who were once a foreigner that could not lisp one of the songs of Zion nor speak even a word to God or to His people, are now a fellow citizen with them all, if grace has reached your soul and put a new song into your mouth and a pure language into your lips. (Psa. 40:3; Zeph. 3:9) O the mighty wonders, the glorious miracles of sovereign grace! What a miracle of mercy has it done for your soul, by bringing you, even you, out of that barbarous condition, that state of alienation from God, that estrangement from all good, that foreign allegiance and idolatrous service in which you were living, a foe to God and godliness, and, by a mighty hand and a stretched arm, plucked you from your destructions, adopted you into the family, and given you the privilege of citizenship with the excellent of the earth; yea, more, with the glorified spirits in heaven, with those now before the throne, singing anthems of eternal praise. I hope there are such here; that I am not speaking flattering words to buoy up the graceless and the godless, but addressing some of the living family of God. if, then, grace has but touched your heart; if the love of God has but come into your soul, it has placed you among the saints of the Most High, and given you every privilege which God ever did or could give to them.

And what are their privileges? To be washed in the atoning blood of the suffering Son of God—to be clothed in the justifying righteousness of His perfect and meritorious obedience—to be consecrated by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter—to have the love of God as their enduring portion, peace in believing, supplies of grace as needed, support and strength as they pass through this vale of tears, comforts abounding in proportion to the abundance of afflictions, everlasting arms beneath in death, a mansion of eternal bliss for the soul when the body drops into the grave, and a glorious resurrection of the body at the appearance of Christ in glory. All that the love of God can give; all that the blood of Christ has been a channel for communicating; and all that the Spirit of God can reveal to any

heart, or has ever brought with power into the soul of any saint,—all these things become ours when we become fellow citizens with the saints of God; not indeed always or often by vital enjoyment, though we get sips and tastes, drops and crumbs, but as Abraham was given possession of Canaan, when he had not so much as to set his foot on it (Acts 7:5), yet his as much by promise as it became his children's by strength of hand. Does not the apostle declare this, in the broadest and clearest language, where he says—"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 why all yours? for "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1Cor 3:21-23)

Now, my friends, the great thing that you should seek to realize in your own souls is this: what has God done for you by His Spirit and grace? Has He planted His fear in your heart? Has He made you a partaker of divine life by heavenly regeneration? Has He given you true repentance for sin? Has He blessed you with a living faith in Jesus? Has He ever favoured you with any manifestation of His love and blood? Has He revealed Him in you (Galatians 1:16) and formed Him in you, the hope of glory? (Galatians 4:19; Col, 1:27) What has He done for you and in you? What has He wrought with His own hand in your conscience? If He has bestowed anything upon you by His grace and done anything in and for your soul by His Spirit; in doing that, He has done everything He could do; in giving you that He has given you everything He could give; not indeed in present enjoyment, but He has given you the earnest—He has put you into possession of the first fruits—He has blessed you with a foretaste—He has laid His honour and faithfulness in pledge; so that all that is to come, has already virtually come, in what He has already given.

We see a mighty oak growing in a nobleman's park; we stand at a little distance and admire its beauty. How lofty it extends itself from the ground; how widely it spreads its leafy honours on every side; what a breadth of shade; how flocks and herds may congregate beneath its branches, and birds innumerable build

and sing in its boughs. What was once that mighty oak? Why, once it hung an acorn upon the bough; all that now mighty mass could once have been held in the paw of a squirrel: but every root, bough, twig, and leaf were alike held in that tiny cup. So it is with a saint of God: all the grace that he can have on earth and all the glory that he can have in heaven, all the comfort here and all the bliss hereafter, are contained in the first implantation of grace in his soul, as the whole of the oak is contained in the acorn.

Or look at that man yonder exulting in the full possession of vigorous youth and strength: what a breadth of shoulder, what a brawny arm, what muscle, what power in every limb! But what was he once? A babe on his mother's knee, who could hardly lift a finger or utter a cry; but now he is a model for a sculptor—a man who can work from morn to night, and lift a load with ease that would almost break my back to push an inch. But all that he has now he had as a babe, not only every limb and joint, but every muscle and sinew, artery, vein, and nerve. So with the man in Christ: all the strength God may give him in affliction, to bear the weighty cross; all the love He may shed abroad in his heart on the bed of sickness or death; all the grace He may bestow upon him in time, or all the glory he will partake of in eternity, all were given him when the Blessed Spirit raised up the new man of grace in his heart, and gave him to know something of holy fear and of heavenly love.

2. But the once strangers and foreigners are also said to be "**of the household of God.**" The word literally means inmates or members of a house, that is, a family viewed as living under one roof. God has a family, as the hymn says "There is a family on earth, Whose Father fills a throne."

And what a family must that be of which we can say "This is the family of God?"—that, as we can point to this or that house and say, "Here lives a happy, a united family," so we can point to the church of the living God and say, "Here lives the happy, united family of the Lord Almighty."

Now, must not and should not the head of the family rule and guide the whole of the household? Wife, children, and servants, do they not all need a ruling head and a guiding hand? for "the husband is the head of the wife," and if of her, of the rest of the house. As the head, so the members. Look at a family literally. If the head of the family has no authority in his own house, what are the children? Disorderly and disobedient. What is the wife? Out of her place, commanding where she ought to obey. What are the servants? Despising their master and jangling with their mistress. But let the head of the family maintain his rightful place, given him by the laws of God and man—his natural birthright, as the master of his own house—let him exert his authority, not with harshness and severity, but with firmness and gentleness; let him be looked up to by his wife, children, and servants as their head by right and yet ruling by kindness and love, and then he will have an orderly household. Take the matter higher. View the God of heaven and earth; more especially regard Him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a family has He! Scattered indeed far and wide, not collected locally under one roof save the roof of heaven, whence He looks down upon them in love. What influence, then, and authority does He exert as the Father of His family! This child He restrains by wholesome checks and fatherly frowns; that He draws towards Him by the cords of love; this disobedient son He chastises with His uplifted rod; and that coy and distant daughter, whose eyes are overflowing with tears of godly sorrow for sin, He reconciles with a kiss of forgiveness.

In God's family, according to His own inspired testimony, (1Pet. 2:2; 1John 2:12-14), there are children of different ages: babes, children, young men, and fathers. We will begin with babes. Such may some of you be now—a babe in grace. You cannot yet run, and can only just cry, but still you have some feeling desire towards the Lord God of Israel: you are desiring the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. There may be others able to run about—who just feel their legs—who can climb upon their mother's knee and make their wants known. You cannot yet

Speak plainly the language of Canaan; still, what you do say is good English—it is your mother tongue—it is your native accent; there is no foreign intermixture. It is but a lisp, it is true, but still it is the true language. There are others, again, who are further grown—who have to endure the rude buffets of school and their rough playmates—who are not coddled at home, ever tied to their mother's apron string, but put out into the cold breath of winter and the chilling eastern winds of spring, to harden them into strength and ripen them into maturity. Then there are young men who are able to carry arms for their sovereign, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to lie at night in the tented field, "each man with his sword on his thigh," men "expert in war" (Song 3:8), instructed by the Captain of their salvation to fight the good fight of faith and overcome the wicked one. And there are fathers and mothers in Israel whose hoary head is a crown of glory, as being found in the way of righteousness, and who, as they bend lower and lower to the grave, are ripening more and more manifestly for home.

O what a mercy if any here present are of the family of God! None in that family, no, not one individual member, should be despised. Who despises the babe in the mother's lap because it can only wail and cry? Does the father, does the mother, do any of the children, be they young or old? All hail the new comer, the little stranger, and load it with kisses. And do not all the children of the same family, old and young, stand on the same level? So it is in that higher, nobler, and more endearing as well as more enduring relationship the family of God. They are all sons and daughters of the same Lord Almighty, all heirs together of the grace of life, and will be all put into possession of an equal, exceeding, and eternal weight of glory in the day of Christ's appearing. Is it your gracious portion to belong to this household of God, with whom He Himself dwells and walks (2Corinthians 6:16); to be amongst the members of this spiritual, holy, and happy family? Surely, if any of us belong to the family of God, we shall have family feelings, family affections, family interests, family hopes, and family prospects. We shall strive together for the honour of our Father, for the glory of our elder Brother, and for the benefit of each other. We shall be jealous of the honour of

the family. We shall not expose family failings or family bickerings, if such unhappily there be, to the rude eye of a scorning world; we shall not quarrel and fall out with each other, for that is most unseemly in members of the same family; but we shall bear with each other, and sympathise with each other in sorrow and in joy; and so fulfil the precept, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Have you any of the feelings that were in Ruth's bosom, when her mother-in-law would fain have bidden her return to her own people and her gods? Her language was—"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, if aught but death part thee and me." Are there any such feelings in your bosom as glowed so warmly in her tender heart? When you hear the word of truth preached—the character of the saints of God described in their high privileges opened up—their varied experience traced out—is there ever raised up in your heart a sweet persuasion that you are one of this blessed family, or even a desire stirred up within you—"O that I were plainly and clearly one of that happy number?" Do you inwardly say, "Let my lot be amongst the dear saints of God? Whatever I may suffer in this life, whatever affliction, or trouble, persecution, contempt, or enmity I may be called upon to pass through, O may my portion, both living and dying, be amongst the despised people of Christ!" These are family feelings. You cannot be altogether a stranger or a foreigner if you have any spiritual love or affection towards the saints of the Most High, for this is the Lord's own mark of "having passed from death unto life." (1John 3:14) But if you despise and scorn them, and nothing pleases you so much as for any of them to slip and go astray, that you may make it a matter of reproach against all the rest, surely that does not mark one of the family. It marks the enemy; it stamps the alien, and shows that you are still a stranger and a foreigner, and not a fellow citizen with the saints or of the household of God; for "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1John 3:14)

III.—But I pass on to show how the saints of God are "**built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.**"

1. The apostles and prophets laid one and the same foundation. They had but one work in hand—to lay the foundation for the Church of God to stand upon. When I speak of their laying the foundation, of course I mean only so ministerially and **instrumentally**, as Paul declares of himself, "As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation." (1Cor. 3:10) Christ is the foundation, laid by the hand of God Himself, as He Himself declares, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isaiah 28:16) None but the hands of God Himself could lay the foundation on which the Church could stand for eternity. But ministerially, as setting it forth in the inspired Scriptures and by their mouth and pen, the apostles and the prophets all joined hand in hand to lay the foundation by declaring what it was. They all wrought by the same Spirit; they all spoke under the same influence; and they took, so to speak, in their united hands the foundation, and laid it before the eyes of the Church of God. As the apostle declares, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

So the apostles and prophets, by their preaching and writing, laid the foundation on which the Church is to rest. This is Jesus Christ the Son of God, the God-man—His blood, His righteousness, His finished work, what He is as the Son of the Father in truth and love, able to bear the whole weight of the Church of God as her all-sufficient Surety and Representative. There is no other foundation but this. And I hope when I am dead and gone, you young people who have heard me here, will always bear testimony that I laid no other foundation in this place, but the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. The words I have at various times spoken in your ears may spring up by and by in your hearts; you may remember in years to come the things I have laid before you; and then should my published sermons be lost or forgotten, you will bear witness that during the whole of

my ministry no other foundation was laid in this place but Jesus and His blood—Jesus and His righteousness—Jesus and His finished work.

2. But we are to be **built** upon that foundation. We are, so to speak, to get our souls laid upon that foundation, which will stand with it for ever and ever. God has laid it in Zion that it may stand and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; and you and I, if we are to withstand the storms of time and be saved from the awful breaking forth of the flood of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that will one day consume a guilty world, must stand upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion.

But what is to be built upon that foundation? It is this. Grace takes us from our original state by nature, from the old Adam quarry, in which we lay sunk by the fall as low as the gates of hell, and, by working upon our hearts with divine power, lifts us up and out, and, in due time, by revealing Jesus, builds us by faith upon the finished work of the Son of God. We are thus built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are not built upon them as the Romish church is built upon the Pope, but upon the foundation ministerially laid by them, on which they themselves stood. Here stood Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the prophets of the Old Testament, and here stood the apostles of the New—Peter, John, Paul, James, and the rest. They all stood upon this foundation, deep enough and wide enough to sustain them all, and not only them but the whole church of God; and not a single saint has ever been saved but he has built upon the same foundation with them, for it is the rock upon which from generation to generation the Church is built and stands. See to it, then; look narrowly; examine your own conscience whether you are standing upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, or whether you are standing on the tottering, miserable foundation of a broken law and a covenant of works.

IV.—But lastly, view with me the Lord Jesus as here declared to be "**the chief corner stone.**" In fact, He is all: He is the

foundation, and He is the corner stone that unites the whole building together. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, Greek and Scythian, male and female, all are united together in this glorious building, as all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28) They all stand upon the same foundation, which is the glorious Person and the finished work, the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Son of God. And they are all brought together to be one building by virtue of their union with the chief corner stone which unites the walls together from the base to the top, from the foundation to the headstone. If we have union then with one another, it is because we have union with Christ; if we have communion with one another, it is because we have communion with Christ; if we love one another, it is because we first loved Christ; if we have any spiritual sympathy, any tender affection, or any going forth of sincere desire for each other's Christian welfare, it is because we are knit together in Christ and are spiritually united to His people because first spiritually united to Him, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" with Him and His people. (1Cor. 6:17) Thus He is the chief corner stone, and the whole building is kept firm in its place because He binds it all together by His blood, obedience, and love. My friends and hearers, what say you to these things? Are they the truth of God? Will they bear investigation in the light of Scripture?

Will they stand scrutiny closely and thoroughly examined by the test of divine teaching in the heart of the Lord's people? I am confident they will; and as such I commend them to your conscience. Examine the matter for yourselves. Search and see whether this be the truth or not; and then search and see whether you personally, individually, have a saving acquaintance with it. Look to yourselves, and see whether the Lord the Spirit has so wrought upon your hearts, as to bring you out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, and to give you a manifested union and communion with the Son of His love. Then you will know for yourselves whether I speak the truth of God; and if so, "who will make me a liar and make my speech nothing worth?" (Job 24:25)

## **Fellowship with the Son of God**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, November 13, 1859

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. 1:9

We live in a world of change. The very declining season of the year; the shortening days, the long dark nights, the withered leaves rustling under our feet, the altered aspect of our fields and gardens, all admonish us that we are passing through a change—that the warm, glowing days of summer are gone, and that the cold, cheerless winter is coming on. And if we turn from looking at the face of nature and the misty November sky to view the aspect of the political heavens, what dark clouds do we see overcasting the horizon and spreading themselves over the present scene! What an eventful year this has been which is now fast drawing to a close! How a few ominous words spoken on the first day of the year by a mighty potentate were like the cloud dimly seen by the prophet's servant, "the size of a man's hand;" and how that cloud kept spreading more and more over the heavens until at last it burst into a storm which deluged the plains of Italy with blood. And although we have now a respite, and the troubled waves seem for the time quieted into a calm, yet men's hearts are everywhere failing them for fear. Wars and rumours of wars are shaking the nations; a warlike spirit is spreading itself through our own land, though more for self-defence than aggression; and there is a general feeling that soon our own country may have to enter into a fearful and desperate conflict for her very existence. I am not an alarmist, but I am not one of those who either naturally or spiritually cry "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." I fear not so much the enemy abroad as that we may have lost our only true defence at home; that we have neglected and forsaken the Lord, our only real refuge; and that he may be so provoked by our national sins as to bring upon us national punishment. But I am no politician,

though no unwatchful observer of events, for I desire to see in them all the sovereignty of God and the hastening on of that blessed period when wars shall cease to the end of the world, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Meanwhile may the Lord stay our hearts upon himself, and give us to believe and feel that though all things change, there is One that changeth not; that Jesus Christ abideth the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that by faith in him and by the operations of the blessed Spirit upon the heart, revealing and forming him there, we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved: that though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is still our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1, 2); that amidst the shock of armies and the fall of thrones his throne stands secure; that the very stars may sooner drop from the sky than the saints of God fall out of his heart or hands. It will be well if we can amidst every changing scene thus stay our hearts upon the Lord, for as the Apostle declares in our text, "God is faithful;" it will be our mercy if we can hang upon his covenant love and superabounding grace, and act upon his own gracious invitation, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast." (Isai. 26:20.)

The church at Corinth was in some respects a very highly favoured church, and yet a very disorderly one. We can scarcely in our day conceive how a church of Christ could have been guilty of such disorders as sullied the fair face of that of Corinth; that one, for instance, of the members could have been living in incestuous intercourse with his father's wife; that others could come to the Lord's Supper drunk and disorderly; that at their church assemblies one should bring forward his psalm, another his doctrine, and a third his interpretation, so as to make the house of prayer a very Babel. And yet in spite of these disorders, to us so glaring, the Apostle tells them that they "came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He thanked God always for "the grace of God which was given them

by Jesus Christ," and that "in everything they were enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge." And then to establish the minds of those among them who, grieved and troubled by these internal disorders, might have been much shaken by doubt and fear whether God could be in their midst, and to lead them from looking at changeable man to fix their eyes upon an unchangeable Jehovah, he speaks in the words of our text—"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Three prominent features seem stamped upon these words:—

I.—*First, effectual calling: "by whom ye were called."*

II.—*Secondly, the fruit of effectual calling, fellowship: "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

III.—*Thirdly, the faithfulness of God, who having called them unto this fellowship, would surely fulfil all the good pleasures of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. "God is faithful."*

I.—To be called of God lies at the foundation of all vital godliness. It is the first entrance into the life of faith; the first step in the strait and narrow way; the first fruit and mark of predestinating grace, and indispensable to justification and salvation. As the Apostle speaks, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

But if we look at the testimony of God in the Scriptures, we shall find that there are two kinds of calling. There is what I may denominate a general call, and there is a special call; and these two must be carefully distinguished. The Lord, for instance, himself says—"Many are called, but few chosen." He there draws a distinction between the many called and the few chosen; clearly showing that there is a calling not connected with choice; and that many may be called, yet not be amongst the number of those elect who shall obtain eternal life. Let us look then at these two kinds of calling, for you may possess the one without

enjoying the other. Of this truth we are ourselves personal witnesses, for when we look back upon the way in which the Lord led us in his providential dealings in times past, we can see that we were then partakers of a general calling without being possessors of a special and effectual one.

1. The Lord, then, calls *by his providence*. The best way to prove this is to look back on your own path. Have you not had very many marked providential interpositions in your favour? Were you never raised up from a bed of sickness, which all around thought was the bed of death? Have you not been preserved in a striking manner from what are called accidents, or in the very midst of raging diseases when others fell around you, on the right hand and on the left? Has not the Lord in various ways stretched forth his right hand to feed, to clothe, to provide almost miraculously for your temporal wants; to raise up friends when needed; and appeared in such numerous other ways that you must have been blind indeed not to see that there was a God who watched over your path? These were God's calls in providence to see his hand, and fear and love his great and glorious name. But we were blind at the time and could not see them. Still they were not less real; not to see them was our sin, and but for God's grace would have been our condemnation.

2. God calls us, again, *sometimes by afflictions*. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city. Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." (Micah 6:9.) The rod has a voice, even though the ears are deaf to hear it. You have had afflictions, and they all had a warning voice. Every illness was a warning for death; every family bereavement spoke to you from the mouth of the grave; every loss in providence called you not to love the world and make money your god; the very griefs and sorrows that you witnessed in others were as so many intimations that the judgments of God were abroad in the earth, and that the inhabitants of the world were by them called to learn righteousness.

3. But these are providential calls. God calls with a louder voice *in the ministry of the gospel*. Your lot has been cast under a gospel

ministry. Again and again have you heard the word of truth sounding in your ears. And every time that you have heard repentance preached, faith insisted upon, the way of salvation traced out, and the new birth declared as indispensable to salvation, you have had a call, and that a loud one, if you had but ears to hear it.

4. But there is another, a closer and more personal way still in which the Lord outwardly calls, as distinct from his special, inward call by grace; and that is by the *workings of natural conscience and the convictions produced by the ministry of the word*. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the bosom, which, though sadly maimed and mutilated by the fall, still discharges its office till resisted and seared; and every time that conscience speaks and the soul trembles at the voice, God may be said to call men to repentance.

Now in these four ways God calls to the sons of men. In greater or less degree, more or less plainly, we have all had these calls. It may be we have neglected, slighted, been deaf to, and disregarded them; still they were not less calls from the Majesty of heaven. But none of these calls, though sufficient to leave us without excuse, are effectual until God puts forth a certain power in the heart. Whatever others may think and say, nothing turned my heart to the Lord but his own grace. I had the loudest calls such as I have named, few men louder, but not one or all united ever gave me a grain of true faith or real repentance, brought me out of the world, or turned my feet into the way of truth and righteousness. There is then a special call; and this call alone is effectual to the salvation of the soul. The Lord would not entrust salvation to an ordinary call. He would lodge the message with his own hand in the bosom. It should not be sufficient for the vessel of mercy to hear the word of truth: he would carry that word of truth with his own power into the heart. And it is this special call which distinguishes the family of God; for they are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." "Lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called." (1 Tim. 6:12 )

Now it may be that you, or some of you, are anxious to know whether you have received this special call of God. You cannot deny that you have had the general call that I have named, but you want to know whether God has done anything for you by his Spirit and grace. Now I will give you some evidences of a special call. I shall not set the standard high, that I may shut out none whom the Lord has taken in, but shall bring forward certain marks and evidences which always attend a real work of grace in the heart, that you may compare the experience of your soul with them, and thus gather up some encouraging testimony that you have been favoured with the special, effectual call which distinguishes the living family of God.

1. The first evidence, as it is the first fruit, of a special, effectual call is the *implantation of godly fear* in the breast: it is therefore called "the beginning of wisdom." If God has done anything for you by his Spirit and grace, he has communicated this godly fear to your soul; and it is now, even now, in you "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." It is indeed a part, and a very main part, of that well of water of which the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, when he said—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The first mark then of godly fear is that it is a fountain of life and a springing fountain too. Another mark of it is, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." (Prov. 16:6.) Have you departed from evil? Look at these two marks. Have you seen the evil of sin and departed from it? Do you find a fountain of life springing up in your breast whereby as you see the snares of death spread before your feet you depart from them? There is no evidence that a man does possess the fear of God unless he sees and departs from the snares of death. A third mark of this fear of God is that it is one of the first things that a child of God can recognise as a new feeling in his own breast, a hidden possession that he would not give up for a thousand worlds. It is a fountain ever flowing, and he must therefore be conscious more or less whether it waters his breast. As it springs up he must feel something of its rising and flowing; and as it works in a holy reverence towards God, a conviction of sin and a departure from evil, he that is

possessed of it has so far an internal evidence that it is "his treasure." But you will say, "I hope I have the fear of God in my heart; but I am often much tried whether it be the right fear." No wonder, because much servile fear is mixed with it—that fear of which the Holy Spirit says "it hath torment," and which nothing but perfect love can cast out. (1 John 4:18.) This is servile fear, and as in the breast of the child of God it is much mixed with filial fear, doubts arise whether the fear he has in his bosom is pure, filial fear, or whether it be only the fear which hath torment, which is not spiritual nor saving. But as the promise is that "the elder shall serve the younger," and there is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, filial fear will increase and servile fear will decrease, till perfect love comes and casts it completely out.

2. Another evidence of being called by this special call is *repentance of sin*. Jesus is "exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins." The two go together. Whenever he gives repentance, he gives remission; wherever he grants remission, he bestows repentance. Paul's preaching was this: "Repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.) And the answer addressed by the mouth of Peter to those who being pricked (or pierced) in their heart inquired what they should do, was—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." It will not do to let repentance go. Every child of God is brought to repent of his sins, and by repentance to forsake them. But you say "Have I repented? Considering the nature and magnitude of my sins, were I a repenting sinner, surely I should be mourning and sorrowing over them all the day long." What, then, creates that doubt in your mind? Because you are often hard, dark, dead, cold. Here, then, again, we must distinguish between that godly sorrow for sin which is felt in the spiritual mind, and that hardness and darkness of our carnal mind which is still enmity against God, nor is there faith or love, repentance or any one good thing in it. But there have been times and seasons when, under a peculiar influence, your heart was softened and melted before God; when sin was truly repented of; when you felt that it was indeed an evil and a

bitter thing to sin against so good, so holy, and so great and glorious a God; when the rock melted, the hard heart gave way, the eyes flowed down with tears, and the swelling breast was almost ready to burst with penitential grief for your sins and over the sufferings and sorrows of the Son and Lamb of God, and you could only loathe yourself in dust and ashes before his holy, heart-searching eye.

3. Another mark of being favoured with the special call is having *received the spirit of grace and of supplications*. To be favoured with a Spirit of prayer, and by this to obtain access to the throne of grace; to be enabled to wrestle with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and by prayer and supplication to draw down blessings from the throne of the Most High,—this is one of God's own evidences of his special favour; for he says, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." And see the effect—"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. 12:10.) Mark the connection of the two evidences—the Spirit of prayer and true repentance. Wherever there is a Spirit of grace and supplications given, there will be repentance attending it; and this will be gospel repentance, evangelical sorrow, springing out of a view by faith of the crucified Son of God. What a blessed chain unites every Christian grace! How the fruits of the Spirit grow in clusters on the living bough! How evidence is fastened to evidence by a cord that cannot be broken! How safe, then, how sure is the path that Christians tread! Seek for clearer evidences that you are walking in it.

4. Another mark is a *living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We have not this at first when under the law, in bondage under its condemnation and curse. The Lord Jesus Christ is not yet made experimentally known, and therefore there can be no true faith in him. And though we may hear about him and try to believe in him, still we have no such discovery of his Person and work as brings any relief, any pardon, or peace. But sooner or later the blessed Spirit is pleased to discover Christ to the soul, which he

has effectually brought down under the guilt of sin, cut off from all legal hope and laid in the dust before God. This gracious discovery and manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ raises up a living faith to look unto him, believe in his name, hang upon him as a nail fastened in a sure place, and receive him into the heart as of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Many of the family of God are shut up under the law, not indeed destitute of faith, for they believe in the justice and holiness of God to their own condemnation, nor without desires after the Lord Jesus Christ, but without that faith which gives them an assured sense of interest in his atoning blood and finished work. Have you not felt, or do you not now feel, that, with all your prayers and desires, you cannot believe in the Son of God, faith being the express gift of God, unless he be pleased to bestow that precious grace upon you? But those who have been favoured with a manifestation of the Lord Jesus can, under the sweet enjoyment or the blessed recollection, look up to heaven with a believing eye possessing an inward testimony that they do believe in his blessed name, and that he has been made precious to their soul.

5. Another mark of the special call of God is a *discovery of the evils of our heart*. Whilst shut up in unbelief and self-righteousness, we take no notice of heart sins; but when, by the shining in of light from the Lord's own countenance, each inward recess is laid open to view, every imagination of the thought of our heart is discovered unto us to be evil, and that continually. This is always attended by self-abhorrence and self-loathing; for when we see light in God's most blessed light, and view his glorious perfections in contrast with our hidden deformity, it is with us as it was with the prophet Daniel: our comeliness is turned into corruption (Dan. 10:8); and as it was with Isaiah when he said, "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." (Isai. 6:5) So it was with the patriarch Job, when he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job

42:5, 6.) Whenever he draws near in the majesty of his presence, he lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. (Isai. 28:17.) He thus wounds the head of sin out of the house of the wicked by discovering the foundation unto the neck (Hab. 3:13): stripping off its face all its changeable suits of apparel, the mantles and the wimples and the cringing pins, the hoods and the veils, so that instead of a sweet smell there is a stink, instead of a girdle a rent, instead of a well-set hair baldness; instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth: and burning instead of beauty. (Isai. 3:22-24.)

6. *Love to the brethren* is another and eminent mark of God's special call. John puts it in the foremost rank—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) You must love the brethren if you love the Lord, the elder Brother; for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." And John declares that it is barefaced falsehood to speak of loving him whom we have not seen, and yet not love those whom we have seen. Many a child of God cannot speak of great manifestations, or of a deep experience either of law or gospel, who yet has stamped upon him that indubitable mark that he loves the Lord's people; many a one is very timid of speaking anything of what God has done for his soul, and shrinks above all things from any presumptuous claim or confidence, who evidently loves the image of Jesus Christ wherever it appears in any of his saints, be their outward condition what it may. Therefore, treasure up that mark if you can find it in your heart: it is one of God's own giving; it may cast a light upon your path often so dark and dreary; it may be an evidence when others seem to fall out of your grasp and leave you to be well nigh overwhelmed in doubt and fear.

7. *A good hope through grace* is another mark of special calling, whereby you safely breast the stormy sea, having cast anchor within the veil; and this is good holding ground, for it is nothing less than the sacred humanity of the Son of God as now in the presence of God for us. Have you never found, when faith and love were sunk out of sight and almost every evidence gone,

there was a secret something in you which made you still hope in the Lord? How David thus encouraged his soul:—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Waves and billows of trial and temptation were beating over his soul; it was cast down from its stability and confidence, and became disquieted and troubled in his bosom. But hope comes to his aid; he gathers it into his arms, and, speaking to his bosom companion as her warm and compassionate friend, he bids her look out of herself and hope in God, for he is sure that he shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Have you not sometimes felt you could do the same—that though hope sank low, it was not altogether gone; though buried out of sight, still the anchor held firm within the veil; and though the waves and billows of doubt and fear tossed up and down the ship of your soul, yet there was that in the vessel which held fast on to the blessed Lord?

8. *Spirituality of mind*, of which we read that it is "life and peace" (Rom. 8:6), is another blessed mark of being favoured with the special call. None but those who are partakers of a heavenly birth feel heavenly realities to be their choice element, holy things their sweetest meditation, and the solemn worship of God their supreme delight. Look at this mark as a touchstone of divine life; for to be spiritually minded a man must be spiritual, and to be spiritual he must have received the Spirit and been made a partaker of that "kingdom of God which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) Have you never found in reading the Scriptures a sweet peace distil over your soul, as the glorious promises came forth one after another as the stars in the evening sky, each one brighter and clearer, and you felt a blessed persuasion of your interest in them? When at the throne of grace, favoured with liberty of spirit and access to your heavenly Friend, have you never felt the peace of God to drop into your heart, and like oil upon the waves, to allay every rising of rebellion within? Have you never found, in conversing with the saints of God, a sweet flowing of heart to heart and soul to soul, and felt that such conversation left behind a blessed fragrance upon your spirit? Have you never in the house of prayer had your

heart and affections drawn up to the things of God: and as you sat and heard Christ, his person and work, his grace and glory set forth, faith was drawn out to believe, hope to cast forth its anchor, and love and affection to flow, so that you experienced a spirituality of mind, a heavenly calm, and a holy peace, that touched every spring of your soul, and watered it as the river that went out of Eden to water the garden?

I have now given you certain marks and evidences of being a partaker of a special call, all of which I have, I trust, more or less at various times, felt in my own bosom, and therefore do not speak of them at a peradventure. Look at these things; weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, and see how far a light has been cast in Scripture and experience on the inward movements of your soul, and what you have tasted, felt, and handled as a proof of divine teaching in your bosom. If you can find from these inward testimonies that you have been favoured with this special call, we will now pass on to our next point, which is—

II.—To show *what the saints of God are called unto*. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called *unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*." When God calls his people by his grace, it is to make them partakers of the highest bliss and the greatest glory that he could confer upon the sons of men. And this not only in eternity but in time; not only beyond, but this side of the grave. He appeals, therefore, to them by his prophet. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31.) When the Lord calls his people out of earthly pleasures, is it for no other purpose than to lead them into paths of affliction and sorrow? Does he make them leave the flesh-pots of Egypt to starve them in a waste, howling wilderness? This was the complaint of the ancient murmurers, that Moses had brought them up out of Egypt to kill them with thirst. (Exod. 17:3.) Does he take them from earthly delights to abandon them to misery and despair? O, no! He calls them even in this time state to the greatest privilege and highest favour that his everlasting love could confer upon them, which is no less than "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," that they may have union and

communion with the Son of God by grace here, and be partakers of his glory hereafter.

God's dear Son is and always has been the object of his eternal delight. To glorify him has been from all eternity his fixed, his settled purpose; and in pursuance of this settled purpose, he gave him a people whom he formed for himself, that they might show forth his praise. Thus, therefore, the Redeemer addressed his heavenly Father—"And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:10.) His only begotten Son is God's heir, for he has "made him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth" (Psl. 89:27); "appointed him heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2); "crowned him with glory and honour, set him over the work of his hands, and put all things under his feet." (Heb. 2: 7, 8.) But his people is his inheritance, as was typified by Israel of old, "for the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." And not only has he made his people his inheritance, but given them to him as his Bride; and as such blessed her with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in him. Thus we read in the parable that "a certain king made a marriage for his son." (Matt. 22:2.) The certain king is God; his Son is the Lord Jesus Christ; the Bride is the Church; and the marriage is the union and communion of the Bride and Bridegroom. But before the marriage, proclamation was made, "All things are ready." So when God calls his people "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," all things are ready. To enjoy them by faith is to have "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.) But let us see what is the *foundation* of this fellowship before we enter into its *nature*.

I. When God first made man and placed him in the garden of Eden, God and man were at agreement. God could then come and walk in the garden in the cool of the day, and converse with him face to face as a man converseth with his friend. The fall broke that agreement through: sin separated between God and the work of his hand. Man became a rebel, an enemy, an alien, and God's anger was manifested against him, so that he cursed the very ground for his sake. In that state there could be no

fellowship: for fellowship implies union, agreement, walking together as friends. In order, then, to restore and put upon a higher basis an agreement once enjoyed, it pleased God that his only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ should take our nature into union with his own divine Person. As the Apostle speaks— "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." This is the foundation of all fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our lord, that by his incarnation the Son of God participates in the same nature with us, and has union and communion with the sons of men through his sacred humanity, being sin excepted, one with theirs. Man as man can have no fellowship with God as God. There is no union between an infinite Being such as God and a finite being such as man, any more than there can be between man and a beast. Before the fall there was agreement, but not union; converse but not communion. To bring about then union as a foundation of communion, the Son of God *took our nature* into union with his own divine Person; became man such as we are; and thus established a basis of union and communion by a participation in a common nature. O what glory does this cast upon the sacred humanity of our most blessed Lord, that thereby he became "a daysman," or umpire, as the word means, "to lay his hand upon us both"—as God sharing the nature of God, as man sharing the nature of man, and thus a mediator between God and man. But redemption and reconciliation were needed that the claims of offended justice might not suffer, and that it might be proclaimed in the courts of heaven and to the ends of the earth, "I have found a ransom." In that very nature, then, which had sinned, the incarnate Son of God suffered, bled, and died. That holy body and soul which at one and the same moment, he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, he laid upon the altar of his Deity, presented both as a sacrifice to God's offended justice, endured therein the curse of the law, and by shedding his precious blood and by the travail of his suffering soul brought in an everlasting righteousness, redeemed and reconciled the church, and saved it in himself with an everlasting salvation. Never forget that at the cross is the foundation of fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But this is not enough. All men have a participation in the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of a common nature. Yet all are not saved thereby; nor are all called unto the fellowship of God's dear Son. It is only by being made a *partaker of his Spirit* that we come into fellowship with the Lord of life and glory; according to those words—"He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." When, then, the Spirit of Christ visits the soul with his distinguishing grace, and thus quickens it into life divine, he gives it a spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and out of that union, communion springs. So that the foundation of all fellowship with the Son of God is based upon two things, first, a participation in his flesh; secondly, a participation in his Spirit. By virtue of his flesh he is one with us; by virtue of his Spirit we are one with him. Through his flesh we have union; through his Spirit we have communion. In his flesh he came down to earth; by his Spirit he lifts us up to heaven.

ii. Having shewn the *foundation* of this sacred fellowship, I shall now declare its *nature*. 1. The first thing necessary to this is *agreement*. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" is the Lord's own momentous inquiry. If you are not agreed with Jesus Christ, what fellowship can you have with him? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14.) Then you must be made righteous before you can have fellowship with a righteous Christ; and be enlightened with the light of the living before you can have communion with him "who dwelleth in the light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5.) This he gives by his regenerating grace, for he puts his Spirit into you, shows you the misery of alienation, raises up in your heart a longing for pardon and peace; and then, sooner or later by virtue of his atoning blood sprinkled and revealed, brings about a spiritual agreement, which is the first introduction into communion. Is it not so even naturally? What communion of mind, heart, or affection can we have with a person with whom we have no agreement? But the more points of agreement the more points of communion.

2. But besides agreement, there must be another thing, which is *acquaintance*. "Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. There is a knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, to possess which is to possess eternal life; but if we know him not, what union or communion can we have with him? But know him we cannot until he is pleased to reveal himself; to discover his lovely face; to take the veil of unbelief off our heart; and manifest himself as he does not manifest himself unto the world. In this knowledge there is a growth (2 Pet. 3:18); and the more the growth the greater the love, and the greater the fellowship. There are persons whom the more we know the less we want to know; and there are persons whom the more we know the more we want to know. The blessed Lord is one whom the more we know the more we want to know, but whom we shall never fully know till we see him as he is, and know him even as we are known. (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12.)

3. But besides agreement and acquaintance, there is a third thing needful to this sacred fellowship, *a measure of holy boldness and confidence*; because whilst there is so much doubting and fearing, trembling and hoping, there is no sweet fellowship. In earthly things, before you can walk and talk with open heart and mouth to a friend, you must have a measure of confidence in him that he is your friend; you cannot otherwise express your thoughts and feelings freely. If there be shyness on either side, a coldness, a distance, it is a bar at once to all communion. But if you have some testimony that he is a real friend, into whose ear you can lodge your complaint, who can sympathise with you in trouble, give good counsel when needed, and walk with you on terms of confidential intimacy, it establishes between you a communion of heart and affection. So it is as regards fellowship with Jesus Christ. There must be a measure of spiritual confidence to enable us to converse with him; a feeling that he loves us and that we love him; a looking unto; and hanging upon him as our best friend, our wise counsellor, our effectual teacher, our only Saviour, enduring hope, and abiding refuge!

4. Where there is fellowship, there will be also *having the same mind*. As the Apostle says—"But we have the mind of Christ." As lovers of truth and righteousness, as partakers of God's holiness, as redeemed and regenerated children of light, what fellowship can you have with a drunkard, with a profligate, with a gambler, with a swearer, with a profane wretch who despises and ridicules all religion? You say in a moment—"I can have no fellowship with such beings: my companions must be the children of God or none." So in grace unless you have the mind of Christ, so as to see with Christ's eyes, feel with Christ's heart, love what Christ loves, and hate what he abhors, you cannot walk with him in any sweet communion. If you love and live in sin, and he loves and lives in holiness, what communion is there between you and him on the footing of love? If you love and live in the world, and he when below was separated from it, what communion can there be between you and him on the footing of heavenly mindedness? If you serve divers lusts and passions, and walk in the ways of perdition and death, what communion can you have with him who walked whilst here below as an obedient Son in all the beauty of holiness? Or again, if you are without affliction or exercise of mind, without grief or trouble, trial or temptation, what communion have you with him who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" To have the mind of Christ you must be cast in the mould of Christ, be a partaker of the Spirit of Christ, and know something of the presence and power of Christ, and thus be drawn up into a measure of sweet fellowship and communion with him as your beloved Lord.

5 . But fellowship implies other things. It implies a *zeal for Christ's interest*. Look at partners in a bank or in a firm: how each is anxious for the others' interest, because the interest of one is the interest of all. So in grace: those who have fellowship with Christ are zealous for his interest; feel anxious for his cause; have a desire for his glory; and that his name might be served and obeyed amongst men. His honour is very dear to them; his name very precious; his truth highly esteemed; his people loved; his servants prized; and to sum up all in the words of Hart—

"And everything that's dear to Him,  
To them is also dear."

6. But fellowship implies also *participation in the same lot*, whether of joy or suffering, and that a willing participation; for there is a sharing the same lot unwillingly. The two thieves were crucified with Christ, and had thus a fellowship with him in external suffering, but unwillingly. But when Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and Paul longed for "a fellowship of the sufferings of Christ," it was a willing participation that they coveted in the lot of the man of sorrows. If, then, we have fellowship with Christ, we must have fellowship with him in what he was here below as well as what he is in heaven above. Was he despised and persecuted? We must be despised and persecuted too. Was he hated? We must be hated likewise. Was he slandered and maligned? We must endure the same reproach. Was he misunderstood and misrepresented, called a drunkard and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners, when his life was so pure and holy? We must submit to similar misrepresentations. Did he suffer in the gloomy garden under the temptations of Satan, and the hidings of God's face; did he sweat great drops of blood under the pressure of sin and sorrow? If we are to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in his sufferings in the garden and upon the cross, we must know by internal experience some of these sorrows under sin, or else we have no fellowship with him in his sufferings and death.

7. But fellowship, again, implies *communion*: the word is the same; that is, the communication of his grace to us and of our wants to him; an interchange, if I may use the expression, of commodities; he bestowing upon us his Spirit, his presence, his power, his love, and we giving him in return not only our hearts with its affections, our bodies and souls, to be wholly and eternally his, but laying our sins at his feet, casting our burdens upon him, telling him our griefs and sorrows, and pouring out our desires into his willing ear. This fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord is the highest privilege and greatest favour that

God can bestow upon his people here below; and to be blessed with it is the sure pledge, as it is the earnest and foretaste, of eternal bliss. By this sacred communion the guilty conscience is relieved from its burdens; the troubled heart comforted; the desponding spirit raised up; and the whole soul blessed. Through this holy fellowship the Lord Jesus Christ communicates out of his fulness every heavenly grace. Wisdom, strength, filial fear, tenderness of conscience, separation from and deadness to the world, a spirit of prayer and praise, brokenness, humility, self-abasement, godly sorrow for sin, worship, admiration, and adoration, with that crowning blessing, love—what a train of graces are communicated through fellowship with the Son of God! What condescension in the Lord to stoop so low to poor guilty sinners who, left to themselves, never have done anything but transgress, backslide, and rebel!

But even this fellowship, sweet and blessed as it is here below, is but an introduction to and commencement of a higher, happier, more enduring, and glorious fellowship above. If we have fellowship with Christ upon earth, there will be fellowship with Christ in heaven; and if we are privileged here below to enjoy his presence, feel his love, and know his power, we shall one day see him as he is without a veil between.

III.—But I pass on to our third point, which is to show *the faithfulness of God* in accomplishing the purpose which he has designed for his called people. "God is faithful." Having called his people unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, God will be faithful to his own *word*, and to his own *work*. 1. As a God "who cannot lie," he will surely perform all that he has promised. In heaven, before all worlds, he made a covenant with his Son and the Holy Ghost on behalf of a peculiar people. He will be faithful to that covenant. Such are his own words—"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." (Psalm 89:34-37.) Heaven and earth shall

pass away, but God's everlasting covenant shall never pass away, for it is a covenant "ordered in all things and sure." Now, this covenant, made in eternity, he confirmed in time by an oath, as the Apostle speaks, "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." (Heb. 6:13, 14.) This he did, as the Apostle declares, for the consolation of the heirs of promise: "For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." (Heb. 6:16, 17.) And not only did he swear unto Abraham, but he appointed his dear Son as the high priest over the house of God by oath, when he said unto him, "The Lord swore, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 7:21.) To that double oath he will be faithful, for if an oath is binding upon men, how much more will an oath be binding upon God? The faithfulness of God to his eternal counsel or covenant decree, and to his oath, are "the two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie;" in which we therefore "have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:18.)

2. But besides this there is the faithfulness of God to *his own work* upon the heart. Why did he begin that work but to complete it? Why did he call you by his grace but to give you fellowship with his dear Son? Having begun that work, nothing will ever move him from his determined purpose that his people whom he has called by his grace shall have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. You may not be now enjoying it, or not yet have attained to that distinguished favour; but he who has called you is faithful, and will renew it afresh, or bestow it in due time.

And how we need this faithfulness! Many are the hindrances to this fellowship. Dark clouds gather over the mind; temptations assail the soul; sins vex and tease; backslidings draw aside and entangle; guilt presses hard and heavy; deadness and coldness chill and freeze; Satan harasses; the world allures; doubt and

fear distress; the carnal mind frets and murmurs: all those inward evils are sad hindrances to communion, and are felt as such, in greater or less degree, by every Christian. Yet God is faithful, and will not suffer these hindrances wholly to prevent, though they may intercept fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But God works by means, and it is through them for the most part that he maintains his work alive upon the soul. Prayer and supplication; reading the word; sweet meditation upon God's truth; hearing the preached gospel; communion with the family of God; watchfulness against besetting temptations; resisting Satan when he comes in like a flood; striving against all sin: these are certain means of God's providing; and the Lord is faithful in not only making his people to avail themselves of them, but blessing them in and by them.

May we not, then, well say, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?" Here we rest our hopes—that God is faithful. Having called us by his grace, he will never suffer the work to be undone, marred by sin, and ruined by Satan. He will himself carry it on, and bring it to perfection; and giving us to enjoy whilst here below a taste of that sweet communion to which he called us when he quickened us into life by his blessed Spirit, he will complete it, when perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, the general assembly and church of the firstborn shall enjoy eternal communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the glorious Triune Lord God of Israel.

## The Fiery Trial

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 9, 1865

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4:12, 13

What various, what strange ideas most people have as to the nature of true religion. I suppose there are few persons in this so-called Christian country, except those whom sin has altogether brutalised, the waifs and strays of humanity, the vagrant outcasts of society, who do not acknowledge the necessity of some kind of religion, by means of which they may hope to escape hell and win heaven. But when we leave vague, general ideas, and come to examine clearly their opinions, what ignorance do we see displayed on every side as to the nature of that religion of which they admit, and are forced, almost in spite of themselves, to admit the necessity. We never see this ignorance more signally manifested than on those occasions when true religion is presented before their eyes. But let me here, before I proceed further, define what I mean by true religion. I understand then, thereby, such a religion as we find laid down in the word of truth. It is not what *I* may think, nor what *you* may think to be the true religion which determines its nature, but it is, so to speak, what God thinks. Our thoughts, as merely our own thoughts, are valueless; but the thoughts of God's heart are truth itself. But where shall we find these thoughts expressed except in his own word, in and by which he has revealed his mind to the sons of men? Take this then as my plain and fixed meaning, that when I speak now or at any other time of true religion, I mean nothing less and nothing more than that religion which God has revealed in the Scriptures, and which he works by his own power in the hearts of his people. Now when this religion is presented before the eyes of man, it is so different from their fixed conceptions of

it that some at once pronounce it as little less than a species of mental extravagance, a kind of insanity, the end of which is almost sure to be the lunatic asylum. Others who will not go to such a length as to call it actual derangement, yet think that religion is a poor, gloomy, miserable affair, which cuts men off from all the pleasures and enjoyments of life, and makes this world, instead of being a happy world, as God intended it to be, a scene of unnecessary, self-inflicted gloom, sadness, and melancholy. Having no idea of any other pleasure or of any other happiness than what this life affords, and not being able to enter into anything which is spiritual and heavenly, and as such has a glory of its own, they shrink from a system which seems to deprive them at a stroke of every source of worldly enjoyment. Others again—and these are chiefly professors of religion—take just an opposite view of the case, and think that true religion consists in being always happy, being always comfortable in one's mind, always able to believe in Jesus Christ, having no doubt nor fear as to our state and standing, and taking matters pretty well for granted that all is right between God and the soul. This they say is both our duty and our privilege, upon the simple ground that we ought to take God at his word, and believe the promises without any particular anxiety to know whether they belong to us, or any special application of them to our heart.

But I need not dwell any longer on the various and erroneous ideas generally entertained as to the nature of true religion. When, however, we consider the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and that the natural man cannot receive nor understand the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, we need not wonder at this almost universal ignorance. What seems more surprising is, that even those in whom the work of grace is begun, and of whom we should expect better things, are often very ignorant as to the real character of the kingdom of God. We have a remarkable instance of this in the case of the disciples of our Lord previous to the day of Pentecost. We find continually in the gospels proof of their carnal views, and how little at that time they entered into the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God which our Lord came to

establish. As an instance, immediately after Peter's noble confession that Christ was "the Son of the living God," when our Lord began to speak of his "suffering many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and being killed and rising again the third day," how was this preaching of the cross received by Peter? We read that he took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." He would thus have diverted our Lord from the cross, from the very work of redemption which he came to accomplish. But how instantaneously the gracious Lord rebuked his ignorant disciple: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. 16:22, 23.) Take another instance. Two of his most favoured disciples, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, were so ignorant of the spiritual nature of the Lord's kingdom, that they asked that one might sit on his right hand and the other on his left in his glory. This glory they believed to be the glory of an earthly kingdom, for at that time they had no idea of any other; and in that royal reign over all nations their carnal ambition prompted them to desire the highest and most exalted place in preference to all the other disciples. Nay, even after the resurrection, the disciples generally put to our Lord this question, whether he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel: as if they were all looking for a worldly kingdom, in which Israel should have dominion over the nations of the earth.

But though we wonder at their ignorance, still it is instructive to see from their example that there may be true grace in the heart, real faith and hope and love, even where there is much ignorance in the understanding; and I have no doubt that there are now many persons whose judgments are extremely weak and whose minds are on many points much uninstructed, who yet possess the fear of God and believe in his dear Son. This does not imply, much less sanction a state of permanent ignorance. Childhood is one thing, but to be always a child is another. With the disciples, this ignorance was only for a season, until the day of Pentecost was fully come, when they were baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. When that sacred Comforter and holy Teacher came

down with his gifts and graces into their souls, he corrected all these misconceptions, and showed them that the kingdom of God was not in word but in power; that it was not meat and drink, or anything carnal and earthly, but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What a conspicuous change, for instance, it made in Peter! With what decision, power, and boldness he spoke, who a short time before had trembled before a servant maid; and what an evidence was thereby afforded that the Lord who had gone up on high had received gifts for men, and had sent them down with power from heaven.

Now it is this same Peter who, in after years, nearly 30 perhaps, wrote this precious Epistle to the Church of God. He writes as "an elder," both in age and station, who had been a witness in the past of the sufferings of Christ and would be in the future of the glory that should be revealed. But observe the language in which, as matured by the furnace and ripened by the Holy Ghost for the crown of martyrdom, which he was soon to wear, he writes in the words of our text to the saints. He bids them not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which was to try them, as though some strange thing happened to them; but on the contrary, rather to rejoice as being thereby partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory should be revealed, they might be glad also with exceeding joy.

This is the subject which, with God's help and blessing, I shall bring before you this evening; and in opening up the mine of experimental truth which here lies before us, I shall endeavour,

I.—*First*, as the Lord may enable, to enter a little into *the fiery trial* which is to try the saints of God.

II.—*Secondly*, to show that we are not to *think it strange* concerning this fiery trial, as though some *strange thing* happened unto us when we are put into this fiery furnace; but,

III.—*Thirdly*, rather to *rejoice*, and upon these two grounds: first, as being thereby *partakers of Christ's sufferings*; and, secondly,

as thereby fitted to rejoice with *exceeding joy* when his *glory shall be revealed*.

I.—Peter, though he thus speaks, well knew the weakness of our faith, and that we do think it strange when we are first put into the fiery trial. He meets us therefore upon that ground, that we may not be discouraged nor cast down when the day of trial comes, but be prepared for it, as that which is intended by God for us to experience, and which is common with us to all his family to endure.

But though this is most suitable and excellent counsel, yet it is only when we have passed through some measure of the fiery trial, and have learned in it those lessons which God designs us to learn therein and thereby, that we are able to understand or accept this advice. How indeed can it be otherwise? Does it not seem contrary to the very nature and spirit of the gospel as a message of pure mercy, a revelation of the wondrous and unspeakable love of God? Is not the gospel a proclamation of pardon, peace, liberty, and joy? What does it say as such, and where does it speak as such of fiery trials? How contrary too is it to the experience of new-born souls and the joys of manifested salvation. When the soul is first blessed with any enjoyment of gospel blessings, how little it expects or anticipates that these should be followed by any trial so fierce as to be called "fiery." And yet so certain is the trial, sooner or later, to come that Peter prepares us beforehand to expect it, and bids us not think it strange, as if some strange thing happened to us, and we were the only persons called upon to experience it.

But my object at present is not so much to dwell upon the strangeness of the trial, which will come before us presently, as to set before you in some measure and describe the fiery trial itself.

i. And first, as to the *reason* why it is so named. It is so called mainly for two reasons: first, on account of its *fiery nature* or inflammatory character, as containing a fire in it, or bringing a

fire with it. Now our heart being full of combustible material, when this fire comes, it finds *that* in our nature which it at once lights up, and often puts into a state of fervid combustion. But secondly, it is called a fiery trial in allusion to the usual way of *purifying metals*, there being no other mode generally practised whereby the dross can be separated from the ore except the furnace. Bear then these two things in mind when I speak of the fiery trial which God brings upon his people, as we may be better prepared thereby to enter feelingly and experimentally into its true nature and character.

1. The first fiery trial which God brings upon them is by the application of *his holy law*, which is called in the word of truth "a fiery law." "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his hand went a fiery law for them." (Deut. 33:2.) And well is it called "a fiery law," for when it was given, we read: "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly." (Exod. 19:18.) It was in this fire that the Lord descended, for he "came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount," to manifest the character of that fiery dispensation. To this David seems to allude when he says, "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." (Psa. 97:3, 4, 5.) And thus the apostle says, "Our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:29.) This part of the divine character is little known. He is thought to be a God all mercy; but his holiness, his purity, his justice, his majesty, his greatness, his sovereignty, his anger against sin, his determination by no means to clear the guilty, the awful vengeance which he takes upon his enemies, his eternal and unspeakable displeasure against the unbelieving and the impenitent are little apprehended. He is at present long-suffering and forbearing, and is waiting to be gracious; for "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." His dear

Son is now sitting upon a throne of mercy and grace, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. But it will not always be so. When he leaves the throne of grace and takes his seat upon the throne of judgment, then a fiery stream will issue and come forth from before him, then "all the proud, yea, and all they that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Mal. 4:1.) And be assured that when his indignation bursts forth against sin, it will burn to the lowest hell. What is hell but the manifestation of the fiery indignation of God against sin? What is Tophet, with all its burning flame, but the pouring out of the wrath of God upon guilty sinners to all eternity? Now the law is a manifestation of this displeasure, a revelation of this righteous anger of God; so that when the law enters a sinner's conscience as a revelation of the wrath of God against sin, it is a fiery law, because it manifests the anger and indignation of him who is a consuming fire. What then does it effect? It burns up the combustible material which it finds already laid in the heart. Our pride, our self-righteousness, our creature strength, our free-will, our legal hopes and fleshly expectations, with everything in us to which we can look or on which we can hang, that they may save us or recommend us to the favour of God, all are burnt and consumed in this fire: for it spares nothing which it can reach or destroy.

But I said that it was called "a fiery trial," not only because it met with and set on fire our combustible material, but because it instrumentally purged away the dross and tin, and brought forth the gold, liberated from this drossy material. As then the furnace does not burn up or destroy the gold, though it purges away the dross, so the law never consumes any true faith which God may have given, but by removing from it the dross with which it is surrounded makes it shine all the brighter.

2. But take another instance of this fiery trial, viz., *temptation*.

All God's saints do not go into the same depths under the fiery trial of the law, for we must not in this, or in other points, set up

a rigid standard. They know sufficiently of the guilt, bondage, and condemnation which it produces in their conscience to burn up their self-righteousness, and to convince them thoroughly that there is no salvation by the works of the law, and that by it no flesh can be justified. But all the quickened saints are not equally burnt in this flame, nor pass through an equal measure of condemnation and guilt under its weight and burden. Yet as there must be some kind of equality amongst the family of God, we often find, what I may call, a law of compensation, so that what they fall short of in one thing they seem to make up in another. Thus I have often thought, that those who at the first outset do not go so deep under the law, are often far more deeply exercised with the fiery trial of temptation. Thus what they seem to lose in one point they gain in another—the defect in one scale being made up by a greater weight put into the other.

Now what does temptation meet with in my breast but everything which is suitable to its nature? I am a heap of combustible material; I have everything in my nature alive to sin, yea, in itself nothing but sin. Temptation is the spark to the gunpowder; temptation is the torch to the sheaf; temptation is the lightning to the conductor; temptation is the midnight adulterer that enters into close embrace with the evils of my heart, and by their adulterous union, sin is begotten, conceived, and brought forth. James has opened this point very clearly: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:14, 15.) Now do not mistake me. I do beg and entreat you not to misunderstand, and still more not to misrepresent my meaning. I am only speaking of the natural tendency of temptation, as meeting the evils of our heart. I am not saying that a child of God complies with, gives way to it, or is overcome by it. But he is tempted, which is his misery more than his sin. James tells us to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations," which he could not do if temptations were sins; nay, he adds, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them

that love him." (James 1:12.) But temptation would have no effect or influence, unless I had that in my breast to which temptation was fully suitable. If I had no pride, no unbelief, no infidelity, no covetousness, no lust, no presumption, no despondency, temptation to pride, to unbelief, to infidelity, to covetousness, to lust, to presumption, to despair, could have no influence upon my mind, and would not deserve the name of temptation. But my nature being a mass of combustible material, ready to go off with the faintest spark, when temptation comes, unless God interpose, the spark and the gunpowder meet together, and what an awful explosion there would be unless the showers of heaven wet the powder and prevent the catastrophe.

But what a purifying effect experience of temptation produces; what a separation it makes of the dross from the ore. If a man has a grain of faith in his soul, temptation will discover it; if he has a particle of living hope, temptation will bring it to light; if he has a grain of love, temptation will extract it from the ore; if he has any patience, any humility, any fear of God, any desire to be right, any dread to be wrong, any honesty, any sincerity, any integrity, in a word, if he has any vital power in his soul, anything of the grace of God in his heart, temptation will make it manifest, as the hot flame of the furnace, acting upon the crucible, manifests the gold by breaking up its alliance with the dross. You scarcely know whether you are a believer or an unbeliever until you pass through temptation. You do not know what the nature of faith is as a divine gift and a spiritual grace, unless you have passed through this fiery trial. You do not know the worthlessness of creature religion, the emptiness of everything in self, until you have been put into the furnace of temptation. We are tempted sometimes, perhaps, to doubt the truth of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, the efficacy of his atonement, and many things which I will not even hint at in your ears lest I unwittingly sow infidel seeds in your heart. Now when we are thus exercised, temptation as a fire burns up everything that stands in the wisdom and strength of the creature, and brings us to this point, that nothing but that which is of God in the soul can live in the flame. If then we find there is that in our heart which lives in the

flame, that there is a faith which temptation cannot burn up, a hope it cannot destroy, a love it cannot consume, a fear of God which it cannot conquer, then we see there is that in our heart which is like pure gold in the midst of the dross, and can say in some measure with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

3. But take again the wide range of *personal trials*, since they also in their connection and in their consequences form a part of the fiery trial. You have all your trials. Some of you, like myself, have bodily trials, an afflicted tabernacle, a weakly body, shattered nerves, a sickly frame; and this is your daily cross, bound hard and fast upon your shoulders, which gives birth to many exercises, and is the fruitful parent of many severe sufferings and painful feelings. Others of you have deep family trials, either in the way of bereavement of those so near and dear by nature's ties that the separation has been almost rending your heart asunder; or circumstances may have been so distressing as to render their life worse than their death, and the conduct of the living more afflicting than the bereavement of the dead. Through them disgrace may have come into your family, or reproach cast upon the truth of God; or you may have ungodly children, riotous and dissolute, whom neither love nor anger can restrain, who only grieve your heart, injure your property, and bring a blot upon your reputation. This is your trial. Others have pecuniary trials, being deeply tried in providential circumstances. These heavy providential trials are not confined, as people often think, to the poor of the flock who live on wages or alms; but many in better circumstances of life, who maintain, and are obliged to maintain, even for business sake, a respectable appearance, are more deeply tried in providential matters than the day labourer or skilled mechanic who receives his weekly wages, and has no heavy bills to meet, no payments to provide for, rates and taxes to make up, servants and assistants to feed and pay, no unsaleable stock, sinking credit, or loss of customers. I have often thought that none feel the pressure of providential trials more than persons in a small way of business, or so overborne by the weight of a bad situation, heavy losses, and unlooked for

circumstances, that they are daily expecting they must close their shutters. And I do believe also that though other trials may be more keen, yet none are, if I may use the expression, so *gnawing* as trials in providence. They rest with such a weight upon the mind, so occupy and engross the thoughts, and are often attended with such forebodings that they seem to eat up a man's very heart. Like a worm in a bud, they lie concealed from peering eyes, for they can rarely be spoken of, and yet are eating out the very vitals of comfort. These, then, also form a part of the fiery trial, and for this reason: they work so much upon the corruptions of our heart, meet with so much of that unbelief and infidelity, that doubt and distrust, despondency and foreboding of future ill, all which lie deeply embedded in our very nature, and form materials so combustible and so easily set on fire. O the unbelief, the despondency, the trembling apprehension, sometimes painful rebellion. O the peevishness, murmuring, fretfulness, discontent, and almost worse than all, that miserable self-pity which seems like a gangrene to eat into the very vitals of all rest, happiness, and peace. May we not well call this a fiery trial, as setting on fire those wretched evils of our nature, which, if not sins in the eyes of men, are flagrant sins in the eyes of a tender conscience, and flagrant sins in the eyes of him who readeth the heart?

But I cannot enlarge further upon the various fiery trials which form a part of that furnace of affliction in which God hath chosen Zion—that fire through which the Lord has promised he will bring the third part. In former days, open persecution, even martyrdom, imprisonment, loss of all earthly goods, tortures, and cruel mockings were a large part of the fiery trial. These outward persecutions have in a great measure now ceased; and yet while the enmity of the heart against God and his people remains the same, there will always be "the scourge of the tongue," and the feeling if not the expression of scorn and contempt against all who live godly in Christ Jesus.

But though these fiery trials often set on fire the combustible materials of our corrupt nature, yet what a purging, cleansing

efficacy there is in them when we come to examine the effect produced by them. How, for instance, they bring to light any grace of the Spirit which God may have implanted in your breast. How faith and hope and love, how prayerfulness, watchfulness, humility, brokenness, contrition, separation from the world, spirituality of mind, and communion with God in prayer and meditation,—how these graces of the Spirit, these fruits of his divine operation are called as it were into living exercise, as the inward spirit becomes separated from the dross of self-righteousness and the tin of creature religion. There is no greater clog in the exercise of spiritual acts than the intermixture with it of a carnal religion. It is like tying together a dove and a vulture, like yoking to the same plough a wild horse and a tame one, a mad bull and a patient ox, or, according to the scriptural figure, like dross mingled with pure ore. How can your faith rise into view and brightly shine whilst mingled with the dross? How little are the grains of gold seen when they are interspersed through a vast mass of useless ore! It is as in Australia and California where the stones broken for the roads had gold in them, of which nobody knew till a skilful eye discovered the shining grains. But when the ore is put into the furnace and the gold is separated from it by the skill of the refiner, how bright it appears, with what lustre it shines. So in grace. Give me an exercised child of God; give me one who knows the fiery trial: I shall see the grace of God shine brightly in him. I shall see him purged from that miserable self-righteousness, that arrogance of spirit, that towering presumption, and that daring claim upon God which so many make who have never been in the furnace. I shall see him humble and broken, tender and childlike, and what religion he has, though small it be in bulk or appearance, yet to experienced eyes bright and shining, because of the life, power, and reality of God stamped upon it.

But there are other trials besides those which I have already mentioned, and which I may especially call *spiritual* trials, as connected with a man's inmost spirit, and what he suffers from as possessed of a new and divine nature. These spiritual trials form a very large and influential portion of the fiery furnace, in which

God tries his people as by fire; I mean thereby the chastisements of God as holding in his hand the rod of the covenant, the hidings of his face, the suspension of his visible and manifested favour, and tokens of his displeasure against us. These indeed are a fiery trial, because they in a peculiar way set on fire the many evils of our heart, such as peevishness, fretfulness, murmuring, bitter complaints, often causing great dejection of mind, with despondency of spirit, and almost the casting away of our confidence in God. One would think that when the Lord chastises us for our follies and makes us sorely smart for our backslidings, we should be patient, resigned, and submissive, kiss the rod, and acknowledge how justly we have brought it down upon our own backs. And so, indeed, in God's own time, we shall do, for he will lay it on until he brings us thoroughly down, and will sometimes mingle drops of sweetness with it, which will break the heart and soften the spirit. But this is not done at once, nor for the most part at the first. It requires time for the medicine to work and for the rod to produce its effect. Meanwhile the fiery trial is stirring up the deep corruptions of our fallen nature, and will do so till the fire has spent itself, begins to burn low, and the corruptions rather smoke and smoulder than maintain their former flame.

Still with all this we come to the same point. A blessing is couched in this fiery trial, as manifested by the results and consequences. How sin is thereby manifested as exceedingly sinful; how base backslidings are brought to view, repented of, confessed, and mourned over; what tenderness of walk is created before God, lest we should again offend, and be brought into the same circumstances of his visible displeasure; what a sight and sense of our case, state, and condition by nature as so utterly ruined and completely undone, and what a view of the thorough fall of man, with all its consequent inability and helplessness. What views, too, as favoured at times, of the sovereignty of God in salvation; what discoveries of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, sufferings, sorrows, and dying love of the Lord the Lamb; what faith in him, hope in his mercy, and love to his name are brought to light and brightly shine as the fruit of the furnace. Thus, this fiery trial, though on one side it discovers, and sets on

fire every evil of the heart; yet on the other, how it cleanses and purifies the soul from all its dross and tin, brings to light, and blessedly manifests where and what the grace of God is, and how it can live in the midst of the flame.

II.—But if this be the case, well might Peter, to come to our second point, write, "*Think it not strange* concerning the fiery trial, as though *some strange thing* happened unto you." But why are we not to think it strange? For several reasons.

1. First, we are not *the only persons* who are thus exercised; we are not the only individuals who ever have been or ever will be in the furnace of affliction. It is common to the whole election of grace; it is the appointed lot and portion of all the dear family of God. If therefore we belong to the election of grace; if we have a part and lot in the family of God, we are not to think it strange if that comes upon us which comes universally upon them. We should rather think it strange if we were not so tried. Exemption from affliction would be not a mark for us, but a mark against us. If the Lord has "chosen Zion in the furnace of affliction;" if "the fire is to try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13); if "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psa. 34:19); if "he bring the third part through the fire" and "the other two parts are cut off and die;" if "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6); if we have "to suffer with Christ that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17), then to be out of the way of affliction would be to be out of the way of life and salvation. This may teach us rather to hug the cross than try to thrust it away, and rejoice in tribulation rather than fret and murmur under it.

2. Again, we are not to think it strange, as if there were something in the dispensation *contrary to the wisdom and mercy of God*; as if God went out of his way in some extra-ordinary manner, and it was inconsistent with the general purport of his dealings. When we are first put into the furnace, we think it strange. We may not have had much intercourse with those of the family of God who have passed through the same trial; or if

we have, their conversation may have fallen upon inattentive ears. We have heard them tell about their trials; but we not having had hitherto any experience of them listen carelessly, nor do their words much touch our conscience or much reach our heart. We therefore prefer for our companions those who like ourselves are young in the way, and seem to know more of the sweetness of the gospel than of its trials and afflictions. When then we are for the first time put into the fiery furnace, how strange it seems to be, from our previous ignorance of it. And is not this true of almost every new path into which we are led? Is it not something like entering for the first time into a foreign country, where everything and everybody seem alike new and strange? The first time the light of conviction entered your conscience, did you not think it strange work that the law to which you had looked to save was now the law that condemned; that the ladder which you thought would land you in heaven would be more likely, from your inability to mount it, to let you down into hell; and what you hoped to gain God's favour by was only a means of manifesting his awful displeasure? Was not that strange? And was it not strange, too, that the law, which is holy and just and good, should stir up sin in your heart, set on fire your combustible nature, and, as it appeared to you, give birth to a host of evils that you had never seen or felt before? Do you suppose that Paul did not think it strange when he found "the commandment which was ordained to life to be unto death?" Would not he who had been so zealous for the law, and "touching the righteousness" which it commanded, had considered himself "blameless," be surprised to find that this very law was the strength of sin, and that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived him and by it slew him? Had not you something of the same experience, and wondered how it was that you could not keep the law, and that the more you tried the worse you were? So in a similar way when you were put into Peter's fiery bath of temptation and trial, when sins that you had never dreamed of were stirred up in your heart, and you were tempted by night and by day to do things from which you would have shrunk, even in your carnal state—was this not altogether strange? When, too, all sorts of blasphemies kept running

through your mind, temptations to infidelity, to use language that had never entered your conception, or to doubt the being of a God in whom you had, as you thought, believed from infancy, and of the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures which you had always received at the hand of your parents as God's book; was not this not only strange, but contrary, as it seemed to you, to the wisdom and goodness of God that you should be so exercised? What! that you, a religious man, a man whose whole soul was in search of God and heaven, whose mind was exercised night and day with divine things, who was endeavouring, with all the strength in his power, to be holy, and to have done for ever with sin inwardly as well as outwardly, should be tempted with such thoughts as you believed never found a place except in an infidel, and such blasphemies as you had no conception of, for an oath, it may be, had never passed your lips for many years, if ever, nor even a desire to utter one. Now for you to have all these things working in your mind, how dreadful it seemed; that a man who had lived a moral life from his boyhood should feel tempted to all manner of profligacy, and that one who had been a believer, as he conceived, of every word that God had spoken, to be tempted to doubt this or that and the other part, if not all, of the word of truth,—was not that strange? You might have had during this fiery trial no one who from the pulpit or in private conversation ever named or alluded to such temptations, or ever brought them before you as an interpreter of the secrets of your heart. You might never have heard any one speak, or might never have read any book from which you could gather that any of the children of God had been so exercised; nor did you know that this was a part of the fiery trial which few of them escape. All this made it seem more contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God. It was this which so puzzled Job, exercised Asaph, distressed Heman, and half killed Jeremiah. All these had to walk in this path of temptation and trial, and for the most part without friend or companion. How mournful are the words of Job, "Thou hast made desolate all my company;" "My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." Heman cried out in the bitterness of his soul: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." (Psa. 88:18.) And

Jeremiah, "I sat alone because of thine hand, for thou hast filled me with indignation." Now it is this want of an interpreter, of friends and companions, which much adds to the strangeness of the trial. This indeed, I may add, was much my own case when I was first led into it. I had never heard of experimental ministers, read experimental books, or had any acquaintance with the experience of God's people. What I learnt, whether of law or gospel, misery or mercy, myself or Christ, sin or salvation, I had to learn for myself and by myself, without the intervention of any book or minister, church or chapel. It was therefore, so to speak, doubly strange to be brought into these trials without having ever heard that such or similar things had been known by any one upon earth. But I remember well what a lift I got in those days from reading Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," and some rough notes of his own experience, which had been, as it were, jotted down by Joseph Milner, the author of the Church History. I found in them both such a description of their temptations and trials, that it was, as Solomon speaks, "as in water face answereth to face so the heart of man to man." But I have no doubt it was good for me to have no such helps from preaching and books, as many have been favoured with; and I have thought some times if ever I have been able as a minister to describe the difference between natural and spiritual religion, to take forth the precious from the vile, and to show the distinction between the mere professor and the living possessor, it has been in the hands of God much for this reason, that it was worked out in my own mind without any human help. I thus saw and felt more plainly and clearly the distinction between the work of faith with power and that natural religion in which hundreds live and die contented. I do not despise, nay, I think highly of the gracious helps which God gives to his tempted and tried people both from the pulpit and from the writings of his servants. But I have always thought that we learn things best when we learn them without human help, and get them directly from the Lord without passing through any other channel. I have long felt so, and feel so still to this day. But some such experience is necessary. How am I to put my hand upon your heart unless I know my own? How can I, like a detective, go into the very courts and alleys of human nature and lay hold of

the thief who hides himself in them unless I have a clue by having myself threaded these back slums of the heart; and not lived all my life like a Court lady in a West-end square? Of course I mean only inwardly not outwardly, experimentally not practically. A minister who does not know the turnings and windings of his own heart can never track out the sins that lie so deep in the hearts of others. In my judgment, the best detective in the pulpit is a man who knows most of his own heart, and can enter into the trials, temptations, and exercises of others by having some personal experience of these things in his own soul. How wistfully, how earnestly is many a poor child of God often listening for a word from the minister which may touch upon his trials and exercises; what relief it often gives him to find that a servant of God is no stranger to his temptations, and is thus able to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Have you not sometimes come with a heavy burden of temptation and trial pressing you down, looking and longing for some relief or help, but have gone away and got nothing? Not a syllable was dropped that touched upon your case, and you went away worse than you came. It is needful therefore that a minister should know for himself the fiery trial, and not deal with it as some strange thing which, not knowing himself, he deems it strange for others to know, but may describe it and open it up as far as he can, so as to speak a word of consolation to the distressed and exercised family of God.

III.—But to pass on to the next point which we proposed to consider, where the apostle bids us *rejoice* under the fiery trial instead of being cast down and distressed by it.

You will observe that he bids us rejoice upon two grounds: 1, first, that we are thereby partakers of Christ's sufferings; secondly, that when his glory shall be revealed we may be glad also with exceeding joy. Let me endeavour to unfold these two blessed causes of rejoicing.

i. God has predestinated all his people to be conformed to the image of his dear Son. Now that image is twofold: his suffering

image as a man of sorrows as when he was upon earth, and his glorified image as he now is at the right hand of the Father in heaven. To both of these images we have to be conformed; for we must be conformed first to his suffering image here, that we may be conformed to his glorified image hereafter; in other words, we must be partakers of his sufferings upon earth that we may be partakers of his glory in heaven. Now the fiery trial puts us into a fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.

1. He knew, as revealed in his conscience, the burning indignation of God in a *fiery law*. Do we not read that he was "made of a woman, made under the law;" yea, that he was himself "made a curse for us?" What else was his experience upon the cross, when the anger of God, due to our transgressions, fell upon him, as standing there in our place and stead? He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. O what a solemn letting down of the wrath of the Almighty into the innocent bosom of our harmless, undefiled Representative when he sustained the whole weight of our sins which would have sunk us into the lowest hell! Then and there our gracious Lord went through the fiery trial, by baring his bosom to the fiery law, and, by fulfilling it to the uttermost, put it for ever away.

2. Again, our gracious Lord experienced *temptation* in every shape and form, for the word of truth declares that "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." I wish to speak very cautiously upon this subject, for upon a point so difficult and so mysterious there is great risk of speaking amiss. So long as we keep strictly within the language of the Scripture we are safe, but the moment that we draw inferences from the word without special guidance by the Spirit of truth, we may greatly err. You may think then, sometimes, that your temptations are such as our gracious Lord never could have been tempted by; but that word of the apostle decides the question—"in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is a solemn mystery which I cannot explain, how temptation in every point, shape, and form could assail the holy soul of the immaculate Redeemer. I fully believe it. I see the grace and wisdom of it, and my faith

acquiesces in it as most blessed truth. But I cannot understand it. I know also and believe from the testimony of the word and that of my own conscience, that whatever temptation he was assailed with, not one of them could or did sully, stain, or spot his holy humanity. *That* was absolutely and perfectly a pure, unfallen, immortal nature, able to die by a voluntary act, but having in itself no seeds of sickness, mortality, or death. And yet I read that, though thus possessed of a holy, pure, and spotless humanity, in everlasting union with his own eternal Deity, in all points he was tempted like as we are. I cannot explain the mystery—I do not wish to do so. I receive it as a mystery, in the same way as I receive that great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." But still I bless God that he was tempted in all points like as we are; for it makes him such a sympathising High Priest with his poor, exercised, tried, tempted family here below. I have sometimes compared the temptations which beat upon the soul of the Lord to the waves of the sea that dash themselves against a pure, white marble rock. The rock may feel the shock of the wave; but it is neither moved by it nor sullied. It still stands unmoved, immoveable in all its original firmness; it still shines in all the brightness of the pure, glittering marble when the waves recede and the sun breaks forth on its face. So none of the temptations with which the Lord was assailed moved the Rock of Ages, or sullied the purity, holiness, and perfection of the spotless Lamb of God.

3. And so with the other trials which our gracious Lord had to experience. He felt them all but was injured by none. Some trials indeed our Lord seemed exempt from; at least so far exempt that he could not have a personal experience of them. Take, for instance, *family* and *domestic* trials. Our Lord had no family, except that there were relatives on his mother's side. But our Lord was so separated from all family ties that he could not be said to have family trials as we have. And yet he had them by sympathy. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, so as to enter by sympathy into the trial of Martha and Mary, though Lazarus was not brother to him as he was to them. And may we not indeed say that as our near kinsman, our Goel, the Lord has a large

family to suffer with? for "in all their afflictions he was afflicted." We are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" and in this sense the trials and afflictions of the family are the trials and afflictions of their Head, Husband, and Brother.

4. But again, our Lord had no personal experience whatever of *bodily afflictions*. There was no sickness in him; there could not be. Had he had the seeds of sickness, he would have had the seeds of mortality; and had he had the seeds of mortality, he would not have had a spotless, unfallen, but a corrupt nature like our own. He had, therefore, a perfect immunity from all sickness; and yet he bore our sickness by sympathy. We therefore read, that when he healed all that were sick, it was "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8:17.) He could not have experienced them actually and personally, except by possessing a fallen nature; he therefore entered into them by sympathy. Let me illustrate this. Have not you sometimes had a sick child, a sick husband, or a sick wife; and you, though not ill yourself, yet so sympathised with them in their sickness, that you felt it almost as if it were your own? How that hacking cough went through you; how that croupy bark pierced you; how that loud groan or suppressed moaning racked you; how that pale, convulsed, dying face haunts your memory still. Perhaps you felt by sympathy more than they felt in reality. Thus we see that there is a suffering by sympathy where there is not a suffering in person. In our gracious Lord this sympathy, from the very purity and exquisite perfection of his sacred humanity, was of the tenderest kind, and therefore beyond all conception and beyond all comparison.

5. But other trials our gracious Lord had a large personal acquaintance with: such as *providential* trials, subsisting as he did upon alms, for a bag was carried by Judas and in that bag were deposited such small sums as were sufficient to procure those necessaries of life which our gracious Lord, as a part of his blessed humility partook of with his disciples.

6. But he had an experience also of *persecution*, opposition, contempt, and all that the malice of man could devise, until it rose to that culminating act of daring iniquity to hang him as a malefactor upon the cross.

Now our gracious Lord had no corruption in him as we have to make his sufferings and temptations a fiery trial to him in the first sense which I explained that it is so to us. It stirred up no corruption in him, for there was none in him to stir up. He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and again, "Behold the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Yet as calling forth every fruit and grace of the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in him without measure, it eminently drew forth and displayed the fruits of the furnace. When the gracious Redeemer hung upon the cross, what strong faith in God, what depending trust, what holy confidence, what blessed hope, what sweet humility, what calm resignation to the last breath, before he gave up the ghost and committed his departing spirit into the hands of God. How the fiery trial called forth in him every grace and every fruit of the Holy Ghost; and how all these fruits of the Holy Ghost, for they were such, shone eminently forth in the Redeemer's example when he was wounded for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquities; when the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we were healed.

We are then to rejoice, inasmuch as by the fiery trial we become partakers of Christ's sufferings, are baptised into his death, drink of his cup, and know what it is in some measure to have fellowship with him in the garden and upon the cross. Thus you have cause to rejoice that God has taken you out of the world, chosen you from among men, and is graciously conforming you to the suffering image of his dear Son, that as you suffer with him you may also be glorified together.

ii. But this leads us to the second reason which the apostle gives why we should rejoice in and under the fiery trial; "that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The words, I think, will admit of a double interpretation; first, the revelation of his glory *now* as a spiritual, experimental reality; and secondly, the revelation of his glory *hereafter*, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all them that believe. We will look briefly at both.

1. There is then a revelation of the glory of Christ upon earth, to be known, seen, felt, and enjoyed *even in this time-state*. Our Lord therefore said of his disciples to his heavenly Father, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one as we are one." Similar is the testimony of John: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." When Christ is revealed to the soul, he is revealed as a glorious Christ. The glory of his Deity, the glory of his humanity, the glory of his complex Person, Immanuel God with us, all shine into the soul, when he manifests himself. It is as the apostle beautifully expresses it: "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." And see the effect. "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." O a revelation of the glory of Christ, what a memorable blessing to those who have ever enjoyed it, as I hope some of us here present have. How it makes up for the fiery trial. How the pain and the suffering vanish, are lost out of sight, and nothing is then seen but the glory of Christ as revealed to the soul.

2. But there is the *coming* glory, when the Lord Jesus shall appear with all his saints in the clouds of heaven; for though he seems to delay his coming, yet surely he will come a second time without sin unto salvation. Yes, he will come attended by thousands and tens of thousands of the saints now in glory; for he will raise their sleeping dust and change into his own likeness those who are still alive at his coming, that they may all enter into his glory and so be for ever with the Lord. O what a day of solemn rejoicing will that be to the saints of God, when those who have carried his cross will wear his crown, when those who have

been partakers of his sufferings will be partakers of his glory, when the righteous will shine like the firmament, and those who have turned many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever.

God help you in the furnace, if any here present are now therein, to bear all, to believe all, and patiently endure all that God shall lay upon you. It will be well with you in the end. You will bless him for the furnace, for his helping hand in it, and his deliverance out of it, and the happy result in a personal revelation of the glory of Christ to your soul now, and at the last day of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, to fill your souls with immortal joy.

## **Filth and Blood Purged by the Spirit of Judgment and the Spirit of Burning**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Morning, July 4, 1869

"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." Isaiah 4:4, 5

These words are closely and intimately connected with the two preceding verses, which therefore I shall read, that you may see more clearly the connection between them it the first step to a right and spiritual apprehension of the subject which I hope, with God's help and blessing, this morning to bring before you. "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." Then come the words of the text: "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." (Isaiah 4:4.) The connection to which I have called your attention is clearly indicated by the conjunction "*when*." "*When* the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion," and so on, *then* "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious for them that are escaped of Israel." In fact, the whole chapter from verse 2 to the end (verse 1 belonging properly to the preceding chapter) forms one continued prophecy which cannot well be considered in broken parts, but must be viewed, in its entirety, as a distinct, inseparable whole. When, then, I first began to meditate on the chapter, as it seemed to open itself to

my mind, I thought I would take verses 2, 3, and 4 as comprising its general substance; but I soon found that it was too full of deep and weighty matter for one sermon. I therefore decided to divide it into two discourses, the first of which I lately preached in London; and as the sermon was taken down and will shortly be published, it will give you an opportunity, if you feel disposed, to read what were my thoughts upon the first branch of the subject. I shall now, then, take up the second branch of the subject; and thus my sermon this morning, which I expect will also in due course appear in print, will form a kind of sequel to my first discourse which you will soon have in your hands, and which you will probably either read yourself, or hear read in your midst.

\* It has now been published.

If you look carefully at the words of our text, you will find the Lord speaks in it of washing away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purging the blood of Jerusalem. Now a question may arise in the mind which I have already adverted to in the discourse preached in London to which I have just alluded. Are we to interpret the words of this prophecy, for bear in mind that it is a connected whole, literally or spiritually? Will the day ever come when the Lord will literally in Zion, that is the real, actual Zion, which we know was a lofty hill in Jerusalem where David built his palace, and where Solomon reigned in all his glory, wash away the filth of her daughters? Will the day ever come when the Lord will literally—of course not excluding spiritually—purge the blood of Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified, and out of which, according to his own testimony, a prophet could not perish (Luke 13:33) from the midst thereof? Or are we to discard altogether any literal interpretation of the words, and confine the whole to their spiritual and experimental signification? Though I have endeavoured to explain this point already as far as I understand it, yet as it is a very important question, and affects not only this text but nearly all the prophecies of a similar character in the Old Testament, I feel that I must add a few words further on the subject.

Many good men have been so, I may almost say, disgusted with the carnal interpretations of some of the advocates of the literal view, that they have wholly set their face against it. But I must say for myself, irrespective of other men's views and interpretations, by which I feel I cannot be bound, that I have that reverence for the word of God and that full conviction that every word will be fulfilled, for heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or one tittle of God's word can pass away, as to believe that every thing he has said will be accomplished. If, therefore, he has spoken of these things as to be done in Zion they will be done in Zion, and if in Jerusalem they will be done in Jerusalem, whether we see it now or not, oppose it now or not. The fulfilment of God's word does not depend on our interpretation of it, but on his own purpose and his own faithfulness, which are independent of all the wisdom and all the will of man. But bear this strictly in mind, that if the words of this prophecy should be literally fulfilled, it will not in the least degree interfere with, or contradict any spiritual interpretation of the words that shall be in harmony with the work of grace in the heart of the people of God. God is able to do the same divine, spiritual, and experimental work in the literal Zion, in the case of the daughters that may be then and there born, as he has ever done, and is still doing in the spiritual Zion, the church of the living God. Though we may find a difficulty in harmonising what is literal and what is spiritual, no such difficulty exists in the mind of God, whose purposes are as full of infinite wisdom as of boundless grace, or in the word of God which is deeper than all our interpretation of it. There may therefore come, and, in my judgment, will come, a day when this part of God's word will be fulfilled in such a manner that not one jot or tittle of the literal meaning nor of the spiritual will fall to the ground, but both have their ample and complete fulfilment. I wish you also specially to observe that in the word of God there is that abundant and overflowing fulness, that we may take text after text, yet with all our endeavours to bring out of it the mind of the Spirit we cannot exhaust a thousandth part of its depth of heavenly wisdom and spiritual instruction. I may also observe that the dealings of God with his people are so invariably the same, in substance if not in

detail, that all through the Scriptures, from beginning to end, there is a continual fulfilment of the word of the Lord going on in the hearts of his saints; and thus it is being every day fulfilled in its spirit, though its thorough fulfilment in the letter may only be accomplished in ages to come. Let no one, therefore, impute to me either that, on the one hand, I carnalise the word of God, because I look forward to a fuller and more literal accomplishment of the word of prophecy; or, on the other hand, that I slight the spiritual interpretation of the prophetic word, when you are my witnesses how I have ever laboured to unfold its experimental meaning.

With these remarks, I shall now pass on to the consideration of our text, and in so doing, shall

I.—*First*, direct your attention to the *washing away of the filth* of the daughters of Zion; and to the *purging of the blood* of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the *spirit of judgment*, and by the *spirit of burning*.

II.—*Secondly*, what will be the *effect* and *result* of that work of the Lord, both individually and collectively that he will *create* upon every *dwelling-place* of Mount Zion, and upon her *assemblies*, a *cloud* and *smoke* by day, and the *shining* of a *flaming fire* by night.

III.—*Thirdly*, how the Lord will *guard* and *defend* his own gracious work, so that "upon all *the glory* shall be a *defence*."

I.—Though I have hinted that the words of our text may have, and in my mind undoubtedly will have a complete and thorough fulfilment, reserved at present in the bosom of God to days still future; yet I shall, for the present edification of those to whom I am speaking, confine myself to the spiritual interpretation; for "secret things belong unto the Lord, but those things which are revealed (which spiritual things specially are) belong to us and to our children." (Deut. 29:29.)

i. Whom, then, are we to understand by "the daughters of Zion?" Spiritually viewed, we may understand by the expression, first, godly women; at least, all who profess to have come to that Mount Zion, the city of the living God, of which the literal Zion was a type and figure, by which act of faith they become, at least in profession, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and daughters of the spiritual Zion. The reason why the Lord speaks so specifically of "the daughters of Zion" in our text, seems to be because in the preceding chapter he had so sharply reproofed and also given a long and graphic description of the pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration which distinguished those daughters; for having denounced their haughtiness, wantonness, and mincing gestures, the prophet goes on to describe their specific articles of dress, such as their "changeable suits of apparel," their "mantles, and wimples, and cringing pins, their glasses and fine linen, their hoods and veils." Is it not remarkable that the Lord the Spirit should have given us such a catalogue of the wardrobe of these Hebrew women, such a specific description of the dress and personal ornaments of the daughters of Zion of old? Had the Spirit no mind or meaning in this minute and graphic description beyond rebuking the then daughters of Zion, and warning them of that awful change which should come upon them thus denounced? "And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty." (Isa. 3:21.) Does it not show what notice the Lord takes of the daughters of Zion, even as regards their outward apparel? For bear in mind, that though we have no reason to believe that "the daughters of Zion," thus rebuked and forewarned by the prophet, were themselves personally partakers of faith and holiness, yet they stand in the word of God as typical representatives of women professing godliness; for as daughters of the literal Zion, they figuratively represent to each successive age the daughters of the spiritual Zion. If it be not so, the word of God does not speak to us now, and is become a dead letter as to any present or personal reproof, admonition, or instruction. But let us take heed lest if we make the rebukes and reproofs of God in the prophetic

word of old a dead letter now, we do not make the promises in the same prophetic word a dead letter also now. I would, then, have all women who profess godliness to bear in mind that the Lord takes special notice of their apparel, yea even of their "well-set hair," now so conspicuous in the fashion of the day, when woman's most becoming and modest natural covering (I Cor. 11:15) is made so much the occasion of open-faced display, vanity, and pride. Referring, then, to what he had thus spoken of the daughters of Zion in describing their apparel and the change that would come upon them, when, either from famine in the siege of Jerusalem, or from their fair locks being shorn off as captive slaves, "instead of well-set hair there would be baldness," and the scarcity of men, as being cut off by war, should be so great that, over-stepping the modesty of their sex, seven women should contend for the possession of one man, even if they provided their own food and raiment—having thus described, I say, both the pride and the downfall of the daughters of Zion, the Lord declares in our text that a day will come when he will wash away the filth of these daughters.

Now, assume for a moment that the Lord will one day in the literal Zion wash away the filth of its daughters, must not, according to this view, an interval of hundreds, if not of two or three thousand years, separate the two chapters? This however need be no objection, as many similar instances occur in the prophetic page. But assume again that these daughters of Zion are typical representatives of women professing godliness in all ages: then both chapters alike speak to them, the one to reprove and rebuke all inconsistencies in dress and demeanour, and the other to declare how the Lord will wash away and purge their filth contracted thereby. For this filth is inward filth. There is no reference to anything seen by the eye of man either as regards the person or the dress. The literal daughters of Zion were not defective in outward cleanliness. Their "changeable suits of apparel" were ever fresh and new, and their "fine linen" was doubtless as clean as it was fine. But the Lord looked at their hearts, and the motives of their gaudy attire. There he saw pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration, woman's chief besetment;

and all this was in his eyes so much filth. Is it not so sometimes in yours? Perhaps you come out some Sunday morning in a new dress of which you feel vain and proud. But as you step along, admiring yourself and your new dress, you see on the other side of the way one of those degraded beings of your own sex that infest our streets, flaunting along in her new finery, proud and defiant, and you view her and her finery with disgust and contempt. Why? Because under all this finery you see the filth of her filthy profession; and the finer she is, the filthier she is. Thus you see that even in your eyes finery may be filth. And how do you differ from her except in outward conduct? Do you not see then, how, in God's pure and holy eyes, all your finery may be filth?

But as I do not wish to be too hard upon the women, I may say, that we of the other sex have our hidden filth to as great or worse degree than they. In us there are many secret and powerful lusts, much hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and various other sinful and sensual abominations, of which every heart is conscious into which the true light has shined, and by which they are made manifest and reproved, according to those words of the apostle: "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.)

ii. But we read also in our text of "the blood of Jerusalem," which is to be purged as well as the filth of the daughters of Zion, which is to be washed away. I shall consider this point presently; but viewing Jerusalem in a spiritual sense as the heavenly Jerusalem, which is above, and the mother of us all, we may interpret these daughters of Zion as indicating gospel churches, which are, as it were, the spiritual offspring of our heavenly mother. Now gospel churches often contract filth from sheer neglect, and for want of what I may call a thorough good washing and cleansing. We find from the book of Chronicles, that during the reign of king Ahaz, the house of the Lord was shut up; and as that reign lasted sixteen years, so long probably was the sanctuary closed. Now the sanctuary being deserted and neglected, and its doors closed

during that long period of time, it necessarily contracted a great deal of filth. If you were to shut up a house for sixteen years, or even one room in it, and were to go back at the end of the sixteen years, you would find that house or room, full of dust, dirt, and filth. If we leave our persons unwashed, they contract filth, leave our streets uncleansed, they contract filth. The first work, therefore, of Hezekiah, when he succeeded to the throne of Ahaz his father, was to open and repair the doors of the temple, and the next to cleanse the filth. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." (2 Chron. 29:3, 4, 5.) This command was faithfully obeyed: "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron." (2 Chron. 29:16.)

Now as it was with the temple of old when neglected, so it is with the soul individually, and so with the churches, the daughters of Zion collectively. Neglect produces filth. As the house or room neglected gathers filth, so the soul uncleansed, unpurged, gathers filth; so a church, as a daughter of Zion, neglected, uncleansed, gathers filth. The apostle, therefore, gives a solemn warning to the churches on this head: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." (Heb. 12:15, 16.) But apart from these more glaring cases, there may be in a church a party spirit; there may be secret jealousies, surmises, and heart-burnings; there may be unkind thoughts, or unkind words, and various divisions,—all which in the sight of God is so much filth. The apostle feared he might find this state of strife and division at Corinth, when he should come again to see them. "For I fear,

lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." (2 Cor. 12:20.) We read of "filthiness of the spirit" as well as "of the flesh," the one being of the mind, and the other of the body; and we have to be cleansed from both, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1.) Now just as a cleanly person views filth with detestation, and is never satisfied except that filth is removed, whether from his person or from his house; so in a spiritual sense all sin in the sight of God is filth; and as the cleanly person cannot bear the presence of filth, either on his person, his furniture, or his house; so a holy God cannot bear to see filth springing from neglect in the souls of his people individually, or the filth that gathers in churches from not being properly cleansed away and purged.

iii. But our text speaks also of the "blood of Jerusalem," which has to be purged away, as well as the filth of the daughters of Zion to be washed out. The "blood of Jerusalem" seems to indicate guilt of conscience. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness," cried David, "O God, thou God of my salvation." (Psl. 51:14.) Jerusalem was stained with the blood of the prophets, and especially with the blood of our gracious Lord, who there suffered, dying in the city which God had selected for his own special habitation. We know from what we sometimes read or hear, that the guilt of having shed man's blood, has lain with such weight on the conscience as to compel murderers, under its agonizing pressure, to come and surrender themselves into the hands of justice. But it is not necessary to have shed man's blood to bring the conscience under a sense of blood-guiltiness. There are murderous thoughts and killing words as well as murderous actions; a slaying of men's characters without touching their persons; a dealing harshly and cruelly in thought, if not in action, with those who offend us, all which things produce great guilt, what we may call "blood-guiltiness," when laid upon the conscience.

Having thus given you a general idea of what seems to be

indicated by the filth of the daughters of Zion and the blood of Jerusalem, I shall now go on to show how it is washed away and purged; and I shall shew first, how it is "purged."

iv. It is purged "by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." The word "purged" meant in our language, when the Bible was translated, more than 200 years ago, to purify or cleanse. The word is not used in that sense now, and we have, therefore, lost somewhat of its peculiar meaning according to the mind of our excellent translators. Thus, when we read what our Lord says of the vine, that the Father "purgeth it," he means that he cleanseth it, as we read in the next verse, "Now ye are clean," that is already cleansed, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." But it is also a remarkable circumstance that the word in the original translated "purged" in our text, occurs only three or four times in the Hebrew, and, except in one place, is always applied to the washing or cleansing of the burnt offering. It occurs, for instance, in the description of the lavers which Solomon built in the Temple: "He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them such things as they offered for the burnt offerings they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in." (2 Chron. 4:6.) In this passage the word "washed," as used of the offering, is different from that which is used to signify the washing of the persons of the priests. There is something significant in this as showing that the washing and the purging have a connection with sacrifice and the burnt offering. We may gather, also, from it that there must be a washing and a purging before the burnt offering can be accepted.

But let me now apply this in a spiritual and experimental sense. When God is pleased to begin a work of grace upon a sinner's soul, he sets up a throne of judgment in the conscience. This is "laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," (Isa. 28:17.) This is the light of God enlightening the mind, and the voice of God whereby he speaks to the soul through the power of his word, which thus becomes "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Now, no sooner does the light

of life visit the soul, and the word of truth bring conviction to the heart, than there comes with it the spirit of judgment; for the Holy Spirit is now at work in the heart and conscience and, as the Spirit of judgment, he sits in judgment upon every thing that comes before him, so as to pass a sentence of condemnation, as God's vicegerent, upon every sin that is thus detected and brought to light. Now this spirit of judgment is very unmerciful in its detection of all evil, very implacable in its judgment upon it, for, being armed with the sentence of a fiery law, as I shall presently show, it spares no sin, brings all its hidden filth and guilt to light, and passes sentence of condemnation upon it. But this spirit of judgment does not cleanse the conscience from the guilt of the sins and transgressions which it brings to light, discovers, and judges. I shall presently show how that is done. But it purges the filth by passing a sentence of condemnation upon it. Take the figure of a cleanly person changing his abode and coming to dwell in a dirty, filthy house. The former inhabitant was so used to its filthy condition that he did not even see it, much less hate it or make any attempt to get rid of it. But the new comer sees in a moment the filth of the house, and the spirit of cleanliness in him, if I may use such an expression, at once condemns it and cannot rest till it is got rid of. Similarly, the spirit of judgment, set up in the heart of one quickened into divine life, sees and detects the horrid filth that has been accumulated by innumerable sins and crimes, and passes at once a sentence of condemnation upon them all. It is in grace as in my figure, or as in the case of the leprous house. The priest went in to see the house. He was bidden to come and look, and by that searching look "the hollow strakes, greenish or reddish," were descried, detected and judged before the house could be scraped and cleansed. So the spirit of judgment detects and condemns filth, and in this sense purges it before it is washed away.

But this spirit of judgment is attended with and followed by "the spirit of burning." This spirit of burning is the anger of God manifested in a holy law, for in that, as a revelation of his holiness, "God is a consuming fire;" and it is therefore said that "from his right hand went a fiery law for them." As, then, the

spirit of judgment sitting upon the seat of conscience, arraigns before it all our secret sins, and passes sentence of condemnation upon them, the fiery law, as a spirit of burning, follows upon it, so as to burn up all our strength, wisdom, and righteousness. Thus, what the spirit of judgment condemns, the spirit of burning sets on fire, and in that sense consumes the filth, for it is not able to stand before its devouring flame.

But "the spirit of judgment" is not confined to the work of the law upon the conscience, nor to the way in which God acts in bringing his people in guilty before him in his first dealings upon the soul. There is "the spirit of judgment" in the gospel in a spiritual conscience as there is the spirit of judgment in the law in a legal conscience. And as there is "the spirit of burning" that follows up the spirit of judgment in a fiery law, so there is the spirit of burning in a holy indignation kindled by the fire of the gospel. Be not surprised at this, for wherever the Spirit of truth in a living conscience, as a spirit of judgment, meets with and detects sin, he condemns it and flames forth against it. We have seen how it does so under the law; now see how it does so under the gospel. When the apostle speaks of the effect of godly sorrow, he says: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (2 Cor. 7:11.) This carefulness, this indignation, this fear, this vehement desire, this zeal, this revenge, were all produced by the flaming forth of the spirit of judgment under the gospel as attending godly sorrow for sin.

Now, if you watch the movements of the blessed Spirit upon your heart, which I hope you do—for if he is not operating upon your mind with some degree of divine power, you are gathering filth; all kind of dirt is lying undetected in your carnal mind;—but if you are watching the movements of the Spirit of God upon your soul as the spirit of judgment, you will see that he brings to light and passes sentence of disapprobation and condemnation on

everything which is manifested to you as sinful. Your pride, your hypocrisy, your self-righteousness, your vanity, your conceit, your self-esteem, your love of the world and the spirit of it, with every evil which is detected and brought to light the spirit of judgment sits upon it and passes in your conscience a sentence of condemnation upon it. And if the sins which you thus see and feel are brought to light, and are condemned by the Spirit of truth in you as a Spirit of judgment, it will be followed up by the spirit of burning, so that you will feel a holy indignation against yourself on account of your sins. This is that indignation, that zeal, that revenge, of which I have just spoken; and mingled with them, will be that "jealousy" of which we read that "the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame." (Song 8:6.) This flame of holy jealousy kindled as a fire from off God's altar, as a spirit of burning, will at times rise so high that you will feel as if you would gladly have all your sins and corruptions wholly reduced to ashes, and the power and strength of sin so burnt up and destroyed, as if by a holy flame, as never to revive again.

v. But now let me show how this applies, not only to the daughters of Zion viewed individually, but to them also as viewed collectively. You will recollect that I spoke of the filth of the daughters of Zion as applicable to churches, and that this filth consisted, not only in inconsistent conduct and matters which bring outward reproach both upon the individual and the cause of truth, but also in party-spirit, jealousies, surmises, suspicions, divisions, discords, and various other things whereby churches become inwardly filthy before God. Now this filth has to be purged, as our Lord spoke of the branches of the vine. Usually speaking, it is by his servants that the great Husbandman purgeth the fruitful branches; for I have already shown you that it is by his word the purging and cleansing are effected, of which word his servants are the ministers. To them, therefore, is given "the spirit of judgment," according to those words: "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.) Observe the

connection of those words with our text. "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." Is that not almost the same as "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious for them that are escaped of Israel?" But it is in that same day that he is to be "a Spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment." It is the Lord's servant who sitteth in judgment with the word of God in his heart and mouth, whereby he tries both the conduct and the spirit of the church of which the Holy Ghost has made him the overseer. And thus instrumentally, as the Lord gives him a spirit of judgment, and speaks in and by him, he purges the filth of the church by the power of the word in his mouth. The voice of the true servant of God will always meet with an echo in the heart of God's people. They listen to his word as the word of God, for he is mouth for God to them as his minister and messenger. "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 2:7.) He is therefore endowed, among other things, with a spirit of judgment, that he may purge the churches from their filth; for as he will not flatter nor fawn, so he will not speak either rashly or harshly, but with judgment and wisdom. Now, as the word of admonition, instruction, or reproof comes with power from his mouth into their heart, the spirit of judgment accompanies the word, and carries on this purging work in the real children of God: for these are the branches that bear fruit, and they only are purged, for the unfruitful branches are not purged but taken away. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word." Thus, by the word of the Lord, the soul is cleansed; for with the word of the Lord goes forth the spirit of judgment. But with that spirit of judgment, and following close upon it, is the spirit of burning in a holy indignation and fiery zeal against that filth which is thus discovered.

Now if an individual, through slothful neglect, or if a church store up all this filth, harbour all this sin, leave the cellarage and shut up rooms to rot and fester with all the dirt and filth accumulated

in them undisturbed, there is no manifested presence of God. The Branch of the Lord is not beautiful and glorious, the fruit of the earth is not excellent and comely, nor does the Lord create upon such a dwelling-place in Mount Zion the cloud and smoke by day, or the shining of a flaming fire by night. Take the case which I read this morning of the sanctuary which had been left to its filth for sixteen years. The first thing to be done before the Lord came back to that sanctuary, before any sacrifice was offered, before any part of the temple worship could be performed, was to purge the filth. The Levites and the priests set to work, and they purged it and carried it to the brook Kidron—sweet figure how our guilt and filth are washed away by the blood of the Lamb. But if individuals harbour filth, and if churches, instead of judging themselves and having a holy indignation and zeal against everything contrary to God and godliness, nurture and indulge a spirit of strife and division, as this filth is not purged, so it is not washed away.

vi. But this leads me to "the *washing away* of the filth of the daughters of Zion." I quoted just now a passage from the Chronicles in which a distinction was made between washing the body of the priests and the washing of such things as they offered for the burnt offering; and I remarked that there was a difference in the original between the two words rendered "wash." We have a similar difference in our text, in which two similar things are spoken of, viz., washing and purging. If you will turn to Lev. 1 you will see that the priest was directed to wash the inwards and the legs of the burnt offering with water. (Lev. 1:9.) Now, this was typical of the washing of regeneration, which washes, by its sanctifying influence, those inward parts in which God desires truth, and the life, conduct, and conversation represented by washing the legs.

But there is a washing distinct from this washing of water by the word, viz., that washing of which the church sings in that glorious anthem: "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5.) This is, also, the washing of which the Apostle speaks: "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." (1 Cor. 6:11.) You may observe there how the Apostle brings together the washing and the purging. "Ye are washed," that is, in atoning Blood; "ye are sanctified," that is, by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning; "ye are justified," that is, by the glorious righteousness of the Son of God.

II.—But I must now pass on to my second point, which was to show the *effect* and *result* of this washing away of the filth, and this purging of the blood, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.

"And the Lord will create upon every *dwelling-place* of Mount Zion, and upon her *assemblies*, a *cloud and smoke* by day, and the shining of a *flaming fire* by night."

Here the Lord speaks of what he will do when he has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.

i. The first thing that the Lord will do, will be to create upon every *dwelling-place* of Mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day. This cloud represents the presence of God in the midst of his people. It was first given when the Lord took his people out of Egypt: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before his people." (Exodus 13:21, 22.) When the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, this cloudy pillar descended and rested upon it, and according as it moved so did the children of Israel, as we read: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34.) And again, "For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." (Exodus 40:38.) So when Solomon dedicated the house of the Lord which he had built, this same

cloudy pillar entered into and filled the house; for at the voice of song and praise the house was filled with the cloud: "So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chron. 5:14.) From these testimonies we gather that the cloud of old represented two things, which ever go together: the *glory* and *presence* of the Lord. There is a peculiar significancy in this cloud, as representing to us that God can only be seen as in a cloud. No man can see him and live. His uncreated glory the eyes of flesh could not bear to look upon. In this he resembles that glorious orb of day which he himself has set in the sky. The eye of man cannot bear to look upon the sun in the full blaze of its meridian splendour; but we can look upon it as veiled by a cloud.

The cloud also represents, as it did in the tabernacle of old, the *presence* of God, and that he dwells in the heart of the contrite as of old he dwelt between the Cherubim.

ii. But now let us see the connection between this cloud and the washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion, and the purging of the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning. Whilst the spirit of judgment is going on in a way of condemnation under a holy law, the presence of the Lord is not known or felt, for there is little else made manifest but guilt and filth. But when this work is done; when the filth is seen, acknowledged, repented of, mourned over, and confessed; and the filth is brought out and cast into the brook Kidron, then the cloud comes of the sensible presence of God upon the soul in the manifestations of his mercy and love.

So it is also with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, which I have spoken of as made known in the gospel. If we backslide, get entangled in the spirit and love of the world, fall into any evil, or in any way bring guilt upon our conscience, until sin is repented of, confessed, and forsaken, there is no sensible presence of the Lord. It is so in individuals, it is so in churches. In individuals, if there be indulged sin, filth accumulating, not seen, not confessed, not bewailed, not burnt up, not put away, there is

no cloud of glory resting upon the soul. And so in churches. If filth is suffered to accumulate from want of faithfulness in the minister to take forth the precious from the vile, and from his not being instant in season, out of season, rebuking, reproofing, exhorting, with all long suffering and doctrine, and unless it is purged away by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, as following the words of his mouth, there will be no sensible approbation of God found in the ministry of the word, no visible manifestation of his presence in Zion's assemblies, or any marked blessings upon the word preached in his name. But when the spirit of judgment has gone before to condemn, and the spirit of burning has followed upon it, with a holy zeal and indignation against all filth, to consume it; then the Lord comes in a cloud to manifest his presence and give tokens and evidences of his sensible approbation.

It is hard work to have the filth burnt, and often takes a long time to effect, and that, perhaps, amidst much opposition and rebellion against such humbling dealings. But we shall be made, sooner or later, to pine after the Lord's sensible presence both in our own soul and in our assemblies, and then we shall feel, that before we can realise it, privately or publicly, there must be a solemn repenting and honest confession of sin; and that we must fall down before God as poor guilty sinners, condemned in our own conscience by the spirit of judgment. We stand as long as we can upon our own legs; we rest as long as we can upon something in self. But all this self-dependence and self-righteousness, sooner or later, must come down, must give way, though it may take years to do it, with trial upon trial, affliction after affliction, and temptation after temptation. This, indeed, is the chief reason why the Lord acts so much as a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning, that he may leave nothing in the soul to which we can look, and bring us to fall flat before him in the dust of self-abasement, having no hope but in him. But when he has purged away the filth of pride, self-righteousness, and creature strength, with all other evils, by this spirit of judgment and spirit of burning, and there is nothing left in the soul but the ashes of self, burnt by the fire of indignation, and we

can fall flat before God, putting our mouth in the dust; then he will come, gently and sweetly come over all the hills and mountains of our sin and shame, and manifest his sensible presence to the sons. This is the cloud and smoke by day which he creates upon every dwelling-place upon Mount Zion.

And it will be in churches as in individuals. As long as a party-spirit is indulged; as long as divisions, jealousies, and surmises prevail unpurged by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be no sensible presence of God in the midst of Zion's assemblies. For you will observe there is a two-fold promise, one as regards individuals, and the other as regards churches. The cloud resting by day upon "every dwelling-place upon Mount Zion," represents the presence and glory of God resting upon individuals; and the cloud resting upon her "assemblies," represents the presence and blessing of God upon the churches, as assembling themselves together in his name.

iii. But observe this point, that where there is the cloud, there will be the smoke; for as the cloud represents the presence of God, so the smoke represents the aspirations, prayers, desires, sighs, cries, and petitions of the soul in which the Spirit of God dwells. And this, you will observe, is promised to be the case upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion. Thus, wherever there is a believing soul, in that dwelling place of God in Zion, there will be both a cloud and a smoke; there will be the sensible presence of God in it, and there will be the aspirations which rise up before the Lord as so much incense perfumed by the incense of our great Mediator. Now this is what I call a private religion, carried on between God and the soul, manifested by the presence of God in the cloud, and manifested also by the smoke that rises up out of a broken, contrite, and believing heart, that ascends into the nostrils of the Lord of Sabaoth. O what a mercy it would be for this town if in every dwelling-place there were a cloud and smoke by day. But this we cannot expect. It will be so, however, in every dwelling-place where there is a living soul. If you are the master of a family and know anything spiritually of the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be in your dwelling-place a cloud and a smoke by day, for you will have at times the

Lord's presence in the cloud, and the smoke of your desires, petitions, and aspirations will be going up before the Lord continually. If you are not the master or the mistress of a family, but a son, or a daughter, or a servant, there is still your bedroom, or your secret place of retirement, in which you may have a private religion carried on between God and your soul. And in that secret retirement, as you find, from time to time, an inward spirit of judgment condemn you for what is guilty, and a holy spirit of zeal against all sin, there will, from time to time, come over you something of the presence of the Lord in the cloud; and as this comes, there will rise up with it the smoke of desires, petitions, sighs, and cries to the God of all your mercies. Thus you will have in your own bosom and in your own room, your little bedroom to which you resort to get away from all intrusion—you will have that private religion which consists in the dealings of God with your soul, and the going up of your heart toward the Lord in secret acts of adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

And not only so: the same gracious promise is given to Zion's "assemblies," where the sons and daughters of Zion meet together, as now in this place, to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, to hear his word, and to sing his praise. There, if there be in the ministry the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, the detection of the filth, the judging of it and the burning of it up, there will be, from time to time, the manifested presence of God as a cloud in the midst. And there will be also the smoke, as well as the cloud, in the prayers that will go up both from the minister and people, in the earnest petitions of the godly men who are called upon to pray in public, and from you too, who, on account of your sex or other reasons, are not called upon to pray publicly. As you sit in your seat, there will be the going up of inward desires to the Lord to come down in blessing upon your soul and the soul of the minister and people; there will be the inward confession, the inward supplication, the inward desire rising up, which the Lord alone can see and hear. And thus there will be the cloud and the smoke in the assemblies of Zion, as well as the cloud and the smoke in your private room, where, as

favoured by the Lord's presence, or strengthened and helped by the blessed Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplications, your heart mounts upward in prayer and praise.

iv. But there is also a gracious promise of the *shining of a flaming fire by night*.

There is an allusion here to the cloudy pillar which rested upon the tabernacle. It was as a cloud by day, but as a pillar of fire by night. The reason of this is evident. By day, the cloud and the smoke were sufficiently visible; but not so in the night season. In the night, therefore, it was a pillar of fire, that the presence of the Lord might be distinctly seen. Spiritually viewed, this night may signify dark seasons in the soul; for there is night as well as day in the experience of God's saints. Now when they are in these dark seasons, they want clearer and brighter manifestations of the Lord's presence than when they are walking in the light of day. Thus this "shining of a flaming fire by night" may represent the shining in of the Lord's clearer, fuller, and more manifested presence, the livelier and more powerful application of his word to the heart; the brighter evidences and clearer marks that he gives of his favour, which, compared with the cloud, are as the shining of a flaming fire. It is the same presence of God, and the same glory, as was the case with the cloudy pillar; but that presence and that glory are seen in a more conspicuous manner as giving light in seasons of darkness.

The shining of a flaming fire by night may also represent the shining light of the word of truth which is spoken of as "a light that shineth in a dark place." (2 Pet. 1:19.) How often when the mind is dark, and evidences obscured, there is little else seen but the clear shining of the word of truth to which the soul turns its eyes as its only guiding light. "Thy word," says David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psa. 119:105.) We often get into spots where we have to look out of ourselves to the clear shining of truth in the word of God; for there is darkness every where else; and to that light we have to look and wait, and sometimes at a great distance and for a long season, until that

word comes near and begins to shine into the heart. But with that shining light, as it draws near and gives forth its comforting rays and beams, comes in due time the presence and glory of God. So to fix our heart upon the word of promise, and wait for its fulfilment, is to walk by faith and not by sight. Thus to Abraham the word of promise was by day a cloud; but when "a horror of great darkness fell upon him," the same word of promise, as the word of a covenant God, was as a burning lamp that passed between the pieces of the offered sacrifices. (Gen. 15:17.)

III.—But I must pass on to my third point, in which I said I would show how the Lord *guards* and *defends* his own gracious work: "Upon all the glory shall be a defence."

The glory of the Lord is his presence in the soul, for that we have seen is represented by the cloud, as it was when his glory filled the house of God, which Solomon built. Now this glory of the Lord in the cloud and smoke by day, and in the shining of a flaming fire by night, is to be a defence, both upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon their assemblies. A defence against what? Chiefly against four things.

1. First, it is a defence against *error*. No person can embrace error who knows anything of the presence and power of God in his soul, or has ever seen anything of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; for all error is opposed not only to God's truth, as revealed in the word, but to God's presence, as revealed in the heart. And this is true both as regards individuals and churches. God will never sanction error as held by either. He will never bless with his manifested presence any erroneous man, be he minister or private individual, for he never honours or blesses any thing but his own truth, and those only who believe and hold it. "Them that honour me I will honour." This is a very important point, for you will often hear erroneous men speak as if they knew spiritual things by divine teaching and by divine testimony, and will often boast confidently of their comforts and enjoyments, as if they had got their views from God himself, though they turn the truth of God into a lie. But be not deceived by these men or

their false pretensions. They have only kindled a fire to compass themselves about with sparks, that they may walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks which they have kindled. The spirit of truth guides into all truth, and cannot and will not countenance or bless error. The Lord's own prayer to his heavenly Father for his disciples was—"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17.) The soul never was divinely sanctified by a lie, nor the heart truly comforted by error.

2. But this glory will also be a defence against all *evil*; for nothing makes sin so to be seen and abhorred as sin as the presence of the Lord. He is known and felt at such moments to be infinitely pure and holy, and a holy God must needs hate sin. If, then, his presence be felt in the soul as a cloud in which he manifests his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, it will be a defence against all the sins in which you might be entangled, when there is no such sensible presence to make you revere and adore his great and glorious Majesty.

3. It is, therefore, also a defence against all *temptations*, which would lead us into anything contrary to God and godliness. It is when the soul contracts and accumulates, through neglect, the filth of which I spoke in the beginning of my discourse, and when there is no spirit of judgment in lively exercise to detect and condemn it, or spirit of burning to consume it; or when there is no cloud of God's presence resting on the soul, and little or no smoke going up of prayer or praise, that temptation gets the better of us. Temptation comes in, almost without resistance, when we are at ease in Zion, or living carelessly and negligently, given up for a time to slothfulness and self-indulgence, and backsliding in heart from the living God. It is in these seasons that temptation gains strength; and every indulgence of the sin to which we are tempted adds to its power, until, but for the grace of God breaking the snare, giving us repentance, and restoring our soul, we might be swallowed up altogether in open evil, and disgrace both ourselves and the cause of God and truth.

4. It will be also a defence against all *enemies*. You may have

many enemies, both without and within; but all their attempts to injure you will be unsuccessful if you have the cloud of the Lord's presence in your soul, and his glory in your midst. No enemy can hurt you if the Lord be your defence. They may bring you into bondage and often cause great trouble of mind; but none can effectually hurt you, because the glory of the Lord in the cloud will be your defence against every tongue that may rise against you in judgment, and will bring you off more than conqueror through him that loved you. The Lord will take care of his own work upon the heart. He will not suffer his people to be tempted more than they are able to bear, nor allow their adversaries to triumph in their downfall. He will watch very jealously over what he himself has communicated by his Spirit and grace to your heart, and his presence will be your best defence against every foe and against every fear.

Now do you think you see in the light of life the connection of these things as brought before you this morning? and have you any personal experience of there? Do you see how by nature we harbour filth? Have you ever experimentally known how this filth is purged by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit burning? Have you any reason to hope or believe there has been a washing away of it in the blood of the Lamb, so as not only to purge you from its dominion and power by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, but to wash it away from the sight of God, and by a sweet testimony of his mercy and love, to have your conscience also cleansed from its guilt and filth? Have you a testimony in your own soul that all this work is more or less needful before there is any sweet enjoyment of the presence of the Lord in the cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of the flaming fire by night?

In all the Lord's work upon the soul, there is a certain connection of link with link in the spiritual chain. As, then, we are enabled by his Spirit and grace to trace out these marks of his secret teaching upon the soul in its various links, it strengthens our faith, confirms a good hope, and gives us to see more plainly and clearly our spiritual standing. But unless we can trace out in some

measure the dealings of God with our soul in this way, we have little evidence to give, either to ourselves or others of being amongst the manifested people of God. And see the consequence of not knowing or experiencing these things. Filth indulged within will soon show itself in filth indulged without. If there is no daily purging by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, there will be a breaking forth of the leprosy—it may be in the face. And if sin be not continually judged, condemned, confessed, mourned over, and forsaken, it will break out in some open word or action, and perhaps disgrace the cause with which we are connected. To prevent, therefore, his people from harbouring all this secret filth, and getting entangled in the spirit of the world, and being guilty of things that might sadly wound conscience and disgrace the cause of God and truth, he sends mercifully into their heart the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning; he gives the cloud of his presence; he draws up the smoke of their desires and affections; and upon all this glory he gives a defence, so as to preserve them unto the end harmless and blameless in his dear Son, and eventually to present them before the throne of his glory not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

## The First Fruits of the Spirit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, January 10, 1858

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

"And not only they but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, awaiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23

In the preceding verse the Apostle has told us that the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and much dispute has been raised as to what this groaning is, but I think we may understand it as physical. When God first created the world there was no sorrow—God pronounced all good; there was no groaning then; but when sin entered into the world a curse fell upon the ground for man's sake: it fell upon everything, so that in one sense the whole visible creation, *i.e.*, all that we see, lies under the curse, and is a partaker of man's wrong. We cannot look abroad without seeing the marks of the anger and wrath of God, and feeling that the curse extends throughout the whole creation. It has fallen upon animals, especially those under man's dominion. How they groan under the galling yoke—what sufferings they endure! Look at the horse—how that animal, perhaps the noblest of all animals, is ill-used! How often he is doomed to bear all sorts of wrongs, allowed to wear out before his time, and die under harsh treatment! And in children, what a propensity there is to cruelty! There is not an animal which having once seen they have not made sport of. Thus all animals are made to suffer for man's sake, and thus the "whole creation *groaneth* and travaileth in pain together until now." Wherever we go there is wretchedness and misery, sickness, pain, and sorrow in every street, family and house. How many are lying now upon beds of sickness! How many in hospitals are suffering agonies of pain! How many are enduring bereavement! So wherever we go we see what a field of blood it is in which we live, and in that

sense "the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together until now." Then the Apostle goes on to show that even the family of God themselves have a share in this universal groaning and travailing:—"And not only they but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." The family of God—those who are made alive unto God, who have the first fruits of the Spirit—even they groan and travail with the rest of creation.

With God's blessing I shall first shew—

I.— What the Apostle means by saying "which have *the first fruits of the Spirit,*"

Which will lead me to show

II.—*How they have these first fruits.*

III.—*How they groan within themselves.*

IV.—*What they are waiting for, and how it will, when it comes, relieve them and put an end to all their sorrows, which is the redemption of the body.*

I.—Under the Jewish law there were what was called "first fruits." No man was allowed to reap his field until the first fruits were offered. When the barley, which harvest came first, was reaped, a sheaf was first taken and brought to the temple, and when this was offered all the rest was sanctified: so the dedication of a lamb to the Lord sanctified the flock, and no one was allowed to avail himself of any of the fruit of his field until the "*first fruits*" were offered. And this offering was not only a tribute of praise but it sanctified the rest of the flock in the field. What a good thing it would be if this was so spiritually—if we would give to the Lord our "first fruits" in the Spirit. Here is a man who has had a little property left him, what does he think about? How he shall dress a little more decently than he did before; how he shall bring

up his family, &c. He does not think about the Lord and his people, and of what God has given to him, the "first fruits" should be given back again to God. And even God's children are often very negligent in this respect, therefore the Lord is provoked to take away what he has given, and from this custom the Lord sanctifies the beginning of any known loss as being the first fruits of the Spirit.

Now the first fruits being offered, the whole of the field was recognized to be the Lord's. He might have claimed the whole, but no, he takes a part. Well, so in a spiritual sense, the Apostle speaks of the "first fruits" of the spirit, the first offerings of praise for Jesus' first blessings. And these are offered unto God. The first fruits were only a part of the whole, and so the teachings of God upon the heart are only tokens that the whole of God's teaching and influence will follow. Only the first beginnings are yet come, and so the Apostle speaks of the saints of God as having the first fruits, and the first converts are said to be the "first fruits." They were but a beginning; there was a multitude behind. To have the first fruits is to have the harvest, and viewing the subject in this light let us see how far we can trace these first fruits; for when the Spirit begins he also carries on and completes by communicating these first fruits, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and to depart from the snares of death,"—the communication of life and power to the soul whereby it is taught to fear God, these are the first fruits of the Spirit. "To those who fear his great name are the promises given." To them shall the sun of righteousness arise. "No good thing will he withhold from them that fear his name," for the fear of God is liking what he likes. We never shall escape from the sinner's death but by this fear, and no man can fear God except he has had some application of his truth in his conscience, and it is by the Lord's impressing the soul that this fear is produced. There are some good Christians who do not get any further than this fear, and we read of one who feared God above many. These pass their time in much fear; they are sunk in their feelings, and their sins are ever before them, they are ever beholding them; they have a tender conscience, they seek God's face, and they

walk very uprightly. You will find some of these characters in "Pilgrim's Progress," under the titles of "Mr. Fearing," "Ready to Halt," &c.; indeed, Bunyan has more of these Pilgrims than of any other kind, and he has traced out their experience very accurately; but it will not do to be satisfied with these fears and doubts. The first fruits go beyond these. There must be a living faith in Jesus Christ. How, through the whole Scripture, we continually find that *faith in Christ* is stamped upon all those who are saved with an everlasting salvation, before whose eyes Christ hath been set forth, as we read in the Epistle to the Galatians 3:1, "Before whose eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." He had been set forth in the preaching of the Gospel, he was set before their eyes, he was viewed by them with the eye of faith, and they looked unto him, they believed in his promises, in his suitability, in his glorious person as God-Man, in what he is as the Christ of God, and that by a living faith which was given them, they cast the anchor forth, they hoped in his mercy, they embraced him, and determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, they rested all the weight of their souls upon him, and at times they had an application of a promise, and all this because they had a hope in their hearts and faith in him. So that to them he was the chiefest among ten thousand, they cleaved to him, they felt him precious, and to know him was their chief happiness; without him life was an empty void, and in it there was nothing worth seeking. These are manifestations of the first fruits of this spirit; the manifestations of the love of God and of Christ springing up in the soul, and producing peace and thankfulness, arising from the goodness and mercy of God, and so the whole feelings and desires of the heart are made holy and delivered from this mass of sin and death, indeed, all that God does for the soul, all the liftings up out of self with repentance and self-loathing, all desire to do good and what is right, and to avoid what is wrong, and everything that bears the curse of God; whatever the blessed Spirit works upon the heart, whatever he communicates by his nature, may all be summed up in the expression—"The first fruits of the Spirit."

II., III.—Now, the apostle speaks of the children of God as having

these first fruits of the Spirit, and groaning within themselves with the whole creation. What makes them groan? The sin and wretchedness that they see and feel that they have within them; this makes them groan, and of this the saints of God have a terrible share—they have a Benjamin's mess—for "the Lord trieth the righteous," and the afflictions under which they suffer are at times most searching; whatever be their religion they will groan within themselves. Now, God means to pardon them because he has wrought a work upon their souls. Now, when we have no affliction our heart goes into the world—give a man plenty of property and his heart soon goes into the world—and in order to draw his people to himself the Lord brings losses upon them, and he knows best where to lay the cross to send them from the world, and the things of time and sense. Well, under this cross they groan, for flesh is flesh, human nature is human nature, and God means us to feel it. I have no idea of a stoicism in affliction. What does it show? It shows that a man has no feeling; and what would you say of a man who has no feeling—who discourses about things as if nothing was the matter? Does not your mind revolt from such an one? But, on the other hand, if you are a man of feeling you sympathise with those that mourn. We must always bear our afflictions—we must not make a noise about them: they are nothing but the hurt feelings of pride. Now, we are to feel the Lord's hand—the Lord means us to feel: like a master he means the unruly child to feel the rod; and God will deal with us until we do feel; and then when at last we lie prostrate at his feet he will take the cross off our shoulders. But besides all these losses which we are called upon to sustain there is one under which a child of God will ever groan, and that is sin and his carnal nature. We have always the feelings and workings of sin within us. What a task it is to read the Word, to approach a throne of grace, to engage in any godly service, there being such coldness and deadness of heart towards it. You take your Bible—you can't read it, and you feel no interest in prayer. You go to your business—you can attend to that—but when you come to the solemn things of God there is an unwillingness to bend the knee. This wretchedness is so humbling to a child of God. And then there is so much unbelief in the promises, so much self-seeking and

sensuality. You are full of bad thoughts; all these are a burden and grief to a child of God, and his body is the seat of disease, sickness, and death, which calamities fall upon all. Therefore our poor body being nothing but a wreck, and our soul being diseased under such numerous trials and afflictions, we cannot look up, for we are burdened. To think we should be what we are, so often overcome and entangled by sin, that we should be cast into such shame and confusion and brought under such strokes of heaven's vengeance; all this is enough to weigh us down, till in our feelings we become as lifeless as the stones of the street. These things make us groan within ourselves.

IV.—But what are they waiting for? They are looking at a hope of their adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body. Our body was redeemed at the same time as our soul, for Christ redeemed soul and body; but at present our body is the seat of disease, and it is not as yet delivered out of sin and wretchedness like the glorious body of Christ, without speck or stain—an active, glorified body conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, without an evil imagination, always spiritual, holy and pure, and bright as the angels in bliss. Such will be our body when delivered out of sin and death and given up to the Lord. Now, this is the adoption when it will be made manifest. In the Roman time a man could adopt a child and be a father to him, so that when he came of age he could commit all his property to him. With this practice before his eyes the apostle speaks of an adoption of the saints of God as children: so when the redeemed family of God shall stand before the throne, God will say of them, "These are my children, for them is the kingdom prepared, and they shall enjoy that kingdom, and possess an exceeding weight of glory to the praise of him who is without change." Then there will be no more carnal imagination, no more vile workings of wickedness, but we shall be holy as Christ is pure and holy. Now, these are the first fruits of the Spirit, and those who possess them are looking forward to the day of harvest. While they are in the flesh they will have a life of losses and crosses until they come down to the grave; then they will have a new body. Till that morning—the morning of the resurrection—comes they will never enjoy real peace, and for the

want of enjoying this they are what they are while "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies." There are some of the family of God who cannot realise their interest in this fact, but they will be partakers of it hereafter. Are there any of God's first fruits in your soul? Have you offered anything to God? Have you given yourself to him? Have you come out of the world and self, for these are the first fruits of the Spirit, and he it is that draws forth these desires out of your bosom? As the high priest took the sheaf and weighed [perhaps, *waved*] it before God, so the Spirit takes these first fruits and offers them to God, and as the first fruits sanctified the whole of the crop so these are the earnest of the harvest. Every communication with the Lord is a first fruit, and the day will come when you shall be perfect. You will then see Christ face to face, and be with the Lord for ever and ever. Now, is it not worth while for us to groan in this life? May you and I struggle on a little more, enduring the cross, until the Lord shall come and, being our consolation, shall take us as his children. The Lord bless what has now been spoken in your ears and seal it on your hearts. Amen.

## **FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW THE LORD**

Preached at Allington, near Devizes, on Lord's Day Afternoon, September 19, 1841

"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

Before I enter into the spiritual meaning of these words it will be necessary to see the connection of the passage with what precedes it. There is no more fruitful parent of error than to take detached portions of God's Word, separated from their connection. Only so far as light is cast upon the Word of God by the blessed Spirit, and we in that light see its spiritual meaning, are we able to arrive at any right understanding of it; but that meaning will not be one distorted from the connection, nor one wrested from the place that it occupies, as a link torn from a complete chain, but will, for the most part, be in harmony with the context.

The words of the text are the language of Ephraim; but they are the language of Ephraim under particular circumstances, and as passing through a particular experience. They are not a promise thrown down for anybody to pick up; they are not words to be taken at random into everybody's lips. Nor are they a promise addressed generally to the Church of God; but they set forth an experience of a peculiar nature; and therefore only so far as we have some acquaintance with that experience are the words suitable to us.

We will, then, with God's blessing, look back a little at this and the preceding chapter (**for they are both closely connected**), and endeavour, with God's help, to trace out what was the experience of Ephraim **at the time** that he uttered these words; and then we shall perhaps more clearly see the difference between the language of faith and the language of presumption.

1. In the twelfth verse of the preceding chapter, the Lord says: "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness." This casts a light on the dealings of God with Ephraim. Ephraim had wrapped himself up in a robe; he had covered himself with a garment, but not of God's Spirit. Now the Lord threatens that He "will be unto Ephraim as a moth." That is, He will fret this garment; He will **(to use a familiar expression)** make holes in it; it shall not be a complete garment to cover him, but it shall be moth-eaten and rotten, so that, dropping to pieces bit by bit, it could neither cover his nakedness nor shield him from God's all-searching eye. We find the Psalmist, in (Psalm 39:11), making use of the same figure, and a very striking one it is. "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:" or as it is in the old version, preserved in the Common Prayer Book, "like as it were a moth fretting a garment."

These words then show us just where Ephraim was in soul experience. Ephraim does not represent one destitute of spiritual light and life, but a quickened vessel of mercy, and yet one who, for want of the moth and the rottenness, was wrapping himself up in a garment, not of God's giving, nor of the Spirit's application, that is, not the glorious robe of Christ's imputed righteousness cast around him by the Spirit of God.

Now I firmly believe that there are many persons who have the fear of God in their hearts who are wrapping themselves up in a covering which is not of God's Spirit, and therefore, as the prophet speaks, "add sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1). Not having been led into a deep acquaintance with the spirituality of God's law, not having had all their refuges of lies broken up, they wrap themselves up in a covering which is not of God's Spirit; and they fancy that this garment in which they are wrapped up is the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness, merely because they believe in **the doctrine** of Christ's righteousness. But that cutting expression, "a covering, but **not of My Spirit,**" shows that there is something more to be known than **the bare doctrine** of

Christ's righteousness, and that the very doctrine itself becomes a lying refuge, when the mere letter of truth is sheltered in, and the Holy Ghost does not experimentally make it known to the soul.

The Lord, then, seeing precisely where Ephraim was, says, "I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness." That is, just in the same way as when a man takes out of his chest or wardrobe a dress which he has laid up there perhaps for months, and when he holds this dress up to the light he finds that the moth has been there, has laid its eggs and fretted it, made holes in it, and absolutely spoiled it; so Ephraim, after having laid up his garment in his wardrobe, the Bible, and with great inward satisfaction having often looked upon it, when the hour of temptation and distress comes, and he would bring out this robe to wear, finds it all rent and torn, fretted and spoiled. The rents in Ephraim's covering were not seen until it was brought out to the light; but when beheld in the light of God's countenance, the moth-holes were visible, and it was found to be all dropping to pieces.

2. "And to the house of Judah as rottenness." That is, when Judah comes to put a strain upon the prop on which he leans, it breaks. That is the idea of rottenness. The old cable will do very well until there is a strain put upon it: but then, if it be rotten, it parts asunder, and the vessel falls upon the rocks. Thus the Lord says, "I will be to Judah as rottenness:" not "rottenness;" that cannot be, for that would imply corruption; but, "I will do the same thing spiritually that rottenness is naturally. I will make all his props to be to him as rotten; I will so spoil them in his experience, that, as Bildad speaks (Job 8:15), he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."

3. But what is the effect of "the moth" and the "rottenness?" Will it at once cure Ephraim of his idolatries, and turn him to the stronghold as a prisoner of hope? No; not yet. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal

you, nor cure you of your wound." Ephraim will not then turn to the Lord. No; He is the last to whom he will go. He has a sickness, but the Assyrian shall be his physician; he sees his wound, but King Jareb shall be his surgeon: but it shall be all in vain, for the first cannot cure, and the second cannot heal.

And has not this been in a measure our case? When our false religion gave way, when the moth fretted our garments, and rottenness mouldered our props, was there not a secret leaning on an arm of flesh, a going to the Assyrian, a sending to King Jareb, a looking to the creature in some shape or another to bring ease and peace? But the wound could not be healed; there was no balm to be found from the creature; the moth had so fretted the garment that there was no patching it up again; the prop had become so rotten that it was no longer able to bear any weight.

4. But the Lord does not mean to leave Ephraim either to self-righteousness or to despair. He, therefore, says, "will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him." Here the Lord speaks of Himself as being a lion unto Ephraim: that is, just as a lion rends a man to pieces, so will the Lord spiritually rend Ephraim. "I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them" (Hos 13:8).

But what was this dealing with the Lord upon their souls for? Was it to destroy them? to rend them actually to pieces, so that none could deliver? This was not His object; it was to rend away everything that stood in the way of His grace, or that was substituted for His grace: to tear away false hopes, and rotten props, and creature expectations, so as to leave nothing, absolutely nothing, on which the creature could hang for support.

5. Now as long as the Lord is thus entering into controversy with Ephraim, there is in Ephraim's mind little else but murmuring, repining, fretting, rebellion, dissatisfaction, despondency, almost

despair. And with all that, he cannot really pour out his soul before God, nor can he find or feel any nearness of access to a throne of grace. But the Lord, secretly, in His own time and way, pours into Ephraim's soul the Spirit of grace and supplications; "He goes and returns to His place," until Ephraim is brought to his right mind; until rebellion is, in some measure, lulled in Ephraim's soul; until these waves are in some degree calmed, and he is brought to that spot spoken of in (Lev. 26:41), "to accept of the punishment of his iniquity," to own that the Lord is righteous, and that He would be just if He sent him to hell.

6. Being thus divinely wrought upon, a blessed change takes place. Ephraim's heart now begins to work before the Lord; his bowels melt, his soul is softened, his spirit meekened. He is no longer struggling like a wild bull in a net; nor kicking like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; he is no longer full of inward rebellion; but by the secret work of God in his soul, he is humbled and quieted, so as to lie low at God's footstool. "He acknowledges his offence, and seeks His face." A change, which he could never have wrought himself, comes over him; and, under the meekening operations of the Holy Ghost in his soul, he is brought to repentance and confession. He draws near, therefore, with these words in his mouth: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up."

7. But what language is this of Ephraim? Is it the language of creature-faith? Is it the language of daring presumption? Is it the language of free-will? No, none of these; it is the language of spiritual faith, the Lord having kindled in Ephraim's soul a measure of divine faith, whereby he is enabled to return. "Come," he says (**as the prodigal said, 'I will arise and go to my father'**), "come, let us return." Here is his soul going out after the Lord; he is no longer labouring under rebellion and fretfulness; but a meekness and a quietness have been produced in his spirit. The Beloved has put in His hand by the hole of the door, and Ephraim's bowels are moved for Him (Song 5:4). The stony heart has become a heart of flesh; and his pride,

stubbornness, and rebellion having all melted away, he cries, "Come, and let us return to the Lord." It is with Ephraim now as it is with the Church as described in (Hosea 2:7), when she says with melting heart and weeping eyes, "I will go and return to my first Husband; for then was it better with me than now."

In this language, then, of Ephraim we see the return of affection, living desires kindled, faith communicated and drawn into exercise, godly sorrow at work in the soul, all the breathing and going forth of prayer and supplication from the heart. O what a different feeling this is from rebellion and self-pity! And, depend upon it, friends, until the soul is thus meekened, softened, and brought down by the work of the Spirit upon it, there will be no saying with living faith, "Come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us." It is, therefore, not the daring language of presumption, but the accents of living faith "He hath torn our souls with conviction; He hath smitten with sorrow of heart; from Him came the wound, and from the same hand must come the remedy."

8. "After two days will He revive us; in the third day will He raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." In this mention of Ephraim's being raised up on the third day, there is doubtless an allusion to the resurrection of Jesus-Ephraim's covenant Head; for it is only in consequence, their union with their Head, that the members are quickened from their death in sin, are revived in their bondage (Ezra 9:8; Psalm 85:6), and will be raised up at the last day. "Thy dead men shall live; together with My dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26:19). Thus Ephraim speaks in the language of faith—"After two days" (**a definite time for an indefinite one**) "will He revive us"—that is, out of all our darkness and bondage; "in the third day will He raise us up" by the power of Christ's resurrection, and, as thus rising with Jesus, "we shall live in His sight." Faith was here at work. The Lord gave to Ephraim this sweet confidence, and wrought in his soul a powerful persuasion of coming deliverance.

Now it is absolutely necessary to take all these things into connection with the text in order to understand its meaning. The language here employed by Ephraim is not such as can be taken into any one's mouth. It is that "fruit of the lips" which the Lord specially "created" (Isaiah 57:19) and the root from which this special fruit sprang was the experience that has been described. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," is not then a general declaration which anybody may claim, but the special language of faith in a living soul, and of that only as having passed through such an experience as has been described.

Having thus cleared our way a little, we come to the text. "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."

I. We gather, then, from these words, that there is such a thing in soul experience as **"a following on to know the Lord:"** and indeed there is no obtaining the blessings which are laid up for the righteous, unless there is this following on. "To know the Lord" is the desire of every living soul; that is, to know Him by His own divine manifestations, by the gracious revelation of His grace, His love, His presence, and His glory. And whatever measure of knowledge a child of God may have of the Lord, it will always seem in his mind to be an imperfect and deficient knowledge. The blessed apostle Paul, who had been in the third heavens, seemed still comparatively to know Him not, and therefore says, **"That I may know Him,** and the power of His resurrection;" as though all his knowledge of Christ was but as a drop compared with the ocean—as though all his experience was but as a single ray compared with the body of light and heat that dwells in the sun.

"To know the Lord" is to know experimentally and spiritually the power of Jesus' blood and righteousness; to know our eternal union with Him; to know Him so as to be led by the Spirit into soul communion with Him, that we may talk with Him as a man

talketh with his friend; to know Him so that the secrets of His heart should be revealed to us, and we enter by faith into the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; to know Him so as to drink into His Spirit, and to have His image stamped by the Holy Ghost upon our souls; to know Him as coming down into our hearts out of His glorious sanctuary, filling our souls with His presence and His love; to know Him as formed in us the hope of glory, making our bodies His temple, dwelling in us, breathing Himself into us, speaking in us, moving as it were every affection of our heart and every faculty of our soul.

Thus to know the Lord is the sum and substance of vital godliness. And, as "to know the Lord" implies, as well as comprehends, the knowledge of Jehovah in His Trinity of Persons and Unity of essence, well may we say that, to know Jehovah the Father in His eternal love, to know Jehovah the Son in His redeeming blood, and to know Jehovah the Spirit in His divine operations and blessed teaching, is the foretaste of bliss below; and to know and see God as He is, is the consummation of bliss above.

But the expression "follow on," implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances in a man's way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." We will look at a few of these.

1. Sometimes, for instance, a thought like this will rush into the mind: "My religion is all in the flesh; God did not begin with me: I fear I am nothing else but a base hypocrite; and I have taken up a profession of religion, without the Lord the Spirit leading me into the truth as it is in Jesus." Now, when a solemn dread of this kind, perhaps in the lonely watches of the night, falls, as it were, like a ton of lead into a man's heart, it seems for the time effectually to check all the goings forth of his soul. In whatever state of mind he be, when it seems dropped into his conscience with conviction that he is nothing but a base hypocrite, it seems to cut the thread of all his religion; it effectually stops him from making any movement towards God. He will indeed sigh and

groan as a forlorn and lost wretch; but the actings of faith are so damped, that he seems to be nothing but an awful reprobate in the sight of God, and he fears that hell will be his portion for ever.

2. Sometimes when the soul is following eagerly on to know the Lord, Satan will hurl some blasphemous suggestion into our carnal mind. This fiery dart shall so kindle into a blaze those combustible materials of which our carnal nature is full, that it shall set them all on fire. There is no "following on" now to know the Lord, the soul is driven back upon itself; and as it recoils with horror from the imaginations that possess it, it draws back from all approach unto God, fearing to come within the pale of His holy presence, as conscious that His heart-searching eye sees all the abominations that are working within.

3. Sometimes the remembrance of past sins lying as a heavy load on the conscience so presses a man down into despondency and well-nigh despair, that it seems impossible for him to move one step towards Zion. He looks back on his past life, he calls to mind all his sins against God; and they appear so monstrous, so aggravated, so horrible, so black, that it seems utterly impossible they can be washed away, blotted out, and freely forgiven; and this keeps him from following on.

4. Sometimes the gusts of infidelity will so blow on a man's mind as to make him doubt the reality of all religion; aye, for a time persuade him that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, and that everything which others say they have felt, and even what he has felt himself, was a delusion. Objections innumerable start up in his mind against the Scriptures; and Satan plies every argument that is suitable to nature and reason, till faith appears driven out of the field, and infidelity to riot at large in the soul. Whilst these gusts blow, I am very sure there is no following on to know the Lord; nor until a lull comes, and faith once more lifts her drooping head, is there any power to move forward.

5. Sometimes the recollection of the many inconsistencies, the many foolish thoughts, the foolish words, and foolish and even sinful actions that a man has committed since he made a profession, so stand like mountains of difficulty in the way, that he is utterly unable to pass over them; and thus they check and keep him from following on to know the Lord; for he says to himself, "If I were really a partaker of the grace of God, I should never have acted in this way; the Lord would never have suffered me to commit this or that sin: surely I can be nothing but a base hypocrite, and the grace of God can never have touched my heart."

6. Sometimes mountains of worldly trouble stand in his way. His religion brings a cross with it. It calls down perhaps the persecution of his relatives; his children or his wife, his master or his parents oppose him; persons from whom he derives his daily bread set their faces against him; and his worldly prospects so stand in the way of his religion that he must either give **them** up, or the things of God. Here then sometimes the soul comes to a stand; it cannot go forward or backward; it cannot turn to the right hand or to the left: flesh pleads so hard, and faith is so weak; the right path is so rugged, and yet conscience remonstrates so loudly against the wrong, that a step can be taken in neither direction, and this prevents him from "following on to know the Lord."

7. Sometimes such darkness besets the mind, such clouds of unbelief rest on the soul, the way is so obscure, the path so out of sight, and we so unable to see any road at all, that we cannot "follow on," because we know not which way to go. Job was here when he said, "O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him." Darkness besets his path; and like a man in a dark night, he could not move a single step forward, lest he should fall down some precipice, or go out of the road altogether.

Now the work of the Spirit in a man's soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles. Nature, and all the work of nature, and all the power of Satan working on nature, is to draw the man back; but the work of the Spirit on the soul is to lead him forward, to keep alive in him the fear of God, to strengthen him from time to time with strength in his inner man, to give him those enlargements, to drop in those hopes, to communicate that inward grace, and to gird up the loins of his mind, so that in spite of sense, reason, and nature, he is compelled to follow on. Sometimes he seems driven and sometimes drawn, sometimes led and sometimes carried—but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarce knows how, he still "follows on." His very burdens make him groan for deliverance; his very temptations cause him to cry for help; the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step; the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide: so that the Lord the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on; and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, till He sets him before the Lord in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. I am often a marvel to myself, that ever I should experience any revival, feeling at times such barrenness, such leanness, such deadness, such carnality, such inability to any spiritual thought. I have been often astonished that ever I could preach, that ever I could pray—astonished when the Lord's day comes that I should have a text to preach from, any life in my soul, or any power to say anything for the edification of God's people. I believe a living man is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly; worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles, that he is a miracle of mercy, and, as the apostle says, "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1Corinthians 4:9); the world wondering, the angels admiring, and men standing astonished, how the quickened soul is carried on amidst all its difficulties,

obstacles, trials, and temptations; and yet in spite of all—"following on."

But "following on" for what? "To know the Lord" as the sum and substance of all religion, as the very marrow of vital godliness; to know Jesus, so as by faith to enter into His beauty and loveliness, and feel ourselves one spirit with Him, according to those words, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1Corinthians 6:17).

But the Church, speaking thus in the person of Ephraim, says, **"Then shall we know,** if we follow on to know the Lord." **What** shall she know? She shall know that the Lord's hand supported her through all her temptations, that none of the devices of Satan against her have prospered, that all her temporal trials have worked together for her good, that God has made use of the things that seemed most against her that they might be most for her, and that He has overruled every dispensation so as to make it a dispensation of mercy. She shall know that her first convictions were of God, that the first dawnings of light and life upon her soul were from Him, that He held her up when she must otherwise have utterly fallen, and that when Satan came in like a flood, it was the Spirit of the Lord that lifted up a standard against him. She shall know, too, that God was the Author and the Finisher of her faith, the source of her hope, and the fountain of her love. She shall know that she has not had one trial too heavy, nor shed one tear too much, nor put up one groan too many; but that all these things have in a most mysterious and inexplicable manner worked together for her spiritual good.

Now, friends, till we know something experimentally of the Lord we cannot know all this; till we know more or less of Jesus by His own sweet manifestations, the cloud is not taken up from our religion. Doubts, fears, despondencies, inexplicable mysteries will rest upon our path—both on our path in providence, and on our path in grace. But when we are brought to know Jesus, it is like the sun shining in the midst of the sky. Until the sun shines, mists and fogs hover over the scene; but when the sun arises, then the mists and fogs disperse, and the whole path shines forth

outstretched to view. So when the Lord brings the soul into some sweet communion with Jesus, and He is made experimentally known, then it sees that the Lord has led it all these years in the wilderness; then it knows how kindly, and gently, and mercifully, and wisely He has dealt with it; then it feels as a matter of personal, individual, practical experience, that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

II. But we pass on to consider another prominent feature of our text; and that closely connected with the preceding. **"His going forth is prepared as the morning."** The Lord had said in the foregoing chapter, "I will go and return to My place;" that is, "I will hide Myself from Ephraim; he shall call, but I will not answer; he shall cry, but I will not appear." Now this is a part of experience through which every living soul passes—to know what it is to seek the Lord, and not find Him; to call upon Him, and receive no answer; to feel that the clouds of darkness so hide the throne of God as not to be able to see it, nor come near it, and yet to know that He is there.

And here lies the difference between a living soul in his darkest hours and a dead professor. A living soul knows that God is to be found of His saints, but cannot always, nor often find Him for himself; but a dead professor knows nothing about God at all. The darkest fog might cover the downs that "heave up their broad backs into the sky" a little distance from where we now are; still I know they are there, because I have seen them again and again; but a thorough stranger to the country, who was passing for the first time through this valley, would not know that they were there, because the fog would hide them altogether from his view. So a soul that has seen anything of the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, knows that **there** is His dwelling-place (Exodus 25:8), His goings (Psalms 68:24), and His way; and, like Jonah, "looks again toward His holy temple," though clouds and darkness entirely surround Him. But a dead professor of religion has never by faith entered into that sanctuary, nor lifted up believing hands toward His holy oracle (Psalms 28:2);

and, therefore, as he knows nothing of light, knows nothing of darkness. All is with him a dead unmeaning service.

It is, then, to the living soul walking in darkness, and unable to find God, that the text speaks: "His going forth is prepared as the morning." There is an appointed time for the Lord to go forth; and this is sweetly compared to the rising of the sun. Does not "the dayspring know his place?" (Job 38:12). Does not the sun arise every day according to the minute before appointed? Is he ever before his time, or ever after his time? Did the free will of the creature ever hurry or retard his rising for a single second? Thus it is with the going forth of the Lord for the salvation of His people (Habakkuk 3:13), the going forth of the Lord in the revelation of His presence and His power, the going forth of the Lord from the place where He has for a while hidden Himself, to come down with light and life into the soul. All His glorious goings forth are as much prepared, and the moment is as much appointed, as the time is fixed every morning for the sun to rise.

But what is the state of things naturally, before the sun rises? Does not midnight precede the dawn, does not darkness come before light? And when it is midnight naturally, can we bid the sun arise and disperse the darkness? Is there not, as the psalmist says, a waiting for the morning naturally? "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning" (Psalm 130:6). Is there not the invalid tossing on his restless couch, waiting for the morning? Is there not the shipwrecked mariner driven on the rocks, waiting anxiously for the morning, to know what is his prospect of safety, what friendly sail may be in sight? Is not the man benighted on the downs waiting for the morning, that the sun may arise, and he find his way homeward? But with all their waiting, they cannot bid the sun arise; they must wait till the appointed time. So the going forth of the Sun of Righteousness, the appearance of Christ in the heart, the sweet revelation of the Son of God, the lifting up of the light of His blessed countenance, is "prepared as the morning"—as fixed, as appointed in the mind of God as the morning to come in its season; but no more to be hurried than the sun is to be hurried

up the sky. Aye, and it is as much an impossibility for us to bring the Lord into our souls before the appointed time, or keep Him there when He is come, as for us to play the part of Joshua, and say, "Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."

But "His going forth is prepared as the morning," and when He goes forth, He goes forth "conquering and to conquer," mounted on the white horse spoken of in Revelation (Revelation 6:2). He goes forth to conquer our enemies, to overcome our temptations, to lay our souls at His footstool, to arise like the sun in his strength, and to come into the heart with healing in His wings.

III. But we have another figure added, which shows the fruit and effect of His coming: "He shall **come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.**" His going forth is compared to the rising of the sun—glorious and certain; His coming to the rain—softening and fertilizing. And there is something very sweet not only in the figure itself—rain, but "in the latter and former rain" spoken of. To understand the spiritual, we must first know the natural meaning of this figure. In the land of Palestine there are not, as in our country, showers at all seasons of the year; generally speaking, there was only rain at two periods—one was called the former rain, and the other the latter rain. Thus we find that the prophet Samuel makes it a miracle, that God should send thunder and rain in the wheat harvest. It would not be a miracle with us, it is a common occurrence: but it is so unusual in those countries to have rain in harvest, that the prophet Samuel speaks of it as a miracle, and as a sign that God was displeased for their asking a king (1Sam. 12:17, 18). The Hebrews began their civil year in the autumn. Thus "the former or early rain" was the rain that fell in the autumn, and "the latter rain" that which fell in the spring. Now the former rain came upon the seed in the autumn, when it was committed to the furrow, and falling upon it, caused it to germinate and spring up. The latter rain fell in the spring upon the growing crop, and brought it forward for the harvest, which was much earlier there than with us, the barley harvest being at

the time of the Passover, or our Easter, and the wheat harvest at the feast of Pentecost, or our Whitsuntide.

Now I think that in this early **(or as it is here called, "former")** and latter rains, we have a sweet figure of the visitations of Christ to the soul. The early rain, which comes first, is the first sight which the soul has of Christ—the season of the first love, the day of the espousals, when we go after the Lord into a land not sown (Jeremiah 2:2), when the Lord allures us, (as He speaks in Hosea 2:14) **into the wilderness; the first days of the Son of man: the season that Job speaks of, when he says, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle"** (Job 29:2,3,4). **"The days of my youth"—that is, the days of his spiritual youth—when he first fell in love with Jesus, and was full of zeal and warmth for His honour and glory.**

**Christ then first comes as the former rain which falls on the seed committed to the furrows, and makes it spring up vigorous and strong. But there is a winter to come after that. The Hebrews, as I have just said, began their year in the autumn, at which season the former rain fell. There was a winter then to pass through afterwards; there were frosts to nip the young wheat; there were long, cold, chilling nights to make it turn yellow in the blade; it often became stunted and sickly, and seemed to go backward rather than forward, and so it continued until the second or latter rain came in the spring.**

**Does not this well set forth the experience of the soul? After the first rain of Christ's presence and Christ's grace and power has come on the seed of truth in the heart, there follows the long winter, when the blades of faith, hope and love turn sickly and yellow, aye, sometimes (as we saw a few winters back), even the very blade gone, so**

that the wheat seems dead, as though all the crop were utterly destroyed; and yet life in the root, yet life struggling on, but still unable to spring forth until warmth and rain should come to make it shoot afresh. And then, after all this long winter, drops down in the appointed time the latter rain just before the harvest, the warm showers falling on it just before the Lord "putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:29). Here is the smile of the Lord upon the soul just before He takes it home, the breathing of His presence and love before He gathers it to be finally and everlastingly in His bosom.

Now it is said "He shall come" in this way, first in the espousals, and then in the wedding; first in the sowing of the seed, and then in the reaping of the harvest; first to make it germinate and come up out of the soil, covered with the thick clods, and then to fill the ear before it is gathered into the garner to be for ever with the Lord.

The Church speaks here in a spirit of prophecy. If I may use an expression, which perhaps you will hardly receive unless I explain it—the Church here believes for her children. Not believes for them **in a way of justification**, as though her faith could be any substitute for theirs, or be any way available for their salvation; I mean not that; but believes for them in **the way of experience**. We often find this as a daily matter of fact. A man who has passed through some severe trial of soul and been delivered, when he sees another in the same trial, can believe for him, though the man passing through it cannot believe for himself. So the Church in this way believes for her children. She believes in the Lord's faithfulness, and being favoured with strong confidence in His mercy, opens her arms wide, and prophesies of the visitations of His favour to all her children.

And now before I close, let me gather up my fragments, and run over what I have endeavoured to unfold of the meaning of the text. There is then a following on to know the Lord, after the soul has been smitten, wounded, and torn; and he that thus follows on to know the Lord amidst all the difficulties and troubles of the

way will surely know Him to his eternal joy; for His going forth is prepared as the morning which must arise in its appointed time. Nor will He go forth only "as the light in the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2Samuel 23:4), but He will also come "as the latter and former rain unto the earth." He will come unto every parched soul that feels itself like a barren wilderness, as the latter and the former rain, to water the ridges thereof abundantly, to settle the furrows thereof, to make it soft with showers, to bless the springing thereof, that the valleys may be covered over with corn, that they may shout for joy, and also sing (Psalms 65:10,13).

We see, then, that the words of the text are not such expressions as any professor of religion may take into his lips. They are not to be thrown down by the minister from the pulpit to encourage anybody and everybody, whether they know anything of divine dealings or not. They are not to be held out as an encouragement to carnal people, that **they** are to follow on to know the Lord, and make themselves religious, whether God work in them or not. But they are spoken to those who have passed through a certain experience, and are prophetic of the happy termination of that experience. And all who are passing through it know something of the things I have been speaking of; they know something of the difficulties of the road, something of following on in spite of those difficulties; and something too, at times, of a sweet confidence and blessed persuasion in their souls that they shall know the end of the present trials, and the reason of the Lord's dispensation, believing in their very hearts, by the Spirit's inward testimony, that the going forth of the Lord is prepared as the morning, and that He will come in His own appointed time and way, as the latter and the former rain unto the earth.

## **FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW THE LORD**

Preached at Providence Chapel, West Street, Croydon, Lord's Day morning, April 16th, 1865

"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

I was speaking, in my exposition of Hosea 5 this morning, of the various keys of a house, and that these were all different. Thus there is the key of the street-door, of the parlour, of the study, of the bedrooms, of the kitchen, of the pantry; and there is no use taking the street-door key to open the door of the study, or of the parlour door key to open the tea-caddy. You may fumble at the lock with the wrong key and hamper it, but you will never open it unless you have the right key. How many bring their keys to open God's Word, but miserably fail because their wrong keys will not fit into, or turn the lock. But there is a master-key which will open those inner chambers which are filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Prov.24:4); and that is the key of experience. We might, for instance, understand the literal meaning of the book of Hosea, have a critical knowledge of the language in which the Holy Ghost originally composed it, explain the ancient or Oriental customs referred to in it; but that would be taking the street-door key to open the cash-box. What we want is the key to understand the spiritual meaning, which, after all, is the only one to do our souls any real good. Now we only understand the spiritual meaning of God's Word by having some experience of that Word in our own hearts; for then we have an unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things, and can penetrate beyond the letter of the Word into its inner core and spirit. Indeed I may say that only so far as we are blessed with some experience of the truth and know divine things by divine teaching, can we enter into any of the heavenly mysteries of God's Word, and find it to be spirit and life to our souls.

Let us then take up the subject where I dropped it this morning, viz., the end of the preceding chapter. The Lord had there said, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early" (chap.5:15). But this chapter opens with Ephraim's words: "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (chap.6:1). "Come, and let us return unto the LORD." We have basely departed from him, but now let us return. "For he hath torn." Now Ephraim sees where the moth came from, and who was the lion; who had torn, and there was none to rescue. "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him" (chap.5:14). The soul sees that its wounding strokes come from the Lord. "He hath torn, and he will heal us." Here is faith springing up into living exercise in the power of God. "He hath smitten;" it was from his hand the blows came; it was he that rent and tore us; and he, and he only, can and will bind us up. From the same hand must come both wound and cure. Ephraim has now got on the right track. There is no more being "broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment" (chap.5:11); no, more going to the Assyrian, or sending to king Jareb; no hiding sin in his bosom, or rolling it as a sweet morsel under the tongue; but some dawning beams of opening day breaking in upon his soul show him the path in which he must walk to find pardon and peace; for he seems to have had a view by faith of the resurrection of Christ. "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (chap. 6:2).

Something like this was felt in some of our souls when the Lord first appeared to us as a suitable Saviour. We felt that we had departed from God; that this was the cause of his hiding his face, and that he would not be found of us till we acknowledged our offences. But when in our affliction we sought him early, there was some view of a risen Christ at the right hand of the Father as the Mediator between God and men. This was the opening of a door of hope. When Christ rose from the dead, the church

mystically rose with him. We are said, therefore, to be risen with Christ (Col. 3:1); to be quickened together with him, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places (Eph. 2:5,6). Ephraim therefore says: "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Then come the words of the test: "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." In opening up these words I shall, with God's help, direct your attention to these three leading points:

I. First, *the condition*. I use the expression reluctantly, but I can find no better. "If we follow on to know the LORD."

II. Secondly, *the promise*. "Then shall we know."

III. Thirdly, *the mode of fulfilment*. "His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain unto the earth."

I. I use the word *condition*, I have already said, with reluctance; but bear in mind, that though I use the word, I do so in a gospel sense. It is true that there are no conditions in the gospel; and yet there are "ifs," which, though not conditional, because the Lord enables us to perform them, are so connected with the promise to which they are attached that they cannot be separated from it. So stands the "if" of our text. "Then shall we know, *if* we follow on." If no following on, no knowing. And yet the Lord must give both will and power to follow on as much as to know.

But now let us consider the spiritual meaning of the words thus conditionally expressed, introduced, and guarded by the "if." "If we follow on to know the LORD." Before the soul can even begin to follow on it must first be put into the right path; and before it can keep on pursuing its course boldly and perseveringly, it must be well assured that it is the right road. If I were to ask my way

to Mitcham, and a person on whom I could depend were to say to me, "All right, Sir; keep on this road; if you follow it, it will bring you there," it implies that I am in the right road, or he would tell me that I was wrong altogether. So when the text says, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD," it shows that we are already in the gospel path. When the Holy Ghost turns us from Mount Sinai, that fiery mount, and plants our feet in the road to Zion, every step is a step forward to heaven, and every step is a good step; for the way is good, the direction good, and the end good. And we have companions in it, according to that word: "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). But we follow on for what? To know the Lord. The Lord said in his intercessory prayer, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Thus the eternal life which the Lord bestows on as many as the Father has given him consists in these two things: 1. To know the only true God; and, 2. To know Jesus Christ whom he has sent. There is, then, no eternal life in a man's bosom, no eternal life reserved for him in the time to come, except he is taught and brought to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ the Son of God. This knowledge is no natural knowledge, no fruit of learning or study, no acquisition of human industry, talent, wisdom, or investigation, but a knowledge arising out of spiritual manifestations to the soul. The Lord, therefore, said to Simon Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). So Paul also speaks: "When it pleased God .... to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15,16). I am satisfied, both from Scripture and my own experience, that there is no true knowledge of God except by some personal manifestation of himself to our soul, nor any saving knowledge of Jesus Christ except by some revelation of him to our hearts. I am at a point here, and so are all who have felt and groaned under the darkness, ignorance, and unbelief of their mind, and had any shining in of the true light of God from

heaven.

In the first leading of the blessed Spirit in the path Zionward, there is some discovery to the soul of the Father. If you look at the words of John in his first epistle, you will find he speaks to fathers, young men, and children: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" (1 John 2:12). The word rendered "little children" here is a different word in the original from that used in verse 13; it is a more general and comprehensive one, as in the last verse of the epistle, and includes all the family of God. But each of these three classes has its distinctive character. "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" (1 John 2:14) that is, Christ, who was "in the beginning" (John 1:1), and "from the beginning" (1 John 1:1). This was the fathers' mark, that they knew the Lord Jesus for themselves. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). To fight, wrestle with, and overcome Satan, was the young men's mark. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13) Here the word means "little children," as small in stature and young in age, and is the same word as the little child whom Jesus called unto him, and set in the midst of the disciples (Matt. 18:2). This then is the little child's mark, that he knows the Father. See the distinction; the little children know the Father, that is God, and the fathers know him from the beginning, that is Jesus Christ. Does not this correspond with what the Lord said to his disciples, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1)? But by knowing the Father here, we must not understand that the little children at first know him as a Father shedding abroad his love in their hearts, so much as they know him as a righteous God. The foundation of that godly fear which is the beginning of wisdom is some personal discovery of God to our souls. If we have not had that, we have not a right fear of God; for only as he reveals himself to our hearts is there a right knowledge of him. But you may say, "How can we see him who is invisible, or know him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto?" How do

you see the sun? By his beams. The sun itself is too bright to look upon. He is revealed by the beams which shine out of him. Is it not so in the early dawn, when the rays of the sun discover his presence? So we see God by a beam of himself.

Every step, then, in the way, is to make us know more of that great God whom we are thus taught to fear. There is a following on, if we know God in this way; for these beams have a guiding light, an attractive influence, and a quickening, enlivening power. But all this time we may have very dim views of God's dear Son: true views, yet faint views; right views, yet feeble views, seeing him in the Word more than in the light of his manifested presence; something breaking in, perhaps, of the true light with sweetness and savour, yet we can hardly tell what it is, or if there is salvation in it. This is what I may call an incipient knowledge of the Son of God. But after a time, it may be, perhaps, a long time of doubt and fear, conviction and trouble, prayer and supplication, there is a blessed revelation of the Son of God to the soul. His glorious Deity, his sacred humanity, his complex Person, are set before the eyes of the mind as clearly as if we saw him with our bodily eyes. And what is the immediate effect? He is at once received into the heart, embraced in the affections, and enthroned in the conscience as Lord and King.

But even after this manifestation of Christ there is still a following on to know the Lord. The soul that has once known something of the Lord is never satisfied but by obtaining clearer, deeper, more spiritual and abiding views of his beauty and blessedness. After such a clear revelation of the Person and work of the Son of God as left no doubt on the mind that we saw him by the eye of faith, we may walk in such thick darkness and bewilderment of soul as to lose all sight, and to our feelings all knowledge of him, so as even to doubt whether there is a God. But, O, how intense sometimes are our desires that he will break through the cloud, and speak a word to our soul. I have stood sometimes under a tree, lifted up my eyes to the Lord, and cried unto him with such earnestness and vehemence to break in on my heart. How at such seasons, we long for him to rend the heavens and come

down and manifest himself to our soul. How at times we seem not to have a shred of religion, not a grain or an atom. Then we have again, such goings up of desire that the Lord would only speak one word, give one look, apply one soft touch. This is all we want. A word from the Lord, some breaking in of the light of his countenance, some manifestation of his presence, some knowledge of and communion with himself, some healing beams, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, this is all our religion. When we have not this, where is all our religion? Gone, fled, vanished. I have none. I don't say I am going into the world, or to give up all my profession and all my hope; but I have no religion; at least nothing that I call religion, unless the Lord is pleased to speak into my poor heart, and make himself known by his almighty power. We have the fear of God, it is true, still there, with faith and a good conscience, for these we must never put away; but as to any felt enjoyment of the things of God, we have no religion to satisfy the heart, or give rest and peace to the soul.

Here, then, is the blessedness of the promise: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." This promise has a very wide bearing, a keen, far-seeing eye, a strong, far-reaching hand. Perhaps you are only just beginning to follow on. You have desires, something more than wishes; for some may wish to be saved who have no strong desires after manifested mercy. You have prayers, you have sighs and cries, tears and groans, often begging of the Lord to appear. You are in the track; you are following on to know the Lord; for that is what you want. You want to know God the Father in the sweet shedding abroad of his love in the soul, God the Son in a revelation of his Person and work, and God the Holy Ghost in his heavenly communion. You are following on, though it may sometimes be through a cloud of darkness, a crowd of fears, a host of devils, and a sea of troubles.

II. But we now come to the second part of our text, *the promise*. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD."

"Then *shall* we know." There is, then, no doubt about it. It is one of the Lord's "I wills," and "Ye shalls!" What fixedness, what

firmness are here! But, if you observe, there is here what is called an ellipsis, that is, a designed omission of some words to complete the sense, and this omission is of the things which we shall know. But may we not fill up this ellipsis by bringing from other parts of the Scripture promises of what things we are made to know by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit? As the apostle speaks: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor.2:12). The things, then, which we shall know are "the things that are freely given to us of God." These are too many to enumerate, for they comprehend every spiritual blessing with which God has blessed us, already blessed us, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. I can only, therefore, name a few of them.

1. The first which I shall name is contained in the words which the Lord spake to those Jews of whom we read that "they believed on him." It is true that their faith was, as the event proved, but a natural and temporary faith; but the Lord's words still stand good to those who believe in him with a spiritual, living, and lasting faith: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). This promise assures them of two things; first, of a *knowledge of the truth*; secondly, of an experience of its *liberating power*. You may often fear that, with all your long profession, you do not know the truth. Your mind is often so dark and confused, and you are from time to time so tossed about, that it seems as if you do not know the truth, that is, rightly and savingly for yourself, and that you never will know it. But you shall. Here is the Lord's own promise for it. It shall be sealed upon your heart by a divine power, and you shall know it by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in your own soul. And you shall also know the sweet liberty of truth, the efficacious power of it in your own bosom, and the giving way of every bond and shackle under its melting influence; for "the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isa.10:27). This is receiving the love of the truth so as to be saved thereby (2 Thess.2:10), and enjoying the blessing of which the psalmist

speaks: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance" (Psa.89:15).

2. But what else shall you know? The *pardon of all your sins*; the blotting out of all your transgressions. There are those here, it may be, that truly fear God, who do not yet know that. You have many hopes and expectations; and sometimes these rise very high, for there is what the apostle calls "the full assurance of hope" (Heb.6:11), as well as "the full assurance of faith" (Heb.10:22). But because you cannot rise up into the sweet assurance of forgiven sin, you often fear that you are wrong altogether. But if you follow on to know the Lord, he will sooner or later speak to you the pardoning word, and say, "Go in peace, for thy sins are forgiven thee" (cf. Mark 2:5-12).

3. But you shall also know *more than you have ever known* of the Lord Jesus Christ. From what you have seen and known of him already, you are following on to know him more. But you have not seen a thousandth part of what he is to those who believe in his name. You shall know his faithfulness to every promise, his suitability to every want and woe, and what he is in all his covenant offices and gracious relationships to all who look unto him. He will bring you to the spot to which he brought Paul: "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). You will thus learn to live a life of faith on the Son of God; and, as Bunyan speaks in his "Grace Abounding", find what it is for him "to stand by you at all turns." You will learn the riches of his grace as superabounding over all the aboundings of your sin; the efficacy of his precious blood to cleanse your conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works; the blessedness of his righteousness to cover your needy, naked soul; and the sweetness of his dying love shed abroad in your heart, with his strength made perfect in your weakness to support you in every trying hour. In fact, what is there which you shall not know? The text seems given to us like a blank cheque, signed by a man of wealth, with permission for us to fill it up with any sum that we

please. Fill up the cheque, then, with as large a sum as your faith can muster courage to do; and when you have done that, you will still fall far short of the intentions of the donor. God will pay it in full, for he will surely keep back from you nothing that is good for you to know.

Follow on, then, follow on to know the Lord. Never be satisfied till you cash the cheque and get the money, and when you have got it, ask for more, and be ever crying, "More faith, more hope, more love, more power, Lord, more vital godliness, more spirituality of mind, more conformity to thine image, more knowledge of thy will and desire to do it, more unfitness for the world, more fitness for heaven." Ever keep following on, and you will find that the more you know of the Lord, his truth will be more and more felt in its preciousness in your soul. It is true that with it you will also know plenty of trials, afflictions, and cutting strokes; for it is through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom, and sufferings and blessings, trials and deliverances, always go hand in hand. The apostle even prayed that he might know "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings" (cf. Phil.3:10); viewing that knowledge as even a greater blessing than to know the power of his resurrection.

But once more consider the words, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD," and do apply them to your own case. I have already said that there is an "if." This "if" stands, so to speak, as an angel at the head of the way, to keep out those who are not following on to know the Lord, and to let in those who are. Now, if you are following on, you have a testimony, not only that the Lord has planted his fear in your heart, but has given you a gracious promise to hold you up in the strait and narrow way. Keep firmly, then, in the way in which he has planted your footsteps. Do not listen to erroneous men. Deal with them as the church did at Ephesus, to whom the Lord testifies, "I know .... how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev.2:2). Read no erroneous books, which, in our days, so awfully abound. Keep close to truth, close

to conscience, close to a preached gospel; close to the things which God has shown you, and of which you have felt the savour and the power. Be this ever the desire of your soul, to know the Lord in the sweet manifestations of his Person and work, his blood and love, and he will reveal to you everything which shall be for your good and his glory.

III. But I now come to our last and third point, the *mode of the fulfilment* of the promise, and, indeed, I ought to add, the *certainty of its execution*. We may look at the last point first. I. Observe how the execution of the promise is spoken of as the Lord's "going forth," and that this going forth is compared to two things: First, it is prepared as the morning; and secondly, he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. Is not the morning "prepared?" Before the morning comes, say, when you lie down at night, have you any doubt whether to-morrow's sun will rise? Do you not close your eyes in sleep with a certain persuasion that the sun will rise at its due hour to give light upon the earth, and to call you to your daily work? The going forth of Jesus for the salvation of his people is as certain is the rising of to-morrow's sun. As sure as the morning will come to-morrow, so surely will Jesus go forth according to the promise of our text. And is there not something sweet as well as significant in the word "prepared?" There is a preparation for the sun to rise; and that not only that he may come out of his chamber as a bridegroom, and rejoice as a strong man to run a race, but as issuing out of preceding darkness, and making all things light before him. How the morning springs out of the shades of night! Is it not always night before morning? We have not always daylight with us. What a dark night of sorrow and trouble often precedes God's morning; darker than the night which precedes the rising of the natural sun. How often mists and fogs also obscure the sun when he begins to rise. Yet it is the morning, and they will be soon dispersed. So the Lord will as certainly come to manifest himself to your soul if you are following on. But does not the morning come very gradually? But before the sun rises, a preparation is made for his appearing. His beams and rays, while he himself is still below the horizon, streak

and lace the eastern sky as harbingers of his coming. And sometimes the morning star glitters like a diamond in the east, heralding his approach and proclaiming his speedy appearance. So it is often in grace; I will not say always, for sometimes the Sun of righteousness bursts at once out of the dark shades of night. But often, if not usually, the Lord's going forth in grace is prepared as the morning in nature. There are beams and rays of the coming morning before the Sun himself rises upon the soul; some gracious breaking in of coming mercy, some dawnings of hope, some expectations of manifested salvation; "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psa.62:5); some good reading, hearing, or praying times; some glimpses, glances, and transient sights of the King in his beauty, enabling the heart to feel and the tongue to say, "O Lord, how precious art thou to my soul." All these preparations precede and herald the Bridegroom coming out of his chamber. And sometimes spiritually there shines forth, when the day dawns, the morning star, "the day star" spoken of in Peter as arising in the heart (2 Pet.1:19); which we may, perhaps, understand as some promise applied to the soul with special unction and power as a prophecy of coming good. But in due time the Sun himself comes in a blessed revelation of Christ to the soul; a gracious manifestation of the Son of God in the glory of his Person, and the efficacy of his blood, righteousness, and finished work. Thus "his going forth is prepared as the morning." How certain, O how blessed is this promise to every waiting, expecting, longing, and desiring soul, which can find neither rest nor peace until the Lord himself appears and personally manifests himself as all its salvation and all its desire.

2. But we have another figure given to us in our text scarcely inferior in certainty, or in the fulness of its blessing: "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." In Palestine there were but two seasons in the year when rain fell. It fell first in the autumn, about the equinox; that is, the latter part of September and the beginning of October. I say "first fell" because the civil year of the Jews began in the autumn, in the month Tisri, corresponding to the last half of our September,

and the first half of our October. This rain, therefore, is called the former or early rain. Until that fell, from the hardness of the soil, baked by the burning summer sun, they could not plough the ground to receive the seed. But the frequent showers of this former or early rain, for it began with gentle showers, broke down the hard clods, and the seed being then committed to the furrow, the same rain, falling more copiously, made it germinate and grow. It was then, therefore, they sowed their wheat and barley. Then there came a cold winter, with showers of hail and snow. But about the end of March and through April rain fell again, called "the latter rain," as coming later in the year, which prepared the corn for the early harvest, which, for barley, was about the Passover, when they presented the first-fruits of the barley harvest. The wheat, ripening later, was not cut till near Pentecost, or fifty days afterwards, when the first-fruits of the wheat harvest were presented at that feast, which fell about the middle of May. I have explained these things to throw light upon the figure here given us of "the latter and former rain." Now these two seasons of rain were so certain in the Holy Land that they might be looked for as certainly as the rising of the sun; for, indeed, without them the land could not have been cultivated, and the people would have died of famine.

But now for the spiritual meaning of this figure of the latter and former rain. Two things are implied in it; first, *Certainty*; secondly, *Blessing*.

First, then, *Certainly*. "He *shall* come unto us as the rain." Do we not see certainty here? But for its certainty of fulfilment, where would be the promise as a promise? How could it be one of "*all* the promises of God" which in Christ "*are yea and in him Amen*" (2 Cor.1:20), if it were not to be certainly fulfilled? Hosea spoke to a people who were certain that these rains would come in their appointed season. The very life of the nation depended upon them. But even if, for the wickedness of man, the Lord should, as Solomon speaks, "shut up the heaven, that there should be no rain," or even if the Lord carried out in nature his declaration by the prophet: "And also I have withholden the rain from you, when

there were yet three months to the harvest" (Amos 4:7), yet he will not deal so with his people in grace.

But let us now look at the *blessedness* of the promise, and see how far we may find in it a spiritual description of the Lord's gracious dealings. May we not, then, compare the first work of grace upon the heart, the softening influences of the blessed Spirit in the soul, with the former or early rain? Is not some softening influence needed to break the hard heart and make it tender, that there maybe a tilth for the seed of the Word to lodge in, that it may germinate and grow, and not perish under the clods? "God," says Job, "maketh my heart soft" (Job 23:16); and the Lord's own word to Josiah was, "Because thine heart was tender" (2 Kings 22:19). Is not this softness and tenderness also what is intimated by the prophet? "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezek.36:16). But in the east, as I have observed, frequent showers precede the fuller and more copious rainfall sufficient to soften the clods for the plough, and yet hardly enough to make the seed spring up and grow. So in grace. The Lord's people have not at first usually copious showers. They have sprinklings and waterings sufficient to soften the heart, and to allow, so to speak, room for the plough of conviction to make a deep furrow and prepare a suitable seedbed for the Word of life to fall into and grow in. But when Christ is revealed to the soul, the heart is broken under a sight and sense of his bleeding, dying love; and godly sorrow for sin with real contrition breaks the heart all to pieces. This may be called the former rain in its more copious showers, for then the truth takes deep root downwards and springs forth upwards. The hard clods have been already broken under kindly showers and gracious convictions. But the fulness of the former rain is not yet come. It is often in grace as in nature. Farmers will sometimes say, "This little rain is not enough after such a long dry season. We want a day's rain, at least, a good soaking rain, to go down into the depth of the soil." So spiritually. The first sprinklings and little showers of heavenly grace are enough to soften the hard clods; but they do not go deep enough; something still is wanting for the Word of life to take root and bear fruit. Now, this seems to

be when the heart is softened and melted by a gracious discovery of the Lord Jesus to the soul; for then the truth is so commended to the conscience, and brought into the heart, that it strikes a root into the innermost affections, called, in Scripture, receiving the love of the truth (2 Thess.2:10).

Now, look at these two things, that you may judge for yourself whether you have had the early or former rain. View it in its first sprinklings, and view it in its more copious outpourings. Have you had your heart softened so that the plough of conviction has drawn a furrow in it? This is good, for it is the first falling of the former rain. Then look if you have had the fuller shower, in some discovery or manifestation of the blessed Lord. But you may depend upon it that great blessings are very rare. There are dews which keep the soul alive, as in the Holy Land the heavy dews kept vegetation alive during the interval of the two seasons of rain. "I will be as the dew unto Israel" (Hosea 14:5). "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Sol.5:2). But a copious rainfall, a thorough blessing, is only at certain seasons; and we may be truly thankful if we can lay our hand upon one or two memorable spots in our experience, and believe that at such and such a time we had a real soul-blessing from God.

But I now come to "the latter rain," which, though put first in our text was called latter because it fell after the other, and, as I before intimated, in the early spring. I observed, also, that this rain was to prepare for the harvest, enabling the ground to put forth its strength and fill the ear with corn, that it might not be shrivelled with drought, but well filled with the fat of the wheat. May we not apply this to the experience of a soul in its latter stages? When the Lord is going to take one of his dear people home to himself, he often gives him a good copious shower of the latter rain to ripen him for the harvest. How often do we find that when a saint of God comes to his dying bed, the Lord breaks in upon his soul with his love and mercy. Does not this seem to be the last showers which fall upon the soul to make it ripe for the sickle of death? And is it not the desire of your soul to have upon

your deathbed those manifestations of the love and mercy of God which will carry you happily through the dark valley of the shadow of death, that, as has been said, you may then have nothing to do but die? But though I have thus opened and explained the figure, I by no means wish to confine to it the free grace of the gospel. This would be to limit that which is unlimited, and to cramp that which is free. As a figure, it beautifully represents the certainty and blessedness of the gracious comings of Christ; but we must not think that there are no comings of his power and presence but those which strictly correspond with the figure. A figure at best is but a figure, and must not be strained beyond its due place among other figures; as if, like Aaron's rod, this one figure swallowed up all the rest. Do not think that because the latter and the former rain are spoken of, as I have explained, according to the figure, that there are no other showers but those of the former and latter rain. There are, as in our own climate, showers at other besides these set and peculiar times. At any rate, there are often little sprinklings and gentle bedewings where there are no copious showers. If you get a good hearing-time under a sermon, a sweet visitation on your knees, a blessed opening up of God's truth to your soul, a softening and melting of heart by some unexpected glimpse or glance of the Lord in his blessedness and beauty, highly prize them. These may be considered by some small things, scarcely worth notice; but "who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech.4:10). Is any thing small that comes from God, or that leads to him? Look for and expect great things; but prize small things. Only mind that, whether great or small, they are real. Look at the things, which you experience in a way of mercy and grace, as narrowly as a jeweller looks at stones which are brought to him by a stranger for him to buy, as if diamonds or rubies. He does not take it for certain that they are real jewels, because they are offered him as such. He carefully examines them before he pronounces them to be diamonds, and wants also to know whether they were honestly come by. Deal with your mercies and blessings as he does, not only to examine them carefully, but after he has ascertained their reality. They all are precious; but they are not all equally precious. The larger, clearer, and brighter are more valuable than

the smaller and less brilliant. When you get a blessing, be it small or great, do you not often say, "Is it real, Lord? Is it truly of God?" You may have feelings of sorrow or joy, sorrow for sin, or joy in the Lord; but are those feelings wrought in your soul by the Holy Ghost? You may have various marks and evidences of divine life; but have you a divine warrant to believe that they are of God? The reality of your religion must be tried one day; try it now. If a man has a reality in him, it will stand the keenest trial.

I remember once going to the Bank of England to get a note cashed. When I presented it to the clerk, he first looked at me hard in the face, I suppose to see whether I had a roguish appearance, and next he compared my note with a list which hung by his side, to see, I suppose, whether mine was one that was forged, or of which payment had been stopped. I did not flinch. I knew the note was good. But suppose it had been forged or payment of it stopped; the next thing might have been for a bank porter to take me by the shoulder, or a policeman to carry me before the Lord Mayor. So you need not be afraid of a searching ministry, if it searches the very core of your heart. Men of God do not stand up to flatter people, or pay with solid cash the forged or stolen notes of mere professors. They would do everything, indeed, to encourage God's family; that is their work and office; but they cannot and will not stand in the name of God and deceive people, be they sinners or saints; for of all deceivers a pulpit deceiver is the worst. We have heard much lately of burglars breaking into shops of watchmakers and carrying off much valuable property; but even their guilt seems less than that of robbing and plundering the souls of men. But I must pause. As the Lord's ministers cannot be deceivers, so the Lord's people cannot be deceived. And may I not add that whatever ministers and people be, or turn out to be, he never can, he never will, deceive his people, who has declared that his going forth is prepared as the morning; and that he will come unto them as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

## The Fool: His Character, Affliction, and Deliverance

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 27, 1851

"Fools, because of their transgression, 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." Psalm 107:17-20

The dealings of God with the souls of his people are similar, yet diversified; similar in substance, diversified in particulars. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" "When he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." These, and many other texts of a similar kind, point to the uniformity of God's teachings and dealings with the soul. And yet, if we were to converse with God's people, one by one, we should find, that though in many points there was in their experience a great similarity, yet in others there would be a great diversity. The Apostle Paul, speaking of the gifts of the blessed Spirit (and in these gifts we may include also his graces) mentions this similarity and diversity. "Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all." Again: "But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit (*similarity*), dividing to every man severally as he will" (*diversity*). (1 Cor. 12:4-6, 11.)

Psalm 107 is an epitome of Christian experience; an abstract, as it were, of the gracious dealings of God with the soul. And did time and opportunity permit us to run through the leading points of that Psalm, we should find these two features stamped upon

it—*diversity* of experience in each case; with *similarity* in four things—distress, cry, deliverance, praise.

In this epitome of Christian experience, Psalm 107, four characters stand prominently forth, which we may thus briefly characterise—the *Wanderer*, the *Rebel*, the *Fool*, and the *Mariner*.

I shall with God's blessing this morning, take up the character of the "fool;" and, in looking at his experience as drawn by the pen of inspiration, I shall hope to consider,

I.—*First*, his *character*.

II.—*Secondly*, his *affliction*, with its *cause* and *consequences*.

III.—*Thirdly*, his *cry*.

IV.—*Fourthly*, his *deliverance*.

I.—We are forbidden to call one another "fools," but there is no Scripture against calling ourselves "fools." If I am not mistaken, there are those here (at least I know one) who have called themselves fools, and the worst of fools, a thousand times over, and sometimes many times a day. If, then, we have called ourselves "fools," you will not be offended if the blessed Spirit call you the same. It is only bearing his witness to what you have often borne against yourself.

*"Fools,"* says our text, *"because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted."*

What is a "fool?" naturally, I mean. He is one who has not the least regard for his own interest, whom everybody can gull and deceive; who will barter gold and silver for sticks and stones; whom his best friends cannot manage, and whom his enemies can securely deride and ridicule. Such is a fool. And as there are fools naturally, so there are fools spiritually; and I may justly say, far greater fools spiritually, than the greatest fool that ever lived naturally.

But let us see, by a little closer examination, how far this portrait corresponds to what many a child of God feels himself to have been or to be.

Now you would not think that if the Lord had quickened a man's soul into spiritual life, planted his fear in the heart, and made him sensible of the nature of sin, and given him repentance and godly sorrow for it; taught him to feel how dreadful and detestable all evil is; brought him to the feet of Christ: revealed to him the love of the Saviour, and manifested a sense of mercy and goodness to his soul; you would not think that after the Lord had done thus much for him, he could ever trifle with, or in any way indulge or caress this monster, sin, which had been shewn to him in so hideous a light. And yet this is what this fool does. He can trifle in his imagination with sin, though he has seen what a detestable thing it is; he can, in his wickedness, indulge that evil which caused the dear Lamb of God such acute sorrow, and has at times caused his own soul sorrow also.

Again. Is not God our only Friend? Where shall we find such another? If he be our Friend, need we care for any foe? If he be our foe, of what value is any friend? But if you had a friend who had been heaping benefit after benefit upon you, and you should do everything to offend, to grieve, to distress, to pour contempt upon him, and if possible to alienate all his regard and affection from you, would not this be the height of folly? Yet who can say he is not guilty of this folly before God? Who can say he has not thus provoked his best, his only Friend, that Friend without whose friendship all is misery, and wretchedness, and woe? Who dare say that he has not grieved, offended, slighted, and neglected this Friend that sticketh closer than a brother? And for what? for what? For some vain gratification; for some foolish lust; for some base desire; for something which is not worth having when we have got it; for something from which our eyes should be turned away rather than looked upon; for something evil which ought to be detested and abhorred. And yet, who that knows himself, the workings of sin in his fallen nature, and what a depraved

imagination can do—who is not sensible that all this he has done, and perhaps is doing, daily? "Hast thou not procured this to thyself?" says the Lord to his sinning Israel. Who dares say he has not by his sins; his carnality, pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, unbelief, foolishness, and rebelliousness, procured to himself many things that have grieved and distressed his soul? I do not believe that there is one child of God exempt who knows himself. If indeed we take no notice of the sin that dwelleth in us; if we pass all by as a thing of nought, and pay no regard to our thoughts, desires, words, and actions; if we keep evil at arm's length, and take our stand on our own righteousness and holiness, we may refuse to believe that we are such vile sinners. But if we are compelled to look within, and painfully feel that sin is an indweller, a lodger, whom we are obliged to harbour; a serpent that will creep in and nestle whether we will or not; a thief that will break through and steal, and whom no bolt nor bar can keep out; a traitor in the garrison who will work by force or fraud, and against whom no resolution of ours has any avail; if such be our inward experience and conviction, I believe there is not a man or woman here who will not confess "guilty, guilty; unclean, unclean!" 'Lord I am that fool!'

II.—I pass on to the *affliction* of the "fool." Does the Lord pass him by, and let him go on unchecked in his foolishness? "Folly," we read, "is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Prov. 22:15.)

i. The cause of affliction is *sin*. "Fools," we read, "*because* of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities are afflicted." The Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. We bring affliction upon ourselves; we procure suffering by our own transgressions, and by our own iniquities. But you will say, perhaps, these are very strong words,—"*transgression and iniquities.*" I grant their strength, but they are not one whit, according to my feelings, too strong. Must not the Psalmist, you will perhaps say, be speaking here of some very black and base transgressors, some out-of-the-way characters? Surely he was not fixing his eye upon any whose lives were consistent. He must

have been dipping his brush into very black colours in order to depict some enormous backsliders. If the Lord should ever take the veil of unbelief and self-deception off your heart, and give you one little peep, one transient glimpse into the chambers of imagery, you will not find these words too strong. It is from want of seeing what sin is, feeling its burden, knowing its guilt, and sorrowing under its smart, that men think only this, or the other outward thing is "transgression" or "iniquity." Thoughts, looks, words, desires, imaginations—are not all these evil? Are not these sinful? Are not these in the sight of God "transgressions and iniquities?" They are. The Lord tells us, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." "The thought of foolishness is sin." Iniquities and transgressions are inward as well as outward. I know not your personal sins; but there is One in heaven that knows them wholly, and one on earth, his vicegerent in the heart, that knows them partially. Let only that witness speak, let only conscience open the pages of that long and black catalogue, let sin be seen and felt as sin, and I believe you will confess there are many "transgressions," many "iniquities;" more or less daily, daily transgressions, hourly, hourly iniquities, transacting in the chambers of imagery. Now in order to shew us these, the Lord has to afflict us. It is usually in the furnace of affliction that we come to see the depths of the fall, to learn the nature of sin, and to have some discovery of ourselves as sinners. Give a man health, strength, good spirits, and abundance of worldly prosperity, what a thick evil soon covers his heart! Sin is not seen as sin; carnality and self-indulgence are drunk down like water; one folly after another is played with, each opening a way for the next, and binding on a fresh cord, till the yoke of transgressions is wreathed round the neck. Now what is to be done with this "fool?" Is he to be given up? No. "How shall I give thee up Ephraim?" But he must be corrected in measure, and not left altogether unpunished. Hence the furnace.

When, then, the Lord puts the soul into the furnace of affliction, things before hidden, passed over in the whirl of business or the flurry of carnality, are discovered. Conscience first brings to light

one sin, and then another, till the sum appears innumerable and the prospect indeed is dark and gloomy. For with the affliction comes a sense of God's displeasure; and the poor fool reflects with sadness and remorse on his folly in bartering a sense of God's approbation for something that has perished in the using.

ii. But the *consequence* is twofold. 1. "*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;*" 2. "*they draw near unto the gates of death.*"

1. "All manner of meat" their soul abhorreth. What meat is this? Not merely meat *naturally*, but also meat *spiritually*; not only the food of the carnal mind, but the food of the spiritual mind—the things of the spirit, as well as of the flesh. The "fool" until he is afflicted and humbled, has gone out in desire after many foolish and hurtful lusts; has indulged in many things that would be hated and shunned under some trouble, or under warm impressions of grace; and whilst in this foolish course could eat "all manner of meat." His natural meals were eaten with relish, through health and strength; and the carnal mind, not being held in due check, nor crucified, as it should have been, and denied, could and did much feed upon trash. But let the Lord afflict him, and put him in the furnace, and there begin to take away the dross, he begins to abhor "all manner of meat." Nothing satisfies him now. How pleased he was with his business; how his thoughts settled down on the shop or farm; his speculative mind could run in to various imaginary channels of advantage. Trade was to be increased in this direction, or profit gained in the other; and whatever check conscience might interpose, there was a secret power that overbore the opposition. But let the Lord afflict him in body or mind, and bring his soul down into trouble, what then is "all manner of meat?" His shop is now a burden; his business a trouble; his farm or his employment only wearisome work. "All manner of meat," which his carnal mind at one time so greedily fed upon, he now learns to abhor. There is no gratification to be found in anything. A dark pall of gloom and melancholy is drawn over the world. The things of time and sense fade out of his sight; and he sees that vanity and vexation of spirit, misery and sorrow are stamped upon all earthly pursuits.

But not only does he abhor "all manner of meat" in a *natural* sense, but even he abhorreth "all manner of meat" in a *spiritual* sense; that is, his soul's disease makes him turn away from the very food that is its only remedy. Do you always love religion? Do you always delight in your Bible? Do you always come with eagerness to the throne of grace? Do you always love secret meditation and Christian conversation? And do you always relish spiritual-mindedness, and to have your affections placed on things above? Come, be honest with yourselves. No disinclination ever for the word of God? No unwillingness ever to hear the word of truth? No idle excuse made on account of the weather or the fatigue of business? No excuse not to go to a throne of grace? No disinclination to take up the cross? No aversion to the company of the spiritually-minded? No dislike to the solemn realities of the things of God? What? Is the enmity of your carnal mind all covered up? Is the veil of self-deception so drawn over what you are as a fallen sinner that it never peeps forth? O, if you know yourselves, you will be convinced that the carnal mind is and ever will be enmity against God, and that the carnal mind manifests its enmity by its disinclination to spiritual things.

Here, then, is the "fool." When he is struck, as it were, with soul sickness, has to reap the bitter reward of his folly, and has to mourn over what he has been and is, and the state of things he has brought himself into, he not only abhors "all manner of meat" naturally, but he finds his soul sunk into such carnality and death that it abhors all manner of spiritual meat; that he has not that delight in the word of God, nor that inclination to a throne of grace, nor that love after spiritual things, nor that relish in heavenly employments which he had in times past when the candle of the Lord shone upon him, and by his light he walked through darkness.

2. The next consequence is, that he "*draws near unto the gates of death.*" This seems to be the worst symptom of his malady. There has been a time perhaps when the Lord afflicted him in body, or in circumstances, or in family, and it was borne with

resignation and calmness, for the sweet consolations of the Lord comforted his soul and upheld his spirit. But O to be afflicted in various ways, and then not to have the presence of the Lord; not to enjoy the sweet consolations of his Spirit; not to have an appetite for the Word of God; not to feed upon heavenly meat; not to drink in the milk of the promises; not to love a throne of grace; and not to feel a sweet union with the people of God—to be afflicted in body, soul, or circumstances, and yet to have the mind still carnal unto death—this it is that most deeply aggravates the affliction. The affliction in itself is hard to bear; but the denial of the Lord's presence and a sense of his displeasure makes it a thousand times worse; and when to all this is added, "All these things have I procured to myself;" this makes the knife cut deep. It is almost as if conscience laid hold of the haft when in the hand of God, and drove it in up to the hilt. 'My worldly-mindedness, my pride, my covetousness, my carnality, my neglect of divine things, my rebelliousness, and recklessness, the snares I have been entangled in, and my various besetments'—'O,' says the fool, 'this it is which has provoked the Lord to afflict me sore; and to make the affliction yet heavier, to withdraw his presence, and leave me, fool that I am, to reap the fruit of my own devises!'

Thus he draws near to the gates of death in his feelings spiritually, and, it may be, from an afflicted body naturally. As death seems to approach, he is almost overwhelmed with gloomy fears, yet knows not how to escape from the burdens and weights which so heavily oppress him.

Here, then, he is, as low as a poor soul can well be—in a pitiable plight, in a very sad and miserable condition. He can now say with Hart, and he never penned a truer verse:—

"O what a fool have I been made,  
Or rather made myself!  
That mariner's mad part I play'd  
Who sees, yet strikes the shelf."

III.—Well, is it all over? Is there no hope? Is all remedy gone? Must he sink away into despair and die? Shall Satan, with a yell of triumph, flourish his bleeding sword over the slaughtered victim? He would, he must, if God were not rich in grace, and abundant in mercy and goodness. We therefore find, that the Lord does not leave him in this pitiable case and miserable condition, but raises up and draws forth *a cry* in his soul. This is a blessed evidence of the life of God within, which all his folly could not utterly extinguish, and which all the miserable condition in which he is cannot wholly drown.

*"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble."* A cry in the still depths of the soul! The blessed Spirit touches his heart with sacred grief and holy compunction; dissolves the eyes: takes away that hardness of spirit into which his folly had cast him; melts, moves, and stirs up the soul; raises up, and draws forth that cry which enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Some persons think that a Christian never can sink so low as not to feel a cry in his soul. I believe he may indeed. But I will appeal to a better authority than mine, which is, Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress." We find Christian there shut up in the castle of Giant Despair. But it was only *after* he had been there a certain period that he and his fellow-prisoner began to cry, and sigh, and pray unto the Lord. Despair had stunned the cry in their soul before: it was only about midnight that they began to pray. So when this poor "fool" gets into trouble, such a flood of despairing thoughts rushes into his mind, and he seems so shut up in hardness of soul, that there is little or no cry to God in his heart.

But the Lord does not leave him. There is an attempt at a cry; but still the heart is hard. There is not yet that compunction, that grief, that godly sorrow, that tenderness, that pouring out of the soul—all which is implied in the expression "cry." But when the Lord touches his heart with his gracious finger, so as to melt him down into real contrition, penitence, and sorrow for his folly, then with that spirit of compunction comes the spirit of grace and supplication; and then he cries, and that to a purpose. He cries, because he knows that none but the Lord can do him any good.

He does not want man, nor the help of man. He knows that none but God can bless his soul. *He* must appear; *he* must help; *he* must deliver; *he* must bring him out into the enjoyment of his presence. Like Hezekiah, he turns his face to the wall, away from his courtiers, away from his flatterers, away from his friends, and looks only, wholly, and solely to the Lord. Or as poor Jonah, when he was in the belly of hell, with the weeds wrapped round his head, "Yet," he says, "I will look again toward thy holy temple." Jonah did not cry when he was asleep in the sides of the ship, nor when he was first thrown over-board. The weeds—fit emblem of his filth and folly—were first to be wrapped round his head, and he was to sink into the belly of hell. But when the Lord at last touched his heart with his gracious finger, then came the expiring cry, and the last longing, lingering look; and that cry, and that look came up into the ears and before the eyes of the Lord. Prayer, true prayer, lies deep in the soul. It is at the bottom of a man's heart; and therefore needs heavy weights and burdens to press out those few drops of real supplication that lie low down in its hidden depths. "Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble."

IV.—But is this cry heard? Yes. "*He sent his word and healed them and delivered them from their destructions.*" He sent his word; nothing else would do. The poor "fool" might have examined his evidences, raked them together, and scraped them up; but O, they are all black and beclouded. Or he may have looked to the dealings of God with his soul in times past; but such a cloud of obscurity rests upon them that he cannot gather anything satisfactory out of them. His religion, and his profession of it, seem at times his greatest condemnation. Then what comfort can he get from it? In this pitiable plight, it is only a word from God that can settle the matter. All that friends may say is of no avail; God must decide the case. And he does decide it in his own time and way by sending his word, applying his truth, bringing home some sweet, and precious promise, and making the word of his grace to drop like the rain, distil like the dew, and fall with a divine weight and power into the soul. Now till this is the case, he cannot believe for himself what God says; he cannot mix faith with any promise however suitable, or any passage of Scripture however encouraging. But directly the Lord sends his

word, and brings it home with heavenly power to the heart, immediately faith springs up and lays hold of the truth which God applies. As faith thus lays hold of the word, the word is brought into the soul. It penetrates at once into every corner of the heart; and as it diffuses itself, melts it, dissolves it, makes a way, and opens a channel for the mercy and grace of God to flow into.

What an effect a word from God can produce! Be it in reading, in hearing, on the knees, or in secret meditation; when a word drops from the Lord's mouth with any divine power into the soul, what a change it produces! And nothing but this divine power can ever bring the "fool" out of his miserable condition! When this comes, it does the work in a moment; it heals all the wounds which sin has made, and repairs all the breaches in the conscience that folly has produced. One word from God heals them all. The Lord does not come as it were with plasters to heal first one sore and then another. He heals now as in the days of his flesh. When he healed then, he healed fully, at once, completely. The earthly doctor heals by degrees; he puts a plaster on one sore, and a liniment on another; and heals one by one. But when the Lord heals, it is done in a moment. The balm of Gilead flows over all the wounds, heals them up, and makes them perfectly whole. It is then with the soul as with the woman with the issue of blood; "she felt in her body she was healed of that plague." And this is healing. Any testimony from God, really from God, does it in a moment. If you can get but one word from God into your soul to make you believe you are a child of God, and interested in his pardoning love and mercy, every wound, though there be a million, yes, every wound will be healed instantaneously. This is the only healing worth having. To be healed by evidences is like being healed by plasters. You want an evidence here, and an evidence there, as a man that has his body full of sores wants a plaster upon every wound. One word from God is the real panacea, the true, the only "heal-all;" and Jesus (Jehovah-rophi, "the Lord my healer") the only true, infallible Physician. Would you be healed completely, you must look to the Lord, and not to man; be a Hezekiah, not an Asa.

Two blessed *consequences* follow. 1. "*He saved them out of their distresses.*" The word of the Lord does three things; it heals, it saves, it delivers. "He saved them out of their distresses." Not *in* their distresses; but *out* of them. He lifted them up and out. And this is the only way to be saved out of our distresses—to be lifted out of them into the bosom of God. Just as a man fallen into a deep pit is not delivered whilst he is in the pit, but by being brought out; so when the Lord saves by some application of his precious truth to the soul, he brings it out of distress into his own bosom, into an enjoyment of his presence and mercy, and of a full, complete salvation. 2. "*He delivered them from their destructions.*" O! how many things there are even to those who have the grace of God, which would, but for sovereign mercy, prove their destruction! Lawful things but for the grace of God might prove their destruction. Your shop, your business, your farm, your family, your worldly occupation, all might be your destruction but for the goodness and grace of God. But consider, besides, your temptations, snares, besetments, the lusts of the flesh, the pride of your heart, the carnality of your mind, would not all these things be your destruction but for the grace of God? John Bunyan says, "One leak will sink a ship; and one sin will destroy a sinner"—that is, one master sin. And who is there that has not some temptation, some besetment, some snare, some evil perpetually at work? Who is not, more or less, in the sieve of some powerful temptation which would prove, but for the grace of God, his destruction; and, as far as he could do it, has already destroyed his soul? "O Ephraim, thou hast destroyed thyself!" not 'Ephraim, if thou do not take very great care, thou wilt by and by destroy thyself;' but, "O Ephraim, thou hast destroyed thyself" already! And so have we destroyed our souls over and over again. Here is this temptation, this snare, this besetment, this trap of the devil—all ready to entangle our feet, and would prove again, and again, and again our destruction; ruin body and soul, and sweep us into hell without remedy, if the Lord did not interfere and interpose.

Here, then, is the "fool"—having destroyed his soul. All we can do (it seems an awful thing to say, but I believe it is true) is to damn

our own souls; that is all we can by nature do. And what God has to keep us from is, to keep us from damning ourselves. For our heart is so vile, our nature so corrupt; we are so bent upon backsliding, so deadly intent upon our idols, that God has to hold us from hurling our own souls to the bottomless pit.

How manly are our "destructions." And these "destructions" are like poison. We sip, and sip, and sip, not knowing there is poison in the draught. Its sweetness hides its venom. Arsenic is in every glass; the table is spread with wine; and to drink is to die. See how "the wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps!" Look at our self-righteousness and pharisaic pride; is not that sufficient to destroy? Look at our carnality and worldly-mindedness, with all our reckless and vain thoughts; are not these sufficient to destroy? Look at our unbelief and infidelity; is not that sufficient to destroy? Look at the base lusts and sensual appetites; is there not enough poison of this nature in our heart to send a world to perdition? Look at the workings of despondency and despair; are not these sufficient to destroy? Watch the movements of our heart in the various circumstances of life. Is not there a snare in everything? In business, in our occupation, at home, abroad, wherever we go, in whatsoever company we fall, is not some secret snare hidden? And would not that entangle and destroy our souls but for the sovereign grace and mercy of God? A man does not know himself, nor the evil of sin, nor the wickedness of the human heart, nor the depth of the fall, who does not see and feel he has over and over again been entangled in things, which but for the grace of God would have been his eternal destruction. If he were to say he had not, I would not believe him, for I should know he either deceived himself or wished to deceive me; in other words, was an Antinomian, a Pharisee, or a hypocrite. For sure I am, if any one is acquainted with the depth of the fall, the wickedness and weakness of our Adam nature, and what a man can think, say, and do, when not upheld by the grace of God, he will say, 'but for the grace of God I should again and again have rushed upon my own destruction.'

Then do not think me very hard this morning, if I have been

calling you all "fools." I put myself into the catalogue. He that stands in the pulpit, and they that sit in the pew, all bear the same name, for they have the same nature. We are all "fools," for folly is bound up in our hearts. If we possess one particle of the grace of God, or one grain of heavenly wisdom, we shall say, 'Lord, I have been, am, shall be to my dying day a "fool," if thou do not give me wisdom, and keep me every moment of my life; aye, keep me as the apple of thine eye.'

Then you need not think yourself a very singular being as we sometimes do think ourselves, nor a very out-of-the-way wretch, since there are other "fools" in the world beside yourself. And if you are the character as traced here by the pen of inspiration, there maybe something in it to lift up your head, and encourage you to believe there is something still of the good work of God upon your soul. Christ is our wisdom; and as we feel our folly, it may by his grace make us, perhaps, more cautious for the future. The burnt child dreads the fire; and if entangled in this or that snare, we learn to rue the consequences, it may produce a holy watchfulness. He is a wise man who knows himself to be a fool. The greatest is he that does not know his own folly. Such an one resembles certain very clever personages, whom we used to meet with in the world. O, they knew everything; nobody could instruct them. They had not wisdom enough to see their own ignorance. So in grace. He is a wise man who knows himself to be a fool. It is not every professor of Calvinism who has got as far as this. If a sense of our own folly makes us prize that wisdom and teaching which comes from above, it may not be our worst lesson. We may have had to bitterly rue our folly; but if it has brought down our pride and self-righteousness, made us hate and abhor ourselves in our own eyes, and opened a way for the free manifestations of God's superabounding grace, mercy, and truth, it may have been for our spiritual good, at any rate, it is better than being a "fool" and not knowing it. There are two kinds of fools; one that does not know his own folly, and he is the worst of fools; and there is another that does know it, and he is next door to becoming a wise man; for the deeper he sinks in a sense of his own folly, the higher he will rise into an apprehension of Christ as

of God "made unto us *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

## Four Links in the Chain of Grace

Preached at Trinity Chapel, Trinity St., Southwark, on Thursday Evening, August 1, 1850

"These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." Psalm 106:27, 28, 29, 30

Jehovah is the God of nature, the God of providence, and the God of grace. In these three distinct departments, as regards his general government, there exists a striking analogy. The analogy is this: the existence and intermixture of good and evil in each, with general good as the result of the whole. Let me explain my meaning a little in detail.

In *nature* we see darkness and light, winter and summer, seasons barren and fruitful, creatures deformed and beautiful, animals noxious and useful; and yet good educed and evolved out of creation as it at present stands. Night and day, winter and summer, sun and storm, all work together to produce as the result a general benefit to the inhabitants of the earth.

In *providence*, we see sickness, health; adversity, prosperity; poverty, wealth, continually intermixed, and often succeeding each other; and yet, out of this strange intermixture good evolved to the objects of God's mercy.

And when we come to the department of *grace*, we view the same analogy. We see sorrow, joy; darkness, light; death, life; conviction, consolation; hidings of God's face, manifestations of mercy; despondency, hope, unbelief, faith; enmity, love—*good* and *evil* in the department of grace, as well as that of nature and of providence; and yet, all in a mysterious manner working

together for good to those who love God.

Living, as we do, in a fallen world, there exists a necessity that there should be this good and evil. If there were no evil, it would not be a fallen world; if there were no good, God would cease to be the governor of it. But if evil so prevailed as to overcome good, God would be thrust out of his own sovereignty, and Satan would successfully usurp his throne.

These remarks may perhaps throw some little light upon the passage before us, inasmuch as the words taken literally seem rather to refer to the works of creation and providence than to the work of grace. For the Psalm dwells much upon the glory of God in *creation*; and immediately preceding the words of our text, speaks of "the great and wide sea wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein." Then, turning to the great Creator and Preserver of all, the Psalmist bursts forth in the words of our text, extolling his *providence*, "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season," &c.

But, viewing the analogy which I have been endeavouring to shew, may we not apply these words in a spiritual, experimental sense to the work of grace upon the soul? I think, if the Lord enable me to open up the words as I see them, we shall find that there is in them a sweet applicability, not only to the departments of creation and providence, but also in a special manner to the department of grace.

We may observe in the words before us four distinct features, corresponding with the four verses of which the text consists; and those I shall briefly name.

I. *Waiting*. II. *Giving*. III. *Withdrawing*. IV. *Renewing*.

I.—*Waiting*. "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season." It is true, literally, that all the created beings of God's hand wait upon him. Upon him they are

dependent for life and breath, and all things. But do they wait upon him in a way of intellect or consciousness? Is not their waiting a mute waiting? Must we not, then, rather adapt the words to the state, posture, and experience of the children of God? "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season." How true of, how applicable unto, the experience of God's family! For you will see, if the Lord enable me to draw out the words of our text, a chain running through the whole. You will find the work traced out from the beginning, and carried on through its successive changes, so as to embrace and comprise the whole work of grace upon a saved sinner's conscience.

"These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season." Until the Lord is pleased to begin a work of grace upon the soul, we know nothing of what spiritual "meat" is. Having no spiritual appetite, we cannot long after spiritual food. The things of time and sense, the charms of sin, the occupations of life—these are the food of our natural mind. We have no sight to see, nor taste to relish the food that God has in reserve for his hungry and thirsty people. The Lord, therefore, in the opening up of his ministry laid this down as one of the first marks of spiritual life; "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness;" implying that to hunger and thirst after righteousness is one of the first things that God bestows upon the soul. Now until this spiritual appetite is given, till the eyes are opened to see, till the heart is divinely wrought upon to feel, we have no spiritual hungering and thirsting after the provisions of God's house. But it is with the quickened soul as with the awakened and returning prodigal; "a famine arose in that land, and he began to be in want;" and when the famine came, and he began to be in want, "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine ate." Yet he could not do so; a new appetite was given him; he hungered after solid food; and he remembered there was "bread in his father's house and to spare," whilst he was "perishing with hunger." Thus one of the first marks and evidences of spiritual life, one of the first effects of a divine work upon the soul is to hunger after heavenly food. This food is

Christ, for he is "the bread of life;" and the soul really convinced of sin, stripped of all righteousness, brought down into the dust, and made to long, hunger, and thirst after the manifestations of Jesus, is waiting upon God for "meat" which he alone can give. This the text expresses, pointing out thereby the first work of grace upon the soul: "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season."

But God has appointed to give this "meat" at a due season; that season cannot be hurried nor delayed; no human power can bring it forward, and no human power can keep it back. Knowing this, and not being able to bring food into his own mouth, to make Christ precious to his own soul, or feed upon the manna till God brings it into his heart, a convinced sinner is one that waits upon God. "These wait all upon thee." And they wait upon him, knowing that he is able to give them that "meat" which their souls hunger after. They wait in secret prayer; they wait with many a sigh and cry at the footstool of mercy. They wait with many longings, breathings, and supplications; and they wait until often their eyes seem to fail with weariness. The Lord has declared these "blessed;" but the blessing seems so long before it reaches them, that despondency will often work in their minds whether the blessing will ever come to their souls. But knowing that nothing short of the blessing can really satisfy or save, that God must be the sole giver of it, and being encouraged by the promises, and by the blessed Spirit in their heart as "the Spirit of grace and supplications," to pour out their soul before God, they are brought to wait, to look, long, beg, and supplicate till the Lord graciously appear.

Now these early dawnings of grace upon the soul; these waitings upon God for him to be gracious; these hungerings, thirstings, pantings, and desires, seem, to my mind, set forth in the first words of our text: "These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season."

And in what a gracious posture does it represent the children of God—*waiting upon him!* If they wait upon him, they must have

*faith*; because without faith they cannot believe he is a God able to bestow this food upon them. If they wait, they must have *perseverance*; for they have to endure repeated and heart-oppressing disappointments. If they wait, they must have *patience*; for patience in this, as in other respects, must have its perfect work. If they wait, they must have *the spirit of prayer*; for only by a spirit of prayer are they enabled to wait. If they wait, they must have some *hope* that in due season God will confer the very blessing upon them; though "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." They must also have a measure of *love* for the food they are longing after, or else they would not desire that God Himself would put that food into their mouth. And thus, though not themselves able to trace out the work of grace in a clear, definite manner, yet we see—as in the case of an infant, all the members of a man—so in these infants, these babes of grace, all the members of the new man, which are afterwards more completely developed.

II.—I pass on to our second point, which is *Giving*: "*That thou givest them they gather. Then openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*" This is true in providence. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, all have food appointed for them. None die of hunger; and what God gives them, in that sense they gather. But how much more true is this of the spiritual and experimental food given to and gathered by a child of God?

Two things, I think, may be seen as connected with this *giving*: *first*, the first droppings of mercy, favour, and love upon them: "*That thou givest them they gather.*" And *secondly*, the more open hand of God, when the blessing comes into their soul in a fuller, more blessed, and wider sense: "*Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*"

1. "That thou givest them they gather." There is some allusion perhaps to the manna in the wilderness as descriptive of the way in which he drops tokens, favours, smiles, glances, and glimpses on his waiting people. "That thou givest they gather." Nothing else: they cannot take any consolation from man; they cannot

feed upon anything that the creature produces: their long famine has completely famished them out of house and home. Gifts, abilities, creature righteousness and native strength, human wisdom, fleshly holiness, these are the husks which they cannot feed upon. Christ alone in his sweet manifestations, in his dying love, in his beauty, and blessedness, in his rich suitability, is the food God has provided for them; and as they wait upon God, from time to time he lets fall out of his eternal bounty crumbs and drops, sips and tastes of the mercy that he has stored up in Jesus. Thus sometimes a sweet promise comes into their heart; sometimes their case is described in a sermon; sometimes at the throne of grace they find liberty and unexpected access; the word of God is opened up in some special manner; or some melting feelings are produced in their soul, perhaps on a sudden, by a discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this God "gives." His truth falls; a word drops; a blessing comes with it; there is a sweetness in it to their taste; a reality, a light, a life, a power, a blessedness, a heart-melting, soul-softening suitability accompany God's truth. This they "gather" reverentially, believingly, humbly, affectionately, hopefully, lovingly; they store it up in their heart; they ponder over it; they feel a blessedness in it; they take it home with them; it goes to sleep with them; it rises in the morning with them; it takes them through the day; they have got, felt, enjoyed something; some liberty, some love, some assurance, some manifestation, some testimony, something which has come from God into their souls, something really felt as a blessing in their hearts. This God has given perhaps when they least expected it: when almost worn out with waiting, despairing and fearing the blessing would never come; but it comes unexpectedly, overwhelmingly; and being given, they "gather" it gratefully and happily, and their hearts are softened, blessed, and melted by the goodness and felt mercy of God to them.

2. But this is not all. *"Thou openest thine hand."* What the Lord has yet given (if I may use the figure) he gives but with his fingers; he drops a little here and there; but the great blessing is in his hand, lodged and locked up there; and they unable to

obtain it. Yet they try hard; they say, 'I am not satisfied; these sips, these tastes, drops, glimpses, glances, breakings in, meltings down, are not sufficient.' 'O,' they say, 'this is not a complete deliverance; this does not break off all my legal chains; this does not fully assure me that I am one of the Lord's people; it is so soon gone off; the feeling did not last; it was too transient; I want something greater, more powerful, more abiding, more heart-assuring, something of which I can say more certainly, This is indeed of God.'

"Thou openest thine hand." And when at last the Lord opens his hand, gives largely out of it, and blesses the soul fully, completely, and perfectly, he pours out of his hand all that is contained there, which is, Christ in his blessedness, in his fulness, blood, righteousness, and love. When God opens his hand, and gives thus fully, liberally, largely, and blessedly, then they are "filled with good;" they seem to want no more; the Lord has filled and blest their souls; they are overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness; they feel they have all they want; enjoy, if possible as much as they can enjoy; and their souls are exceedingly happy and blessed in the Lord.

III.—But is this to last? Are they to swim down this sea of prosperity? Does the Lord mean this to be their happy lot unto the end? Now comes the change. I observed in my outset that in the ways of grace, as well as in nature and of providence, there were changes. Good and evil, light and darkness, life and death, and these intermixed and blended. So there is a withdrawing, our third point. "*Thou hidest thy face.*" The Lord withdraws himself; he suspends his favours; he does not manifest himself as in times past; he withholds the light of his countenance. And what is the consequence? "*They are troubled.*" The soul has lost its God, lost its Christ, lost its happiness and blessedness; therefore no wonder that it is troubled. If God hide his face, a soul must needs be troubled that knows his presence and smiles.

1. But what makes God hide his face? He does not always give us the reason of these matters; but, generally speaking, it is the

intervention of some sin twixt God and us. I do not mean open sin. God forbid; but some backsliding of heart, some idol set up in the chambers of imagery, some departing from the fountain of living waters to hew out the broken cisterns that hold no water. At any rate, whether it arise from this or not, whether it be the exercise of pure sovereignty on the part of God, or traceable to anything provoking in us—whatever be the cause, the change does come; he does hide his face. And when God hides his face, the soul is troubled, because it has lost everything that makes life happy and blessed; it has lost everything that really made life worth living for, and death worth dying for.

It is a good thing that the soul is "troubled;" it shews the reality of the work of grace upon the heart, that the hidings of God's face, and the withdrawings of his favour, do give trouble. It shows a tenderness of conscience, a singleness of eye to God's glory, and that the visitations of God's favour make up the soul's only happiness. One cannot understand a man's religion who feels no trouble when God hides his face, when he has no access to his throne. If he can be as happy without God as with him, as happy in God's absence as in his presence, in darkness as in light, it does not seem as if he knew much of a present God—a God of light, and liberty, and love—as though he knew much of communion with God, access unto him, intercourse with him, making him his all in all. Where money is a man's god, he does not part with that so readily. Disappointments in worldly things are not taken so coolly. If a clerk go to a merchant or stockbroker, and tell him of a heavy loss, he does not take it as a matter of indifference, as a professor would take the loss of God. "Where the treasure is, the heart must be." If the soul is really healthy to God, thirsting after him, or has ever enjoyed him, it must needs feel the withdrawing of his presence, the hiding of his countenance. Thus, when the Lord hides his face, they are "troubled."

2. But there is another expression, which at first sight seems scarcely applicable to the work of grace; and yet I do not see how we can carry out the chain without taking this too into

consideration. And I can myself, I think, see a light in it in which the dealings of God seem reflected. *"Thou takest away their breath; they die, and return to their dust."* Is not God our life? Is he not the author of our spiritual breath, as well as of our natural breath? But when he takes away the spirit of prayer, when he removes the enjoyment of his presence in the heart, when he takes away himself who is the breath of our very life, then we die; the soul sinks in its own feelings, into sensible death; it dies as to any enjoyment of God's presence, as to any feeling realization of his favour. Compared with its former lively feeling, its feelings are now those of death. "Free among the dead," the Psalmist says, "like the slain that lie in the grave." If God's presence be life, his absence is death. If the enjoyment of God's favour be the breath of the soul, the denial of God's favour is the death of the soul. If he take away our breath, in taking away himself—if he take away our life, in taking away his presence—if he take away our enjoyment, in taking away the source of the enjoyment, we die. And, in a state of death, we are no longer living and lively as before. There is not that going out of living desires from the soul; there is not that living communion with God; there is not that breathing in his presence; there is not that moving in the enjoyment of his mercy. "We die" in that sense, and "return unto our dust." This is true of man, naturally and spiritually, returning in death to his dusty nature, his corruptible material. When the soul then dies down, there is an opening up of its corruptions before unknown, of its dusty nature before unfelt; of the dryness, hardness, barrenness, and wilderness state of the human heart before unseen. This is a returning to its dust, a falling back upon nature, a sinking into the dust of death; "a putting our mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope;" an acquaintance with our base original; a sight and sense that if there be any good, it is wrought by God in the soul; if there be anything heavenly, it must come direct from heaven. Thus, in grace as in nature, when God withdraws our breath, "we die, and return unto our dust;" and there we lie as unable to revive and renew our own souls as we were unable in the first instance to quicken or regenerate them.

But what a close and thorough dependence upon God does the text bring out! How it casts the creature into that position where God is everything! How it makes the soul hang upon God as the needle hangs upon the magnet! How every movement of the heart is here referred to God! If it have food, it must be by "waiting" upon God; if it gather food, it is by the "giving" of God; if it be filled with food, it is by the "opening of God's hand." It is wholly a pensioner upon him! the creature is nothing, and meant to be nothing; it is dependent upon him, in whom it lives, moves, and has its being. So he that gives the breath, takes away the breath; he that grants the life, withdraws the life—not fully, not finally, but in a spiritual, experimental sense, in the feelings of the soul, in the exercises of the mind, in the conclusions we draw, in the workings of our heart. We die not actually (for God is unchanging and unchangeable; his love fails not, and the work of grace upon the soul fails not; the ebbings and flowings are in us, not in him); but as regards our feelings, and the experience of the saints, there is that death in the soul, that sinking into the dust of carnality and corruption as if all grace had perished within. This made Heman feelingly cry, "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?"

Thus, though this view may appear at first sight rather a wresting of the passage, as though the taking away of the breath could only refer to the withdrawal of the natural breath, and the dying spoken of could only be the death of the body; yet, when you view the whole in a spiritual sense, when you see in it the links of one extended chain, you will observe (I can; and if I do not convey the meaning of it, the failure is in me) how they are connected. But if we do not apply these words in an experimental manner to the withdrawing of life and feeling, and of that breath of God whereby the soul living under the power of the Spirit lives upon him, this passage seems to come into the text in a manner utterly isolated from the rest, and to have no reference to the work of God upon the soul.

IV.—We pass, then, to our *fourth* point, which is, the *Renewing*:

*"Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth."* This does not bear a literal meaning. Take these words as applicable to God's dealings in nature, can you make them tally with the preceding verse? "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created." Have you seen that in creation? When you have lost a son, a daughter, a wife, a husband; when God has taken away their breath, and they have died, and returned to their dust, have you seen God send forth his spirit and recreate them? No: you commit their mortal remains to the earth in the hope one day of a better resurrection. But, taking the passage spiritually, viewing the whole in an experimental light as descriptive of the work of grace upon the soul, as one extended chain, we then see the revival of the soul out of that state of death into which it has fallen.

Bear with me a few moments while I trace out these links; it is the harmony of the links that makes the beauty of the chain. First, the soul is wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and "waits" upon him. Next, there is "the giving of food" to that waiting soul; and the blessed feelings that spring up in the heart when God "opens his hand." The third link in our chain is God's hiding his face, "withdrawing" his presence, removing his favour, taking away the sense of his love, with its effect upon the soul, which is to make it die away, to feel all life and happiness gone, and return to the dust of corruption in which to lie, putting its mouth there, and feeling little else but the workings of an earthly, dusty nature. But we cannot leave the soul there; therefore comes in the fourth link, which completes the chain, "the revival" of that soul from which the breath has thus been withdrawn. In experience, it is one consistent chain: we see the separate links. Viewed naturally, the chain is broken: viewed providentially, there is at present little connection. But view it spiritually, as descriptive of the work of grace upon the soul, we then see the four beautiful links—the *waiting*, the *giving*, the *withdrawing*, the *renewing*—these all forming one consistent chain. I am compelled, therefore, by the necessity of the case, as well as by the beauty I see in the passage, by the blessedness of it, and the

striking description it gives of the work of grace upon the soul, to view it in this experimental light, though not utterly rejecting all other.

1. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit." The word translated "spirit" and "breath" is the same. It was the withdrawal of the "spirit" or of the "breath," that caused the soul to sink into death and dust. The soul in itself had no strength or power to rekindle the flame; it could only die when God withdrew his "spirit;" it could only return to its dust when the creating hand ceased to maintain its life. Inability and helplessness are stamped upon the creature; but they are only learnt in experience, and they never are effectually learned until we know both sides of the question. It is having gathered what God has given; having received what he has bestowed; having had access unto God, that makes the soul feel the contrary. It is enjoying the pure breath of God that makes it feel the withdrawing of that breath; it is the actings of life that make it feel the sinkings of death; it is the heavenly-mindedness, the sweet spirituality, the holy affections, the tender breathings, that live in the soul when God is breathing into it his favour and mercy, that make it feel sensibly the change when he withdraws his breath, and it dies at his feet, when all its comeliness is turned into corruption, and it drops into its native dust.

But the Lord does not leave the soul there. He withdraws his breath that it may learn it lives *in* him, and lives *to* him. But he "sends forth his spirit," and breathes once more into the heart. It comes into the soul, generally speaking, first as "the Spirit of grace and supplications." This, I think, is sweetly pointed out in the Pilgrim's Progress. Christian and Hopeful are in the castle of Giant Despair; but before they got hold of the key of promise, they continued in prayer and supplication the greater part of the night. Here was the first inspiration, as it were, of the breath of God. Where the breath of praise was taken away, the breath of prayer was much taken away with it. The breath of faith, the breath of hope, the breath of love, the breath of desire, of enjoyment, and of feeling—all these were taken away when God

withdrew his breath; and deadness, coldness, barrenness, and carnality took their place. Now the Lord has to revive this work; and as the withdrawing of his breath made the soul die in a spiritual sense, it is the sending forth into it of that spirit again which alone can make it revive.

"Thou sendest forth thy spirit." How free, and yet how sovereign! Until the "Spirit" comes, it is powerless; it lies in its dust, unable to live, to act, to feel. But, as a free sovereign act of grace, God "sends forth his spirit." And what follows? "They are renewed." There is a renewal of everything in the soul; there is a blessed revival of the life, power, grace, and favour of God in the heart; and this by his "Spirit." Not by their own works, not by creature doings, duties, or merits, fastings, tears, or prayers, nor anything that the creature can do or has done, but as a free sovereign act of God—as free and as sovereign an act as when he called the world into being, or as when the Spirit brooded upon the face of the waters in original creation—as free and sovereign as the first work of grace upon the soul—as all the acts of God are in nature or grace.

"Thou sendest forth thy spirit." Where does the creature here put in his finger? Nature is silent here. The Spirit of God has put nature into its true place. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit" as a free sovereign act; and when the spirit comes into the soul, then they are "created," or "recreated." Indeed it seems to be altogether a creation; for the work of God upon the soul is a creation; "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," or 'creation.' And after a long death in the soul, when the Lord "sends forth his spirit," is it not a creation? a work so wholly of God, a work so wrought by his own hand, a work so thoroughly distinct from that of the creature, that it is felt and known to be a creation? But how at times the soul is almost hopeless that this will ever take place! Say that you, in times past, have enjoyed somewhat or much of the presence of God; but you have lost that presence; your soul does not now enjoy what it once enjoyed; you are often dark, very dark—dead, very dead—barren, very barren; and your religion as to life, feeling, power, seems much to have sunk

away. Yet, at times, there is a sighing and a murmuring in your soul that things should be so. You want God again to appear; you cannot rest in this spot; you cannot be satisfied to be as you are; and though shut up in much darkness, unbelief, and deadness, yet every now and then there is a breaking forth, a sigh, or a cry, 'Lord, appear for me; revive my soul, and bring me out of this state; do not let me be what I am, and where I am; bring me into some clearer, sweeter, nearer access, into some closer communion with thyself; and let me not be such a cumberer of the ground, such a mass of sin and death before thee!' Have you not some such breathing of soul? Now the Lord "sends forth his spirit," and effects this creation; a "returning," as Job speaks of it, "to the days of their youth," a revival of the old flame, a renewing (as we read, "thou renewest the face of the earth") of the soul. It has been winter; frost has chilled it; snow has covered it; all vegetation has been frozen up; dark gloomy days above, and icy scenes below. But the Lord "sends forth his spirit, and they are created." Every grace rises up under his creating hand; and "he renews the face of the earth." There is a renewal of the soul, a revival of former feelings, a bringing back of things long forgotten, a restoration, a resurrection, a recreation of every blessed feeling of the heart.

And this, perhaps, is delayed till the close of life. The experience of many of God's people seem to be this. Called in early days, they waited under conviction till the Lord appeared; the Lord, then appearing, blessed their soul, and gave them striking testimonies, in which they walked, sang his praises, and spake to the glory of his name. But as they grew up into middle life, worldly cares, family anxieties, business, and many other things seem to bring a damp upon their souls; God took away their "breath;" he suspended the operations of the Spirit; they were not favoured as in times past with the sweet manifestations of his mercy, goodness, and love. And they died. Their heavenly life which they formerly enjoyed—the praises and thanksgivings—with all their lively, vigorous, active feelings seemed to die down to a stump and wither away in the soul, nipped by the frost, cut off like an herbaceous plant, with scarcely anything but the root

left, and that covered perhaps by snow and ice. Thus they were little comfort to themselves, little honour to the church to which they belonged, and though generally believed to be good people, and in time past to have had an experience, yet, as far as any outward usefulness or inward comfort was concerned, there was little of one or the other. Are there not many like this—members of churches, advanced in life perhaps, or in middle age? But at the close of life, perhaps, they may have an affliction which brings them to a death-bed; in mercy God sends forth his spirit; then they are "created;" all their past coldness and deadness, all their carnality and barrenness are removed; they become to themselves and they become to others new creatures; there seems to be a pouring in of new life; and, like the plants I have been speaking of, they spring up from the old root with increased strength and beauty. Thus, the Lord "sends forth spirit;" they are created; he renews the face of the earth; he blesses their soul; they leave a sweet witness behind, and their happy spirits leave their poor crumbling tabernacles of clay for mansions of eternal joy.

Thus, our text, if I have given it a right interpretation, may embrace in its folds many, if not most of God's living family, taking them from the very beginning of the work of grace upon their hearts, and closing them up in the last manifestations of God's mercy, whereby he lands them safe in a happy eternity. Thus it corresponds in some measure with the "early and the latter rain"—the "early rain," which is in the autumn in Eastern countries, corresponding to "that which thou givest then they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good;" "the latter rain," in spring, corresponding with "thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth."

Thus, we find in these four verses four links of a Christian experience. Which link is in our hand? which link in our heart? If you are a child of God you will be found in one of these four verses; and that is the reason why this evening I took so long a text. I would not break the chain; I would not take one link; but I wished to take the whole comprehensive chain that I might wind

it around living souls here present, and find some link to hang on each individual neck. Which link hangs upon you?

Let me, just by way of recapitulation, point out the four links. In the first dealings of God upon the soul, there is a "waiting" upon God: "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season." Do you think that God has made you a waiting soul? Is the work of grace thus far begun as to make you know that Christ alone is the food of the soul? Has it taught and brought you to wait upon God to give you Christ, to manifest him, to bring a sweet sense of his love and blood into your soul? If you have this first link, you will in time have the whole chain; for he that has one link in this divine chain has all.

But there may be those who can go beyond this, who are now "gathering" what God gives. And this is one of the sweetest spots the soul can be in, to be gathering what God gives. O, those early days, that spring-time of the soul, when we are gathering all that God gives, when there is scarcely a sermon in which and out of which we do not gather something! O, blessed days, when we can scarcely open God's book without gathering manna from it, scarcely go upon our knees without getting some access to God, scarcely speak to a Christian friend without feeling love burning in our bosom. Happy days! "the day of espousals," the spring of the soul, the time when the Lord is first gracious, gives freely, opens his hand, and satisfies the soul with his mercy! Perhaps some few here may thus now be favoured. May the Lord keep you, if it be his will, as long as possible in this state! You cannot have a happier; you may have a state more profitable, but not more blessed. May the Lord keep you long there, gathering what he gives; he opening his hand, filling you with goodness, and blessing your soul; and you thanking him for his mercy. This is one of the sweetest spots the soul can be in till it lands in heaven.

But, prepare yourselves for a change. The whole analogy of God is change. We should always like to have it beautiful summer, but winter will come. We should like the day to be always long, and

the sun bright; but the short dark days will come, and the sun remain behind the cloud. We should always like prosperity, but we shall have it not. We should prefer an unmingled cup, but it will not be so. God will see good to withdraw his presence, hide his face, and not shine upon your soul as before. Then you will die in your feelings, sink at his feet, and as one dead return to your dust, be a miserable wretch, having nothing but gloomy feelings working in your mind, and little else than the dust of corruption in your heart. There perhaps you may be muddling for years. God in mercy keep you from that.

But, in due time, if the three links are of God, you will have the fourth. God will not leave you there. He will bless your soul again; for his love is from everlasting to everlasting; and he that began the work will carry it on. He will "send forth his spirit," as an act of his free, sovereign grace, and recreate as it were every sweet feeling, every blessed affection, and every sense of enjoyment. He will banish the dark clouds of winter, thaw the ice and snow that has covered your bosom, make a second spring, and renew the face of your soul, as in nature he renews the face of the earth.

Now, among our Aged Pilgrims, whose cause I am to plead this evening, we may have some of those who have passed through the three successive stages, and are waiting for the fourth, or are now enjoying it. This is often delayed perhaps to the closing scene of life; but yet it will come at last. What a mercy that God will not leave the work of his hands, will never give up Ephraim, and will never abandon Judah! Whom he loves, he loves unto the end, and saves with an everlasting salvation.

To be enclosed, then, within these links is to be enclosed in the chain of eternal love. To know anything of them is a mercy. If we are God's children, we shall be able to say, 'I have experienced this one; in this spot at least I am.' And if we can say this with a feeling heart, we may believe God will go on to work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure."