



## THOMAS BRADBURY

PASTOR OF GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.

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# GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT

FIFTY-TWO

## SERMONS

BY

THOMAS BRADBURY

*Minister Of Grove Chapel, Camberwell.*

"He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." — Jeremiah xxiii. 28.

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## PREFACE.

THE one object the author of these discourses has in view in their publication, is the glorification of God's Christ in the experience and walk of those members of His elect and redeemed family, into whose hands His kind and gracious providence may place them.

The preaching of the Word is God's grand ordinance in this dispensation of grace, by which the nations of the saved are called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ. By the preached Word it pleases God to save them that believe. It is my mercy to be surrounded at the Grove with those whose faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. These have felt the burden of sin, the curse of the law, their utter unworthiness before a sin-hating God, and are spiritually convinced that without Christ they can do nothing but sin, and expect nothing but hell. But to them a precious Christ is All in all, as He is revealed in them "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The God of the Church at the Grove has declared that, among His duly-qualified and commissioned servants who preach the preaching that He bids them (Jonah iii. 2), there are "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but he hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and He hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath He chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are ; that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. i. 26 — 29). William Huntington, the coalheaver, was, and is still, hated and despised by the fleshly religious multitude. John Bunyan, the tinker, is derided as a

visionary by *learned ecclesiastics*, who thus betray their utter ignorance of the Spirit's teaching. Dear old John Kent, the Devonport dockyard laborer, will live in the praises of God's elect family when all haters and despisers of new covenant truth are silent in darkness. The author of this volume expects no better treatment from Arminians, Papists, Unitarians, and Universalists; but it will be his lot, by the grace of God vouchsafed to him, not to fear nor heed their revilings, but leave them to Him who is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."

In these discourses I have nothing to offer, and no invitations to make. It is mine simply to preach Christ as I know and feel Him to be precious to my own soul, and to the souls of His eternally-loved and dearly-bought people, begging of the Holy Ghost to do His own work, so well expressed in this precious hymn by Joseph Irons : —

"May the Holy Ghost descending,  
Crown this message with success;  
We are on His power depending,  
He, and He alone, can bless,  
By revealing  
Christ the Lord our Righteousness.

We have listen'd to the preacher,  
Truth by him has now been shown;  
But we want a greater Teacher,  
From the everlasting throne.  
Application  
Is the work of God alone."

In sending forth this volume to the "little flock," I commend it to the great and glorious Head of the Church in the precious and spiritual language of Romaine, —

"O Thou Beginning and Ending, the First and the Last, the Author and the Finisher of the faith, JEHOVAH-JESUS! I have been

looking up to Thee for Thy Divine teaching, and I am still looking up to Thee for Thy blessing on this my offering to Thee. It is a poor mite, which I would cast into Thy treasury, as my testimony for the truth, and for the power of Thy Gospel. Be pleased to accept it of Thine infinite condescension. Thou knowest the heart of Thy servant: whatever is right in it is Thine own, the work of Thine own grace. Failings there are, and they are mine; of Thy mercy pardon them, and make use of this *volume*, as it shall seem best to Thy Divine wisdom, for the increase of faith in Thy Church, and for the advancement of Thine own fame and glory; that more honour may be put upon Thy Word, more dependence upon Thy faithfulness, and that there may be a growing conformity to it in the lives of Thy people. Be pleased, merciful Saviour, to accompany the reading of it with Thy Spirit for these purposes, and I shall be amply rewarded. May Thy grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all. Amen."

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Grove Chapel, Camberwell.

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# I. "THESE THINGS!" WHAT ARE THEY?

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Dec. 31st, 1876, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

— Rom. viii. 31.

WE have in this chapter a precious fulness of Divine instruction, comfort, and consolation, that gives encouragement and sweet solace to the saints of God under the most trying dispensations, and while suffering the pangs of disappointment, or of bereavement. This is a chapter in which Jehovah appears at every step — Jehovah the Designer of all His people's good, the Revealer of all that fulness which He hath treasured up in Himself for them, and the Applier of every spiritual benefit, bounty, and blessing, in His own time, a time of need to them, and the set time of favour from Him. It commences with that glorious declaration, **IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION**. In Christ the accuser can find no place to vent his spleen against the Church and people of the living God, and according to the glorious declaration at the conclusion, "no separation can ever be the lot of those in experimental oneness with Him. The Church stands glorious and complete; and every individual member thereof must know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, this perfect standing in Christ Jesus. Therefore the apostle is blessedly led to exclaim, “Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*"What shall we then say to these things?"* Mark that personal pronoun "WE!" the eternally loved ones. We, the members of the mystical body of Christ. We, to whom Christ Jesus is "made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We, whom He foreknew as His own before the worlds were formed. "Predestinated to the adoption of children," and to the glorious inheritance which He made for Himself in the Son of His love. We, who are the called according to His purpose. We, who are acquitted in the court of heaven, and stand before Him free from all sin; not a spot, not a stain, not a wrinkle to be seen in us; though it is our lot to mourn, sigh, and groan over our indwelling sin and corruption. We, whom He has glorified — not merely whom He will — for it is our Privilege to look at this precious chapter with its present tense blessings and realities. Not at what He is going to do, but what He has done in the Person of Christ, what He is doing through the power, grace, and operation of His blessed Spirit. We, the predestinated, the justified, the called, the glorified ; we, who are "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." *"What shall we then say to these things?"* No calling into question for a moment the grand realities set before us; no assertion of conditions to shake the faith of God's children. In these words we have a glorious declaration of a precious fact — *"God is for us, who can be against us?"* Looking at the portion as it stands before us, may we, in humble dependence on God's blessed Spirit, speak a little thereon; and may He bedew our minds, so that

as the words of truth fall on our ears, the realisation thereof may cheer and comfort our hearts.

Mark. "*These things!*" What are they? I would direct your attention to the two preceding verses, — "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren," the Chief One — One who hath pre-eminence, dignity, and sovereignty among many brethren. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified." ^ Mark that expression; it is not whom He justified, them He will also glorify, but *them* He *also* glorified is the precious declaration of the, text. Now, "*What shall we then say to these things?*" To Jehovah's foreknowledge. That glorious fact is revealed in God's most Holy Word, the apprehension of which made predestination, election, and sovereignty glorious realities in my soul's experience. Now, mark you, if we are rightly taught in the truth of Jehovah's foreknowledge there must be, as a matter of course, an appreciation and acknowledgment of the truthfulness of this cluster of new covenant verities set before us in these two verses: of Jehovah knowing all things from the end to the beginning, and from the beginning to the end. If He knew all things, then what want of agreement can we conjure up in our poor minds between His foreknowledge and His predestinating us, conformed to the image of His Son, to the adoption of children, "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," and to all the blessings, bounties, and benefits which we should experience through Jesus Christ our Lord? What a blessing it is for me to know that He has foreknown me in a peculiar way and manner! He knew all men and things; but He knew some in a peculiar manner as the objects of His everlasting love and choice, saved and for ever safe in their glorious Head, and sure of eternal glory in the face of the combined onslaughts of Satan, hell, and sin.

Let us for a moment or two notice that declaration at the close of Matt. vii. — "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we

not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you*: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." But the declaration of His mind and Spirit is, that He knows all things, all circumstances, and all persons. Yet here He asserts that He will meet many who figure before the world as *Christian workers*, reformers, and philanthropists, with the withering announcement, "*I never knew you*." How is this difficulty overcome? Sweetly and blessedly when we understand and experience the knowledge Jesus has of His own people in covenant-relationship with Himself. This is a knowledge of approbation and appreciation; and to all others He must declare, "*I never knew you*" as the gift of My Father; "*I never knew you*" as the travail of My soul; "*I never knew you*" as the purchase of My blood; "*I never knew you*" as the living in the new Jerusalem. Oh, no! These were never seen and known as Apelles was, "approved in Christ." Such persons He acknowledges, not as the elect of the Father, but pronounces them in their characters, reprobate; in their doings, dead; in their thoughts, evil; in their mind, ENMITY AGAINST GOD. "The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever" (Mal. 1. 4). What shall we then say to the foreknowledge of God? — a glorious truth to which we give our unfeigned consent and assent, and our hearty Amen. Before this God-glorifying and creature-humbling revelation we bow, and wonder, and adore! Think for a moment! The thought is overwhelming! God's foreknowledge of me before the created angels stood before Him, before all worlds were called into being — when He wrote my favoured name in the Lamb's Book of Life, when in covenant He gave me to His own dear Son, and gave His Son for me, that I might and must be preserved in Him, redeemed by Him, and presented by and in Him without spot, blemish, or blame. Oh! the blessedness of knowing that Jesus is my perfection before the face of the Father! and that in Him I have pardon, peace, acceptance, and glory. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv. 18). Known unto Him are all His people, their peculiarities, and circumstances; and known unto Him are all their sorrows. "I know their sorrows." What

proof have we from God's most Holy Word of this knowledge? Turn to Isaiah xlix.; there we find Jesus, the great and glorious covenant Head, speaking to His Father concerning Himself: "Jehovah hath called lie from the womb ; from the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My Name; and said unto Me, Thou art My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for naught and in vain; yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God. And now saith the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength." This is the voice of the Head speaking, and the response of this is found in the experience of every elect vessel of mercy, every member of His mystical body. Look again, in the case of Jeremiah, first chapter, fifth verse, God speaks: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." Knew thee as to what thou wouldst be; knew thee in My unchanging, unalterable decrees: knew thee in My never-failing purposes; and "before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Look, again, to that marvellous declaration of the apostle Paul in first of Galatians — a portion from which it was my lot to speak to you the very first time I stood here in my position as God's minister to you — "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace." Mark you, there is a separation: what is it to? It is to a revelation of God's Son in Him. "Before thou wast formed, I knew thee." We look into various portions of God's most Holy Word, and we find that this knowledge is not peculiar to God the Father, but common to the Three Persons in the blessed Trinity. The Father knew, when in covenant He gave the Church to Christ; Jesus knew, when He took to His fond embrace a numberless company of Adam's lost family; the Holy Spirit knew, as He witnessed to the covenant transactions and engagements, as He beheld the Church given to Jesus. As we trace through the various portions of God's most Holy Word, we shall see that this foreknowledge is as much the prerogative of the Spirit as it is of the Father, and it is as much that of the Son as it is

of the Spirit and of the Father. "I am the good Shepherd; I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." *All things*. Where does He search them? In the heart-experience of God's own children, according to the declaration in this very precious chapter, "He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." "*These things*." God's foreknowledge of His own, God's predestination of His own, God's predestination of all spiritual blessings for their spiritual enjoyment.

Now see! We come to that golden link of precious truths in the 30th verse, "Moreover whom He did predestinate." To what? Caviller! Objector! We will see; but, say some, all these things lead to licentiousness and looseness of living. I ask you to read your Bibles, and notice those portions which speak concerning His foreknowledge of His own, His predestination of His own. His election of His own. What find you? Predestinated, conformed to the image of His Son — not predestination and conformity to the world; but conformity to the purpose and pleasure of Jehovah, the Father, as revealed in Jesus. Election — What is it? 2 Thess. ii. 3 — "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Look again. "To the strangers scattered, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again, unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Here are wonderful truths for the children of God to contemplate. If I am elected, it is to see Jesus Christ in eternal glory; if I am predestinated, it is to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son; if I am called, I am called unto His eternal glory; if I am afflicted, it is that the afflictions "might work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "What shall we then say to these things?" "*Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called.*" In this

calling we have quickening, regeneration, the new birth, the walk, and conversation of every true Israelite; and in this we understand something of that which the apostle sets forth in 1 Cor. i. — "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." See! Christ our sanctification as well as wisdom, our righteousness as well as redemption. "That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." He hath called us from nature's darkness into His marvellous light, from hell to heaven, from Satan's service unto Himself, from error to truth, from corruption to purity, from the depth of sin and depravity to the heights of holiness, and of infinite excellency. He hath called us by His grace. "*What shall we then say to these things?*" When I look at my calling in connection with God's foreknowledge, I am lost in wonder and amazement. He knew me in all my folly and shame, and my hell deservedness, yet He called me. Why did He call me? Because He had respect unto something He would see in me? No. Not even respect to the work of His own hands. But to what? To His own name and covenant. Mark you, God will not go out of Himself to find a reason why He should act; He found everything in Himself to act from on the ground of justice, and equity, and righteousness. He calls because He will; "for the children being not born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not out of works, but of Him that calleth" (Romans ix. 11). From what does His calling proceed? 2 Tim. i. 9 — "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." So then our calling is on the same ground as our predestination. If we turn to Eph. i., we read "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies in Christ," &c. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will," &c. This is a holy calling independently of anything in ourselves. What were we? What was Abraham? Where was he? An idolater in a land of idols. Look at Joshua's account of Abraham's call. "And Joshua said unto

all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac" (Joshua xxiv. 2, 3). I called him alone, without respect to anything of his own; he had no life, no light, no love, no liberty, yet I called him. Let me look for a moment or two, what was I? A sinner, an enemy by rank rebellion, such was I by nature, and my carnal mind was enmity against God and His truths, yet called to know Him, called to enjoy Him, called to preach Him, called to long over His poor children, that they might, from my stammering lips, receive some sweet morsels of comfort; called simply because He willed it; justified, not for anything in me, but "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Justified by the precious blood of the Lamb. Justified by the imputation of His glorious righteousness to me. Justified by the sweet whisper of His Spirit to my heart. Justified, not on the ground of anything I do, think, or say; but justified wholly on the ground of God's love for me, and which He works in me by the power of the Holy Ghost; and thus I find myself standing in the midst of perfect and full justification. *Justified by His grace*, and justified by His blood, and justified by His obedience, and justified by His Spirit according to 1 Cor. vi. "But ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" justified by precious faith, the faith of the glorious Head communicated to me. Justified by Christ, justified in His glorious resurrection and ascension. When He died, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. As He rose, He triumphed over death; as He rose, having satisfied the claims of law and justice; as He rose, having magnified the law and made it honourable — He stands in all the glorious perfection of His justifying work, and there I stand in blessed, spiritual, eternal, indissoluble union with Himself. What sayest thou to such a justification as this? Shirk! Satan, the world, and professors may be looking at thee, trying to find a flaw in thy character, or something

wanting in thy experience; they may say thy feelings are not deep enough, thy realizations are not clear enough, thy evidences are not bright enough, thy walk is not circumspect enough, thy talk is not guarded enough. Oh ! there is something which they will bring against thee. But, blessed be His holy name, "He is silent in *His love*." Professors and others may bring you into the presence of our precious Lord Jesus; but He will speak, and say, Thomas, or Mary, or John, "where are these thine accusers; doth no man condemn thee?" The cry of thy heart will be, "No man, Lord." No accuser can stand in the presence of Him who pleads the cause of His people, who opens His mouth for His tried and tempted children. "*No man, Lord; neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.*" Justified, what does it mean? It is not simply an acquittal, but He perfectly clears those who are justified from every charge that Satan, world, men, or professors may bring against them. "*What shall we then say to these things?*"

Then He says, "*whom He justified, them He also glorified.*" What a wonderful expression! Glorified, and you may depend upon it, we oftentimes fall short of the glorious realities of the Gospel when judging of them according to our weak stretch of mind. He speaks of His glory being in His own self. "Surely My glory will I not give to another" (Isa. xlii. 8).

Look again (1 Pet. v. 1). We read of Peter being an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Listen again (ver. 10): "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." Look into his 2nd epistle, chap. i. ver. 3, "According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." John xvii., there we have the prayer of our blessed Lord and Master concerning His own, and He saith, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one." Then, that we may understand something of the expression, turn to Ephes. i., where He saith that we, His predestinated ones, we,

the eternally blessed ones, we, the adopted ones, should be "to the praise of His glory, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Oh! the glory of God is in His people, the glory of His righteousness is theirs, the glory of His salvation is made over to them, and the glory of His kingdom is the rich experimental possession, sooner or later, of every member of His mystical body. Hence we can say to Him as we realise the possession of this glory, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning." What was in the beginning? The glory of the Divine Three; as it was in the beginning, before the world was, is now, and ever shall be. "*What shall we then say to these things?*"

Having looked at these words in the light of the two preceding verses, we will now look at the twenty-eighth verse, where it is said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Mark! Not some things, but *all* things; all the attributes of Jehovah, all His designs of love, all His determination concerning the inhabitants of this world, all His decrees as to heaven, to earth, and to hell; all things, all the blessings of His covenant. All the experiences of my heart, all the troubles, trials, pains, and exercises I experience ; all the doubts, all the fears, all the cursed unbelief and indifference which I lament, all the losses, all the crosses, and all the bereavements which my poor heart may mourn over; I say, all these work together for good in His sovereign hand, it matters not what may come to me, for according to His everlasting covenant,. I find that all these things are ordered, all things in covenant sure to me. Is it not a precious testimony of the Spirit? and it may suit some weary, waiting souls — is it not a blessed declaration — that all things work together for good, it matters not what they may be? We may have some here this morning bowed down with affliction, sorrow, and trouble — *all these things work together for good*. What! can our poor nature look on these things and not stagger? No, our nature staggers through unbelief; but precious faith, the faith of God's own giving, that faith looks on and smiles amidst the most touching, the most telling, and the most excruciating circumstances that mortals can possibly experience. All things work together for good. It is said

of Chrysostom, that, after being expelled by Eudoxia, he exclaimed, "Since the queen wishes to drive me into exile, let her do so, the Lord's is the earth and its fulness. If she wishes to have me sawn in two, let her do so, Isaias suffered the like punishment; if she wishes to cast me into the deep, I will remember Jonas; to stone me, I shall have Stephen for an associate; to take away my head, John the Baptist will be my companion; to deprive me of my substance, let her do so, I will cry with Job, "Naked have I come forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thereto." All these things work together for good. The Psalmist saith, "I will bless the Lord at all times," not sometimes, but at *all* times. What! You bless the Lord at all times? Mark, friend, who speaks. It is the language of the Head, assuredly it is the language of God's Christ, and the import of the language shall be fulfilled in the experience of the members. "*I will bless the Lord at all times,*," When losses, when crosses, when bereavements, when destruction and death are around you? Yes. Job's servants may bring him mournful intelligence that the Sabeans' fire from heaven, and the wind from God's fist, had done their work; that these had wrought desolation, destruction, and death in his family and their surroundings. Where is Job? Is he rejoicing with the wild enthusiasm of the free-willier? No, he bows his head, and, through his tears, he saith, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." There was a time for blessing. Look, again, at our old friend, Habakkuk (chap. iii). See! Is this a time of rejoicing? Not according to man's judgment, not according to our finite conception, not according to the rebelliousness of our carnal mind. Oh, no! but it is according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine," &c., no bread, no butter, not a crumb in the cupboard, and not a penny in thine exchequer, friends failing on the right and on the left; even then praise the Lord. Yes, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Here we find blessing the Lord at all times. "What shall we then say to these things f' I tell you what I say to them; I say there is no enjoyment of my Christ so sweet as it is when in company with those who experience fellowship with Him in His

sufferings; and I have proved it here to-day, that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for we are thus brought to that blessed spot where all creatures resources fail, and where Jesus so reveals Himself as to cause us to look up and say, "Jesus, Thou art a true and tried Friend of ours, do undertake for us." How many of you have been brought to this spot?

"Jesus, my sorrow lies too deep  
For human ministry;  
It knows not how to tell itself  
To any but to Thee."

A blessed spot to be brought to. What can you then say to these things? Have you experienced fellowship with Christ in His sufferings? Would you have matters otherwise? Tell me, Would you have had one pain less, escaped one temptation, steered clear of one affliction, or missed one bereavement? I hear you cry by the consolations of the blessed Spirit, "Not one." All these are blessed sources of spiritual encouragement, yea, springs from whence flow the sweet experience of the balm of Divine consolation, only known and prized by those who suffer with Him here, and shall eventually be glorified with Him.

"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,  
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food;  
Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,  
And then, O how pleasant, the conqueror's song."

And now let me ask you, in the words of our text, "What shall we then say to these things?" Surely nothing but Amen and Amen.

Harrowing circumstances, in which we as a congregation are deeply concerned, have taken place within the last nine days. I must speak a word or two on the matter, although I feel myself unequal to the task. Some speak of me as hard, harsh, bitter, and severe. Well, if decision for the truth of God and a thorough detestation of

hypocrisy, shame, evasion, and compromise with error, be construed into hardness, harshness, bitterness, and severity, let me be styled so, and God help me to be still more harsh and severe. But when we come to experimental oneness with those whose hearts the God of all grace has softened, we find no harshness then. Oh, no! Then we feel the melting of heart and the streaming eyes, which we would gladly hide from every eye but His,

"Who sees my wants, allays my fears,  
And counts and treasures up my tears."

It was our lot to have with us a member of our Church a quiet-minded, meek, and retiring one. I envied her oftentimes her placid disposition. I marked her well. No ostentation, no display, no exuberance of spirit! but as Peter by the Holy Ghost describes, "The hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter iii. 4). In early days she listened to the faithful and discriminating testimony of that eminent servant of God, who is now in glory, Mr. Philpot. In the never-failing and all-wise providence of God she was brought to London, and entered the service of our friend and sister, Mrs. Lett. Here God, in the person of His Son, by the grace and indwelling of the blessed Spirit, revealed Himself to her as her own covenant God and Father. She entered this Church under the ministry of the late Mr. Jay, the same evening with our friend and brother Crutcher, who well remembers the words of pastoral affection then addressed to her. It was my lot now and then to be privileged with her gracious conversation, when I sought, not so much to communicate as to draw forth some precious testimonies that would find a vibration in my own spirit. I remember on one occasion we were blest with a few moments' enjoyment of the true communion of saints. It was during one of my visits to that quiet Bethel-spot, Dulwich-house. Her heart was warmed with a sense of a Father's love, while her tongue was loosed and her words were uttered with graceful diffidence. Divine, absolute sovereignty held her affections firmly fixed on "Him who worketh all things after the

counsel of His own will. She saw Him who is invisible in the so-called insignificant things of life, and loved to trace every event up to the gracious hand and heart of that blessed One who is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." She repeated, with a heart bubbling up with life and love, that precious verse, which, for the moment, made me feel that I was the son of a King : —

"It is the Lord enthroned in light,  
Whose claims are all. Divine;  
He has an undisputed right  
To govern me and mine."

She spoke of self, but it was with self-loathing, for none knew better than she the depth of depravity dwelling within, and the workings thereof in the thoughts, purposes, imaginations, and desires. She knew herself as nothing but sin; she knew Jesus as her righteousness before God. Jesus' person, love, blood, and righteousness, formed the sum-total of her hope. From the depths of her heart flowed an experience far in advance of her years, and of many who appear ever ready to deal out *their* experience. Hers were not the big words of the ready talker, neither could she talk dry doctrine from a flippant tongue. She was a mourner over her sins and rebelliousness, which none can truly know but those who are graciously taught by God the Holy Ghost.

Last Saturday week (December 23rd), she left Dulwich house, a happy home to her, entered the train at King's-cross, Great Northern, for Stamford, her heart bounding with hope, to meet her widowed mother and the little ones she loved so well. Her delight was to speak with them of God's love, God's grace, God's salvation. The train hurried on its way to Arlesey and to destruction. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the terrible crash, the wild confusion, the heights of glory! Yes, from the midst of that dreadful scene her ransomed spirit winged its flight to the arms of her Saviour-God, to the bosom of eternal love, to —

"see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There, from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in.

On Thursday last, with our dear brethren George Davis and Horace Hummel, I went to Stamford, to see the mortal remains of our dear sister Abigail Longstaff committed to the dust "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was no small treat to hear the mother speak of her now glorified daughter, in language which caused me to feel ashamed of myself. She told us of Abigail standing by the side of her sick and dying father, and encouraging him with the glorious truths of Jehovah's sovereignty. His mind was troubled in reference to the mysterious ways of God, as manifested in the departure of certain persons out of time into eternity. She was God's messenger of love to his weary soul, as she whispered these precious words of the sweet singer of Israel into his ear, —

"Plagues and death around me fly,  
Till He bids I cannot die;  
Not a single shaft can hit,  
Till the God of love sees fit."

I hope I may never forget the way in which the mother spoke of Abigail's manner of speaking to her father. See you well to this!

The daughter a comfort to her parents.  
The servant a sister with her mistress.  
The hearer a cause of humiliation to her minister.

One little incident I must relate. It pleased God to bring me back from seeking rest and strength last August, when my wife, who was deeply interested in dear Abigail, gave her a reference Bible, as a little token of her love and esteem for her. When we gave it to her, she looked, she wept, she trembled, she stammered, "This is the

written Word, but what is it to me without the presence and enjoyment of the Incarnate Word?" After the Arlesey collision, her box was forwarded home from the fatal spot, and, on being opened, revealed her treasure, the Bible, placed there the last to be taken out the first.

Oh, what a wonder of wonders it is for us this morning to contemplate the gracious designs of Jehovah in the mysteries of His providence, and to adore the guiding Hand which brought one of our congregation, safely preserved from the fatal crash, to mingle his thanksgiving with ours, while it graciously led the redeemed and eternally-loved spirit of Abigail to the sweet home of everlasting and uninterrupted rest!" The ways of the Lord are right" (Hos. xiv. 9). "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him! but the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job. xxvi. 14). "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Amen and Amen.

Hymn Sung At The Conclusion Of The Service.

Yes, she is gone! and gone to be  
For ever with th' ETERNAL THREE:  
Her mansion is above;  
Chosen, redeemed, and sanctified,  
She dwells with Jesus crucified,  
Absorbed in covenant love.

Her flesh and spirit war no more,  
The conflict is for ever o'er,  
Exchanged for endless rest;  
Nor doubts, nor fears, nor sins annoy,  
Wrapt up in everlasting joy,  
She is with Jesus blest.

My soul, art thou prepared for death?  
Dost thou now live a life of faith

In Christ's atoning blood?  
Art thou in spirit born again f  
Then death will be eternal gain,  
And thou shalt live with God.

JOSEPH IRONS.

## II. "WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Dec. 31st, 1876, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? "

— Rom. viii. 31.

IN noticing the two words, "*these things*" in the discourse this morning, I endeavoured to speak of them in the light which the precious truths stated in the two preceding verses throws upon them. Jehovah's foreknowledge of His own — a knowledge of approbation and appreciation, a knowledge that settled their eternal election and preservation in Christ Jesus the Son of His love; His foreknowledge, from which sprang the predestination of their persons, to all new covenant privileges handed over to their great Head, the responsible One, for the sure preservation and the sure conveyance of the same to each of the parties for whom they were designed, at the time specified in the eternal counsel — the set time, the time of love.

"*Called,*" irrespective of anything in them or of them. He calls not according to their works, but according to His own purpose and grace, given to them in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, An effectual call, a call to every elect vessel of mercy, irresistible and invincible; invincible, for no obstacle can stand

against it; all hindrances are cleared out of the way; irresistible according to the sweet words of Kelly —

"All victorious is its course,  
Nothing can withstand its force."

So it is with the call of the living God; He calls and there is no withstanding Him. He calls it a heavenly calling, for it is the voice of God from heaven to His own sons and daughters upon earth. He calls, He saith, O North, give up; O South, keep not back; His sons and His daughters shall come from afar, and shall appear in His courts with that offering which is acceptable to Him. And what is this offering? It is the person of Jesus Christ, and in Him this call is blessedly experienced by those who know their oneness with Him. Mark, it is not as the fanciful religionists of the day dream of it, and as the popular preachers of the present day deal out to the religious world. "*Be converted!*" Not that, O no! but regenerating grace and resurrection-power are needed in the case of every elect vessel of mercy dead in trespasses and sins. Regenerating grace and resurrection-power, in our standing before Him as His sons and daughters truly begotten, spiritually quickened, and born again, is the family experience, by the sweet and blessed operation of His Spirit. Yes, He is the Witness in us that we are passed from death unto life, that we are a new creation, that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Not only so, but they are brought to experience pure and perfect identity with Himself; we are not only pardoned in reference to sins of omission and commission, but perfectly clear; all sin taken away from the person, so that there is not a blot nor a spot to be seen. To be seen where? To be seen in me, a mass of corruption and depravity which I feel myself to be; but He looks on me, not in my relationship to Adam the first, but in the person of Adam the last. He looks at me in the Son of His love: He beholds me, not as a pardoned criminal at His feet, but as a loved son at His table; He

sees me as He sees Himself; I am presented before Him, justified clear from all law charges, from all Satan's accusations, and from all the world's reproaches. It is a glorious privilege for the child of God in experimental union with Him to rise on the wings of love Divine, rise by the power of God the Holy Ghost, above himself, above his surroundings, moral, political, commercial, social or religious, into a glorious isolation with Jesus, whose promise has gone forth, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." Standing before Him, a blood-washed sinner, pure and spotless. Nay, still more. See! "He hath made Him to be sin for us." Read it without the words "*to be.*" "He hath made Him sin for us;" but never made Him commit sin; He could not; it was an utter impossibility, quite contrary to His nature ; but He hath made, that is, constituted, reckoned, or, He hath dealt with Him as sin. What sin? See! That huge accumulation of sin, which He cannot look on for a single moment, all of it laid on the head of our sinless Substitute, that the glorious righteousness- which He wrought out from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, should be mine! But I am not satisfied with this! What then, say you, will satisfy you? You may depend upon this, small things will not satisfy the life of God in a poor sinner's heart; no, not even promises most precious, blessings most bountiful, nor evidences most clear; such a heart can not be truly satisfied with anything short of God Himself. Christ was made sin for me, I am thereby "the righteousness of God in Him." Mark that, "The righteousness of God in Him." He loves me with an everlasting love, makes me a partaker of His Divine nature, and blesses me with the assurance that He is mine and I am His. O glorious truth! The Christ of God mine, and He, in the perfection of His obedience, my righteousness before God. Look at those two portions in the prophecies of Jeremiah, "And this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (xxiii. 6). "And this is the Name wherewith she shall be called, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (xxxiii, 16).

But we are not only justified in Him our righteousness, for we are glorified in Him in whom alone we glory. "He hath called us unto

His kingdom and glory." "For *whom He did foreknow*, He did *predestinate*; *whom He did predestinate*, them He called; whom He called, *them He justified*; *whom He justified*, them He glorified." The language of the apostle is not He will, but He hath glorified His son Jesus, and, bless His holy Name, hath glorified the whole company of His elect and redeemed people in Jesus the Son of His love. These are some of the things.

We go to the next verse, where it is said, "All things work together for good." All the attributes of Jehovah and His goings forth for the salvation of His people, all the achievements of the Son on their behalf, all the operation and grace of the Holy Ghost within them, all the varied circumstances with which they are surrounded, all the blessings which they enjoy, all the crosses, losses, disappointments and dissatisfactions which they experience, and which are so many annoyances to their wretched nature. See! all these work together for good to them who love Him who first loved them. "What shall we then say to these things?" What *shall* we say? Ask David, and he will tell you in Psa. xxxviii. 13: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth." There is humility and resignation to the Divine mind and will, mute resignation, with feelings too deep for utterance or expression, too acute and too crushing is the experience of God's children to be truly expressed — "I was dumb, because Thou didst it."

In meditating upon these things, we who know something of them, are lost in their magnitude and glory. Oh, the preciousness of that first verse, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. **IN CHRIST JESUS!**" How many of us are there? How came we to so high and glorious a position and portion?" Of God are we in Christ Jesus" from the dateless periods of, to us, an unknown eternity. We are in Him according to the sovereign will, everlasting love and uninfluenced grace of the Father. As is His love to Jesus so is His love to us, and according to His love so is His election of His own in Christ. Tell me of a period when God did not exist, and I will tell you of a period when the

Church was not embosomed in the love of the Eternal Three. From all eternity they were in Him as their Representative, not simply as the branch is in the vine, though blessed be His name He has given that as a figure representing the mutual love and consolation experienced between Him and them ; but it fails to describe the unchanging union of God's elect to God's Christ. Dear old John Kent beautifully expresses it in that glorious hymn of his, —

"Sov'reign grace, o'er sin abounding,  
Ransom'd souls the tidings swell;  
'Tis a deep that knows no sounding,  
Who its breadth or length can tell!  
    On its glories  
Let my soul for ever dwell.

What from Christ that soul shall sever,  
Bound by everlasting bands?  
Once in Him, in Him for ever;  
Thus th' eternal covenant stands.  
    None shall pluck thee  
From the Strength of Israel's hands.

Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus,  
Long ere time its race began;  
To His name eternal praises,  
Oh, what wonders love hath done!  
    One with Jesus,  
By eternal union, one."

*"In Christ,"* as the stone is in the building. Buildings decay, fall into ruins; but these are living, imperishable stones in that building not made with hands, whose Builder and Maker is God. As I said before, the allegory and the parable fail to shew forth the glory of this union; no metaphor, no illustration can do so, and only as we are brought into that matchless chapter, John xvii., can we obtain a true description of this union. See how the Lord, in speaking to His

Father, describes it, in ver. 21, "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." There we have a declaration of our spiritual and eternal union with Christ, which human language can never explain or unfold. In *Christ no condemnation*. No condemnation? No, in ourselves nothing but sin, yet in Him free from all sin. Marvellous, say you! Yes, it is, "and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went;" that is God's truth; yes, when he went to meet Goliath, who defied the armies of the living God; and as he stood in the strength of his God, power was given him to overcome the giant of Gath — God preserved him. When walking on the roof of his house he saw, and was snared with, the beauty of a woman; so that he fell not only into temptation, but into sin. "The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went." There is Sampson, the Lord preserved him, and the Lord had regard to him. Sampson in the lap of Delilah, Sampson having his eyes put out, Samson at the last, if not committing suicide, the next door to it, as he fell a victim to his own act; but "the Lord preserved Samson whithersoever he went." Again, Rahab, a harlot, it was so with her, she having received the spies in peace, the Lord's eyes were on her at that very moment; though of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, He beheld Rahab, in spite of her lies, as pure, as spotless, as fair and as beautiful as His own dear Son was in His own eyes at that moment. In *Christ no condemnation*; but, blessed be His holy Name, though no condemnation, yet loving correction, loving reproof, and loving rebuke are theirs; for He saith, '- Whom I love I rebuke.'" Does Peter curse and swear? Jesus is silent in His love, no whip of small cords for the back of Peter; that is only for wretched hypocrites who presume in the temple of the living God, which you find recorded in John ii. No whip for Peter: it is a look, a look of love from His eyes, as soft as doves'; a look which pierced down into the innermost recesses of poor Peter's heart, "and he went out and wept bitterly." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? Feed My lambs. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved" — not offended, not annoyed, but grieved; godly sorrow was experienced in the soul of poor Peter; he looked up into the face of Him whom

he had so basely denied, and said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Feed My sheep." My dear friends, how many Peters have we in this place to night? how many of you can look into His sacred face, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest that I do love Thee;" Lord, Thou knowest I am grieved because I cannot love Thee more? *In Christ no condemnation.* The devil may roar, he may assault, he may infuse into the mind corruption, lust, evil thoughts, and every abomination, so that our imaginations are so disordered that we know not where we are, the mind being distressed with the burden of sin and uncleanness; still, then, "*no condemnation* in Christ Jesus."

Look, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." O, what a glorious truth; only those by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that glorious Gospel which is made life and power to them by the power of the Holy Ghost, only those can say, "no condemnation ;" and only those can realise their position in Christ Jesus. But we must pass on. Just a word. What say you to these things? Methinks I hear the very pulsation of your hearts saying, *Amen* to such God-like and such God glorifying truths. We come to the third verse, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Sin is condemned, elect sinners, all those for whom sin is condemned, are saved. Blessed be God's holy Name for that expression, "*condemned in the flesh;*" not only sin condemned through the sufferings and death of the sinless Substitute and Surety Jesus Christ, not sin condemned in His flesh, for it never found a place there; but it is sin in the root as well as sin in the fruit. See, it is not sin simply in the skin that can be seen by those around, but it is sin inside; what a mercy it is, it is inside sin, that sin which none can know but one's own self, those indwelling sins which worry and annoy, these are all condemned; and we, who have been guilty of them, either by omission or commission, stand eternally saved in the Son of Jehovah's love. We come to verse 4. Listen, it is: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after

the flesh, but after the Spirit." What think you of imparted righteousness, not only imputed righteousness, but righteousness blessedly imparted. How imparted? By the power of the Holy Ghost; for "as Christ is formed in us, the hope of glory," it is the hope of righteousness, it is a righteous hope, it is the righteousness in which we stand before God as saved and accepted sinners; the righteousness fulfilled in us is the same which He has imputed to us, our right and title to the inheritance reserved in heaven for us.

But we must pass on to verse 14: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." That may make many hearts sad who sigh, I have no evidence that I am led by the Spirit of God, I do not experience any witnessing of the Spirit that I am led by Him. Wait a moment, my friend; let us deal with matters as they are plainly stated in God's most Holy Word. What are we to understand by being *led*? Where to? "He led them forth by a right way." You have plain declarations of Divine leading in Psalm lxxviii. and c vi., Nehemiah, ix., and the greater portion of the Pentateuch; types, according to Paul in 1 Cor. x., of the leading of God's chosen people in the midst of this evil world. Where were they led? Led into dry and thirsty spots; led into places of leanness and barrenness; and also led to places where Jehovah showered gracious and rich supplies upon them. *Led*. Look at the last verse in Zech. xiii., "I *will bring*," not I will send; "I will bring the third part through the fire." I love to be led by Him; but oftentimes shudder in the spots to which He leads me. He brought us through fire and through water up into a wealthy place. Thou broughtest us into the fire that we might be tried and tested there. *Brought into*! Brought through! Look! Matt. iv. verse 1, from the full blaze of Divine acceptance and approbation. "*Then*," that very moment; "*then*," was Jesus led up of the Spirit." That is sad, say you. This is sadder still: "To be tempted of the devil." Do you know what it is to be tempted of the devil? Do you know what it is to experience the dry and parched places of the wilderness? Do you know what it is to cry and sigh for the return of the loved One to your heart. This is by the power and indwelling of God's ever-blessed Spirit, and is accompanied by a spirit of intense

dissatisfaction with every state, condition and circumstance you may be brought into with out the apprehension of your best Friend, your loving Husband, your liege Lord. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God. they are the sons of God; for we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." Oh, what a precious testimony is this! Slaves and others not permitted to call God, Father — only His truly begotten children; only those whom He brings into His house, to enjoy its privileges, and immunities, and the love of His heart.

What say you to these things? "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." How does He witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God? When He testifies of Christ, and makes Him precious to our hearts; when we find we cannot do without Him, no, not for a moment. "And if children then heirs, heirs of God." What a wonderful expression! God the Life, God the Portion, God the Inheritance of His people, What is our God? God our Father, God our Friend, God our Companion, God our Guide, and God our All and in All. "Joint heirs with Christ;" no heirship independently of Him. "If so be we suffer with Him." Suffering with *Him*, "that we may be also glorified together." Glorified together with a precious Christ. What say you to these things? Object to them? Nay, no objection by the true-born child of God. Bastards, professors, and hypocrites may boast of their doing for the Lord, and working for the Lord. *Christian workers*; and a pretty lot of Christian workers they are. What does this Christian working mean? Fostering pride, cultivating hypocrisy, producing hypocrites and mere professors, who shall experience in themselves that condemnation which fell from the lips of a precious Christ against all such (see Matt, xxiii). Tell me not what you are doing for Jesus; tell me what you are suffering for Him. Know ye what it is to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake; what it is to suffer the loss of the good things of this world; what it is to lose the good opinion of others, and of the good doing of those near and dear to you by the ties of nature: know you what it is to suffer from having your character ridiculed and blasted by professors? Know you this? I

do; and I thank and praise His holy Name that, under such circumstances, when many have said: Will you not vindicate your character? I have been able to say, No, I have no character to vindicate. No. If He whom I love in some little measure cannot keep my character, I think it is time to give up; but He is my Vindicator, He is my Avenger, He has the right of protecting me; and by His testimony from my faltering lips and exercised heart, to show forth His grace and glory for the comfort of His own eternally loved ones.

Let us pass on. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Cannot you pray very fervently? Cannot you pray very powerfully? No, my praying is but the chattering of a crane or swallow; my praying oftentimes is but the sorrowful sigh of a burdened and contrite spirit, my praying sometimes is but

The heaving of a sigh.  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of mine eye,  
When none but God is near."

What is prayer?" *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.*" That word *helpeth* has a deep and blessed meaning; I cannot explain to you its fulness. It is the energizing of the Holy Ghost, who is here represented as struggling and wrestling with those burdens which press and bow down His loved ones into the very depths of despondency and of self-despair. Is that an evidence of my oneness with a precious Christ. It is, my friend. Is sin a great burden to you? Do afflictions gather thick around you? Do you sigh, breathe, and cry to Him who alone can help? Do you think upon His name when the heart can barely sob, and the bosom scarcely heave its sigh?" Thought on His name." Such thoughts are heard and registered in heaven; and the Spirit of the living God helps, encourages, wrestles, and gains the mastery over these gracious infirmities. "*The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" "He maketh intercession" while

we cry with poor old Job, "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even unto His seat (chap, xxiii. 2, 3). The groaning of the hypocrite, is heavier and louder than his stroke; but the stroke of a child of God is heavier than his groan. Look at David in Psa. xxxviii., "Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee." What think you of *these things*? Groaning beneath the burden of the flesh, groaning beneath the seething of indwelling corruption, groaning under the weight of circumstances, surroundings, and influences with which I cannot grapple, and which I cannot manage for myself; but, blessed be His holy Name, He to whom I groan and sigh, He of whom I think, will manage all these things for me. A precious fact is this to me, and has been the comfort and consolation of my heart day by day. "*He manages our mean affairs.*" "What can we then say to these things?" Can we say they are true? The very throbbings of our hearts respond, Amen and Amen.

"*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" If God *be for us*. Mark well that glorious fact. God on your side, God on your behalf; and He has pledged and sworn He will never leave you nor forsake you until He hath performed all He hath promised in His everlasting covenant of grace. This is the God for us. But there is no realization of *God for us* unless there is a consciousness by the Spirit's power, of *God with us*. "His name shall be called Emmanuel, GOD WITH US." God in our nature for us, through a life of sorrow, suffering, and perfect obedience here on earth; God in our nature for us yonder before the throne in His unceasing and all-prevalent intercession. But see! There can be no enjoyment of *God for us* without some *knowledge of God with us*, and there can be no true knowledge of God with us unless it be by *God in us*. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Are we the temple of the living God? "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." " Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be

reprobates" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). See! I find the Father in covenant, God for me. I see the Son in His incarnation here on earth, and in His human nature up yonder, having entered into the presence of the Father by His own blood. I see Him sending forth His Spirit, and that Spirit testifying of my eternal union to the Father and the Son. Here is the Father for me, the Son with me, and the Spirit in me. This is the THREEONE GOD, God in -His Trinity of Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Incomparable privilege to every true-born child of God! Then mark — "*If God be for us!*" When? In His foreknowledge before the worlds were framed; God for us, in His predestination of us — and His predestination of us was that we should come to the enjoyment of the blessings of His covenant. *For us*, in the pardon which He preaches by the power of the Holy Ghost to our hearts. *For us*, in the rich provisions of His grace. *For us*, in the justification of our persons. *For us*, in calling us from sin, from Satan's service, from the world's worry, from self, from danger, from temptations, trials, corruptions and perplexities. *For us*, when He stands up as the Avenger of our wrongs, and the Vindicator of our characters. *For us!* Look at the various declarations in God's most Holy Word; mark you, not mere declarations, but positive facts recorded of His being with His people in all places whithersoever they are driven, irrespective of their state or their condition. Look! *For us*. Turn to that precious portion in the Book of Judges, chap. vi. Poor Gideon is threshing wheat in secret for fear of the Midianites. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Where is his might? Where is the evidence of it? Listen! "Oh, my Lord, *if the Lord be with us*, why then is all this befallen us *I* and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt *I* but now the Lord hath forsaken us." Here is a mighty man doubting God's Word, calling into question God's declaration — "The LORD is *with thee*." And is not this the heart-experience of every elect vessel of mercy at one time or other?" Zion, said the Lord, hath forsaken Me?" *Me!* Mark that personal pronoun, "Me." "My Lord hath forgotten me." Listen! "Can a woman forget her sucking child that

she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Beheld, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hand;' (Isa. xlix. 15); yes, and on my heart. How blessed to sing in the language of Toplady —

"My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impress'd on His heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace.

Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given,  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Mark that precious portion (Isa. lxvi. 13) : "As one whom his mother comforteth, so I will comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." This speaks not of a woman forgetting her sucking child, or of a mother forsaking her little one; but rather of the fond affection which ever dwells in a fond mother's breast. The promise might read thus, "As a man whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Let me ask any mother in this assembly, whose heart God has touched, Can you forget or forsake him for whom you travailed in pain and sorrow, over whose youthful days you watched with unwearied solicitude, though his foolish feet have oftentimes wandered from you? Can you forget your lad? I know you cannot. O what a God is ours! Ephraim may wander and rebel, but Ephraim's God is ever the same, and His voice of love shall reclaim his wandering feet. "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore, My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD" (Jer. xxxi. 20). With such a revelation of the grace and compassion of Jehovah, restored wanderers may well exclaim, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Look at Elisha! In a time of extraordinary trial he stands unmoved, while his servant's heart quakes with fear, causing him to cry out, "Alas! my master! how shall we do?" Do notice the answer of Elisha: "And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi. 10, 17). Does not this remind you of those precious words of Newton —

"Angels unseen around the saints  
Their guardian pinions spread,  
To cheer the spirit when it faints,  
And raise the drooping head.

The angel's Lord Himself is nigh  
To them that love His Name;  
Ready to save them when they cry,  
And put their foes to shame."

Are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego threatened with immediate death? Listen to their unwavering confession of faith! "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Dan. iii. 10, 17). Their God was *for* them and *with* them, and the king was compelled to acknowledge the presence and preserving care of the Son of God over His persecuted people.

Come to the New Testament Scriptures and there view the varied dangers and deliverances experienced by Paul. In Acts xviii. 1 we find him at Corinth assailed and threatened by a blaspheming mob. "Then spake the Lord to Paul 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."

Turn with me to chap, xxiii., where we see him after the tumult in Jerusalem graciously encouraged by the Lord. "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also, at Rome." But as we turn to chap, xxvii. we find a practical and experimental elucidation of these precious words, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Paul is tossed up and down on the billows of the Adriatic sea — all hope of being saved is gone — the sun, moon, and stars for many days appear not, and no small tempest besets the ship. Paul speaks, "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Now notice Paul's faith and confidence! "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." O what a wonderful exhibition of God-wrought faith! But look still farther at that interesting account he gives of his confidence in the Lord under the most adverse circumstances, in 2 Timothy iv. Paul, the aged, is imprisoned because of his love to a precious Christ, approaching winter causes him to long for his cloak to warm and comfort his aged limbs. Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world. I do not believe that Demas was the apostate and reprobate many have declared him to be. I look upon him as a dear friend and brother of Paul, who, through fear of martyrdom, forsook him. Crescens, and Titus did the same. In fact, he was forsaken of all but his God. Listen! "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Blessed be God, Paul believed that which he preached. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Let a child of God be brought into the pit with Joseph, into the ditch with Job, into the net with David, into the dungeon with Jeremiah, into the depths of the sea and to the belly of hell with Jonah, to prison and to death with Peter and Paul, and all the noble army of martyrs; yet Jehovah's promise cannot fail, His word cannot be broken. "I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee."

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Of Zion we may sing, as the blessed Spirit warms and cheers our hearts with a gracious sight of Zion's Deliverer —

"They may on the main of temptation he toss'd,  
Their sorrows may swell as the sea,  
But none of the ransomed shall ever be lost,  
The righteous shall hold on His way."

Yes! let sorrows swell as the sea, let temptations try our faith, let troubles tax our patience, let what men call accidents appear in the way, in the midst of all the great Deliverer, the faithful Promiser, reveals Himself to His own, and His gracious hand is seen and felt in the preservation of one, and His loving heart is opened in the deliverance of another, from all evil, and conveying her ransomed spirit to the heights of eternal glory.

It is blessedly true that God is for His people whom He foreknew, and neither men, devils, circumstances, or influences, can ever be against them. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah liv. 17). And concerning all such, I will conclude with the precious words of Moses as he surveyed God's Israel in the plains of Moab : — "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of excellency!

and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deut. xxxiii. 29).

May the LORD add His blessing for His own Name and mercy's sake. Amen.

### III. WORDS OF CAUTION, COUNSEL, AND COMFORT.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Jan. 14th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

"The meek shall also increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

— Isaiah xxix. 18, 19.

EXCEEDING great and precious promises are treasured up in the portion read for our instruction, to be revealed in God's own time, by His own grace, to His elect, redeemed, and living people. Let us notice it in the position and order in which God the ever-blessed Spirit has been pleased, in His marvellous condescension, to place it.

The text commences with an expression shrouded in mystery to the great mass of religious professors. Professors, but not possessors of the anointing which teacheth of all things essential to spiritual life and godliness (1 John ii. 27): "In that day." What day? We find this expression, with synonymous terms, in various parts of the Old and New Testament Scriptures: "In that day ;" "The day of the Lord ;" "The day of the Son of Man" (Luke xvii 24); "The day of Thy

power" (Psalm ex. 3); "The day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2); "This is the day the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm cxviii. 24); "The Lord's-day." This is the day of love and of gracious revelation — the time when the covenant-promise of Jehovah is fulfilled by the power of His Spirit in the heart of His people — "All Thy children shall be taught of the LORD and great shall be the peace of Thy children" (Isaiah liv. 13). This is the day of the LORD'S making, and which He acknowledges as peculiarly His own in the experiences of His elect. Hypocrites, professors, and Sabbatharians will tell you that He claims one day in seven. Then, I ask, to *whom* does the rest of the week belong? What! One day in the week for the Lord and all the rest for the world, the rest for the devil?

"The city where David dwelt" was signalized by Jehovah above all the cities of the earth. In it He revealed His will, manifested His mercy, and opened up the treasures of His grace to an elect and favoured people. No nation knew His judgments and His laws, saw His light and understood His mind, but Israel; and of it Moses might well ask — "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments Be righteous as all this law which I set before you this day" (Deut. iv. 7, 8)? In no nation but Israel, in no city but Jerusalem, even Zion where David dwelt, was Jehovah revealed in covenant relationship. So when He speaks of Ariel He reveals Christ, the Altar, surrounded by a worshipping and adoring people; He makes known His Christ, the Light, in the midst of an understanding and intelligent community, and displays the Lion of the tribe of Judah breaking the seals of mystery to His redeemed and waiting Church. Here CHRIST IS ALL. From Zion the Gospel must go forth for the ingathering of His elect from the four winds. See! "JEHOVAH shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion" (Psa. ex. 2). This rod of His strength is His Gospel, as Paul declares, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also

to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. i. 16,17). Glorious Gospel this! "The righteousness of God revealed?" Yes! "Surely shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. xlv. 24). Christ my Righteousness, my Confidence, my Strength, my All in all.

Ariel then sets forth Christ to a people who "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, are thankful unto Him, and bless His Name." A people chosen of God (Psalm lxxv. 4.) : "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee." A people still more clearly revealed in 1 Peter Hi. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God.*" A people *brought*. I approach to my God and Father in the person of Jesus, my Way, my Right, and my Authority. I enter by Him, the true Ariel, the Altar of burnt offering, by Him the golden Altar of sweet incense, the all-prevalent Intercessor. I have access and introduction to His Father and mine. From the Ark of the Covenant, from the Mercy-seat, I see the glory of the Lord revealed, the glory of His salvation, the glory of His righteousness, the glory of His intercession, and He assures me that *that* glory is mine (John xvii. 22).

But let us now look at Jerusalem as described in this chapter. Did the true worship and service of Jehovah abound? No! There was only here and there a worshipper in spirit and in truth; only here and there one walking in the light, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin; only here and there one bowed down with a broken heart on account of the burden of sin, the onslaughts of Satan, and the absence of Jesus; only here and there one mourning over ignorance, infidelity, and indifference; only here and there one who was sick of self, and could feeling say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Strange though it may appear, there were few in the midst of religions Jerusalem whose religion was "that of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise was not of men, but of God," and who could sing or sigh, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the

Strength, or Rock of my heart, and my Portion for ever." What! Those persons who have nothing in heaven and naught upon earth but Jesus in possession of a failing heart! Yes! But hypocrites and professors know nothing of such an experience as that of Asaph. Let us now look at the state of things existing and abounding in Jerusalem, keeping in view the expression, "*in that day.*" A day of *praying*, preaching, and profession, a day of almost universal hypocrisy. A form of godliness prevailed, but the power was denied. Men could talk of their love to and for the God of Israel; but they knew nothing of His love to His own hidden and despised ones. They could boast of the number of their sacrifices, but they hated and disregarded God's Altar and Sacrifice. They gloried in their fancied free-will and ability to do good, but scouted the bare idea of Jehovah's power in them. They prided themselves in the excellency and dignity of human nature, but cursed and blasphemed at the mention of Jehovah's sovereignty in the distribution of His favours. Jehovah looks on and cries in -withering sarcasm and fixed determination, "Add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices, yet T will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto Me as Ariel.

In the midst of abounding corruption God will make His gracious work to appear, and preserve to "Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He will so work in His own that they shall appear before Him as Ariel, worshipping before His altar, walking in His light, waiting for His will, and living alone because He is their life. "And I will encamp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee, and thou shalt be brought down. Moreover, the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away, yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." In this we have a declaration of God's sovereignty. He distresses, stirs up, and afflicts His own people by instruments of His own choice, and makes use of

whom He will as His battle-axe, His sword, His rod, for the display of His justice, in the correction, purgation, and perfecting of His own. Now, mark! This is not really *against* His people, but *for* them. In pity He corrects, in love He chastens. With unceasing care He watches over them, and recompenses tribulation to all that trouble them (2 Thes. i. (5), and declares for the comfort and encouragement of His tried and persecuted Church, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. ii. 8).

Babylon, Assyria, and Rome have done their utmost against the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Where is Babylon? Where stands Assyria? What is Rome? Crushed and abased under the mighty hand of Zion's Defender and Avenger. "For, lo, Thine enemies, O LORD, for lo, Thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered" (Psa. xcii. 9). To Zion Jehovah speaks: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn" (Isa. liv. 17J. It may appear harsh to *pious* and refined ears, but Jehovah hath declared that down into hell the enemies of Zion shall go, while she shall arise and shine resplendently in the glory of her God and Lord.

See! Zion may be *tost* but she cannot be lost. It matters not how low she may sink in the estimation of her enemies, how deep she may fall in her own judgment and feelings, the everlasting arms are underneath her. She may, through the subtlety of her arch-enemy, be determined to have her own way, go after other lovers but the One, seek her own comfort and happiness in earthly things; but in a moment God will prepare and command the waster to destroy. His moth will fret our pretty garments, His rust will eat up our cherished treasures, His spoiler will mar all our schemes of earthly joy and peace, all our idols He will sooner or later abolish; and while He shows no quarter to our wretched flesh, He will bring us as His eternally-loved Zion to stand in all the glorious perfections of our Husband, Head, and Lord.

Look for a short time at the awful state of things with which Zion is surrounded, as described in the successive verses preceding the text, and ask yourselves whether this is not a faithful picture of Christendom in the present day.

I. — INFATUATION and INSENSIBILITY. "Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry ('or, ' *take your pleasure and riot*' — margin^; they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink" (ver. 9). A frightful description of spiritual sottishness. Bishops, priests, deacons, pastors, and people *infatuated* with pride and presumption, *intoxicated* with false doctrine, *insensible* to the glorious truths of the Gospel through ambition and free-will arrogance. Yes! so-called teachers in declaring "*there is some good in everybody,*" though in the daily service of their Church they insult Jehovah with whining out, "*There is no health in us.*" A truth, mark you, which they neither will nor can believe. Oh, that such could be brought to see this terrible truth: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. ii. 11, 12).

II. — INDIFFERENCE. "For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath He covered" (verse 10). Here we have indifference to the revelation, rights, righteousness, salvation, and sovereignty of God. In our day this abounds on every hand. Arminianism, Romanism, Rationalism, Ritualism in profusion in that very Church which Sossesses Scriptural articles and sound creeds. Yet, blessed be rod, we can find in the midst of this dead Sardis a few names which have not defiled their garments. God knows best where to locate His ministers: He places them where He will, when He will, and just because He will, and lordly man is offended and mad because He will not consult him. Turn to the regions of Nonconformity, and you who have eyes to see will behold nonconformity to the sovereign will and grace of Jehovah, indifference to Him who declares His sovereign right to save whom

He will. It may, it will appear marvellous, monstrous and strange to man's finite conception, but Jehovah's sovereign will and good pleasure is to save His elect and eternally-loved people in spite of themselves. When these are bent on their own damnation He is determined they shall be saved.

"Determin'd to save, He watch'd o'er my path,  
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

He chooses whom-He will and rejects whom He will. Some He saves with an everlasting salvation: others He leaves in the darkness of spiritual death, with no conception or enjoyment of His grace or His glory. Are these truths of God's Word and covenant loved in the ranks of Nonconformity? Precious little! And where they *are* acknowledged an amazing amount of indifference exists in regard to the spirituality and vitality thereof. Preachers of free-grace in the morning, free-will in the evening, and both at noon are plentiful. Yea and nay, do and live, duty-faith and conditional salvation are heralded to the four winds of heaven, producing hypocrites in abundance. Preachers conniving with worldly things, and suiting their message to the likes or dislikes of the people, abound. O may God keep me from pleasing men! And while He blesses me as He has done and continues to do with bright conceptions of His love, sweet experiences of His mercy, and blessed views of His glorious sovereignty, I cannot truckle or pander to the taste, whims, or wishes of any people.

III. — IGNORANCE. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to one that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned" (verses 11 and 12). Do we not find this fact in our day? Pride and prejudice blind the eyes of the learned to God and His truth, so that we are driven to the conclusion that the greater the learning and the greater the ignorance of God's revealed will. Turn to the unlearned and such

excuse themselves on the plea of ignorance. "Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people," and of the great bulk, religious and irreligious, *pious* and profane, learned and unlearned, it may truthfully be said, "They know not God, nor desire the knowledge of His ways." "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. iv. 18).

IV. — INSINCERITY. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men" (verse 13). Do you see that? The name of God in their mouth, the name of Jesus on their lips; but Satan in their hearts. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power." Such admit there is a Father, patronize the Son, and ignore the Holy Ghost in His glorious person, gracious offices, and regenerating work. These can speak of the fear of God, but not according to the Scriptures or the Spirit's work in the heart. It is "by the precept of men" they are taught, which never leads from, or higher than, man. The Gospel according to Arminius, or the truth according to Calvin, or the message according to our pastor. The Gospel, the truth, cannot be mentioned but as it is associated with the name of some poor, puny mortal. May the Lord in His infinity mercy and goodness deliver you from all priestly and parsonic thralldom! and may it be the blessed privilege of the Church at the Grove to profit by the ministry of those who are pastors according to God's heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding in the fear of the LORD, and go before you into the rich, fair fields of Gospel liberty, where, unshackled and free, like so many Naphtali's, you may see in the light of God and bow in profound subjection to the guidance and teaching of His blessed Word and Spirit, rejoicing in Jesus, and Jesus only as the one Object of your heart's love and adoration!

V. — INFIDELITY. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they

say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding" (verses 15 and 16)?

Here we see the pride of intellect, the boasted power of reason and independence of God's revelation of His will by His most blessed Spirit. Look at Articles x. and xvii. of England's Church, and compare them with the teaching from thousands of her pulpits. Jesuitry has succeeded well in supplanting free-grace with free-will. Arminianise! Arminianise! Arminianise! is the Jesuit's watchword. Ignore sovereign power and set up human ability to perform spiritual acts; tell man he has the power to give his heart to the Lord whenever he will, to turn over a new leaf when he will, to embrace the offer of mercy when he will. That is rank Popery; but Protestants so-called are spiritually blind and cannot see it. What is Popery? It is Arminianism and infidelity spangled — a tissue of lies and deceit.

Thus, in this chapter the Holy Ghost gives a frightful but faithful representation of professing, but not possessing Israel, in the light of which we see the state of the professing Church in our days. Yet, blessed be God, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound; amid the gloom of insensibility, indifference, ignorance, insincerity, and infidelity Jehovah's glory appears to Zion. The true light now shines to the Israel of God. See!" And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the Book." Who are the deaf? All mankind are by nature dead and deaf — deaf to the Father's commands and to the demands of His righteous law, deaf to the Saviour's voice of love and to the promises of His Gospel, deaf to the Spirit's witness, when the Word is faithfully preached. But the deaf in words of the text are a people separate from all others — "*The deaf that have ears*" (Isa. xliii. 8). This seems marvellously strange to poor human nature, to those who have not been taught by the Holy Ghost in the school of Christ — "*The deaf that have ears!*" We who have ears opened by the Spirit to catch the sound of the voice of our Beloved, are we not

deaf? Deaf to what? See! We are deaf to every voice but that of sovereign grace and power. Sometimes we are brought to hear the voice of the Turtle in the land of spiritual promise and Divine revelation as He sweetly testifies of a Saviour's love, blood, and salvation, and speaks pardon and peace, comfort and quietness to our waiting hearts. We rejoice in the experimental possession of such a Teacher; but although we have ears to hear, we cannot hear every hour of the day; and unless the King speaks, and His gracious words are conveyed by the heavenly wind, which is the conductor of the heavenly mind, we are deaf indeed. Jehovah's mind, the sound of His voice, the revelation of Himself cannot be known without the power of God the Holy Ghost.

But "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isa. xxxv. 5). Jehovah's command goes forth, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. xi. > What is he to hear?" What the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Not what the Church, or the creeds, or the articles, or the preacher may say; but what the Spirit says to the Churches, with or without any of these. The trueborn child of God loves to hear the voice of the King-priest, and when blest with the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, he is deaf to every voice beside. If the Holy Ghost witnesses not in the heart of a tried and tempted pilgrim, it avails not to repeat in his ears a profusion of precious promises from the pages of God's most Holy Word. Ask him, does he hear the sweet voice of sovereign love and mercy comforting and cheering his exercised heart? and he will unhesitatingly answer you, No. This reminds me of one whose toils and trials have reached a close, and whose tried and chastened spirit now rests in the bosom of everlasting love. I stood by the dying bed of dear Thomas Simmons, of Manchester; he was dear to his God and dear to me. Darkness and gloomy forebodings filled his mind, and Satan's hellish injections distressed him greatly. The Comforter that should relieve his soul appeared to him far away (Lam. i. 17). I tried to find good words and comfortable to speak to his sorrowing soul, but all in vain. His natural hearing had almost gone. I put my hand to my mouth to convey the sound of the words to his ears, and said distinctly, —

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrow, heals his wound,  
And drives away his fear."

I asked him, did he find any sweetness there? He answered, No! He was too honest to profess what he did not experimentally possess. He was deaf to every promise, to every word I spoke, when, without forethought — it was God's own doing — I cried in his ear, —

"How *nasty* the name of Jesus sounds."

"No, no!" he cried, "I won't have that!" The ears of the deaf were unstopped when the honour and glory of the King were questioned!

"*The deaf shall hear the words of the Book.*" What book? I believe it is the Book of Life, the book of God's irrevocable and unalterable decrees, the counterpart of which is His own glorious Gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The Bible is God's gift to a covenant people, in which He reveals the Book and the *words* of life to them, and to them alone. In this Book *words* are found, from it *words* are conveyed by irresistible power to those for whom they were designed. Mark! WORDS, not ceremonies, sacraments, ordinances, or rules. WORDS, the *words* of a loving Father, the *words* of a precious Saviour, the *words* of a gracious Comforter, coming home to the heart with warmth, love, and power.

Jesus said, "I have given unto them the *words* which Thou gavest Me" (John xvii. 8).

Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go t Thou hast the *words* of eternal life" (John vi. 68).

Look at Acts xi. 14 : — An angel said to Cornelius, "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee *words* whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

Oh, what precious words, burning in the hearts of God's sent ones (Jer. xv. 16), *bubbling up* in the affections of God's favoured ones (Psa. xlv. 1 — margin), put into the mouth of God's trembling ones (Jer. i. 9), flowing from the lips of God's anointed ones (Ezek. ii. 7), and comforting to the souls of God's mourning ones (Zech. i. 13).

*"The eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."* Blind! Who are they? All, naturally, are blind to the glory, grace, and goodness of a covenant God. They are like the man whose history is recorded in John ix., "*born blind.*" Look at that terrible declaration of the Holy Ghost by the apostle, "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 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. iv. 3, 4). Such are blind to the beauties shining in the person of Jesus, to the revelation of God concerning the all-atoning efficacy of His blood to put away sin, the perfection of His righteousness, the prevalency of His intercession, and the glory of His kingdom. If you will consult the following portions you may read a revelation of the sovereignty of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in this blindness. Isaiah vi. 9, 10; Matt. xiii. 13 — 16; John xii. 39, 40; Acts xxviii. 24 — 27.

But there are others described in the Book as feelingly and experimentally blind, who cannot see, discern, or comprehend the things of God, without His gracious interposition and revelation of Himself; but the moment He touches my spiritual eyeballs, and gives me a gracious manifestation of His love, grace, and mercy, in the pardon of my sins, and the acceptance of my person, through the wounds, love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, I can cry adoringly, "I once was blind, but now I see." It is not I would see Jesus; but I see Jesus humbled, suffering, dying, crowned, and reigning; and all

for me. Look at the account given of Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus (Acts xxvi.). God's light, God's glory shone upon him — that moment he was helpless, speechless, sightless — "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." Here he tarried three days blind, dumb, and helpless, until the word of the Lord came to him through Ananias, a devout disciple. Then the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shone into his heart, the eyes of his understanding were enlightened, he saw and knew the hope of God's calling, and the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in His saints. For the glory of that light he could *not* see, in the glory of that light he saw, he wondered, he adored. His natural reason and intellectual powers bowed before the God of revelation, and from that moment to the end of his life Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, was the prevailing theme of his ministry. How blessed it is to be amongst God's blind who cannot see, and who do not desire to see only as He is graciously pleased to reveal Himself in the Son of His love, by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit!

That is a precious Scripture in Isaiah 1.10, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Oh, child of God, is it dark with thee? Wait! watch! sit still! stay thyself upon Him! Though the light tarry it will come, and "JEHOVAH shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." "*Obscurity!*" We do not always see things as clearly as we would. In providence, God's dealings with us are dark and mysterious, and we see not the bright light which is in the clouds; we cry, "All these things are against me." But a Father's gracious purpose shall be made manifest, to the joy and delight of His waiting children. In grace, His leadings are oftentimes through the dark. We would unceasingly bask in the unclouded light of His countenance, but we do not. Dark clouds of doubt, fear, unbelief, and accursed indifference hide His gracious smiles from our view. "We wish for the day;" we wait for the sweet revelation and

application of His precious Word, which we cannot take to ourselves without the grace and power of His ever-blessed Spirit. "But unto you that fear My Name shall the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv. 2). He will come in His own time, and cheer the hearts of His waiting ones.

"The meek." These are those who have learned some blessed lessons of patience and endurance in the school of suffering oneness with Christ; and they shall increase their joy in the Lord — not in the outside baubles of an empty profession — joy in the Promiser who appears in the promise — joy in the Blessor who smiles in the blessing.

"And the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." How many of us has God stripped of our fancied riches and leveled with the dust? Are we poor and needy, poor in spirit? Such are put into experimental possession of the kingdom of God and of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Elect, holy, and separated children rejoice in their Holy Father through their Friend and Brother the Holy Child, the Holy Man, Christ Jesus, by the grace, power, and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, their Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. To Whom be all glory and praise everlasting. Amen.

## IV. THE LORD IS GOOD."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Feb. 11th, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"The Lord is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."

— Nahum i. 7.

DURING my short stay away from you, seeking that rest and restoration which God alone can give, I received a letter from one near and dear to me, in which I found these precious words. They came home with fresh sweetness, encouragement, and comfort, such as I had not experienced beforetime. More than once, twice, or thrice it has been my privilege to expound the precious truths of God's most Holy Word from this portion; in fact, the first Wednesday evening it was my lot to open my mouth in the name and fear of the Lord in this great London, these words formed the subject-matter of our meditation. May He, who first brought home the words with preciousness, who has confirmed that preciousness again and again, and who has spoken home the words more than twice during the past week, be with us this morning as we contemplate His goodness, His grace, and His glory revealed to the tried and tempted, the desolate and destitute ones of His redeemed family!

We behold something exceedingly beautiful in the order in which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to declare these words for the comfort and the consolation of the flock. If we contemplate the preceding context, we find fury, jealousy, indignation, vengeance, wrath, the whirlwind, and the storm, hiding Jehovah's face from the view of His weary pilgrims. All natural resources are dried up, and there is no standing in His sacred and solemn presence on the ground of what nature can do or produce. Then come the words in the passage I have read to you by way of text — "THE LORD IS GOOD." If we consult the words immediately following, we see destruction, desolation, and death. How glorious these words appear in the light of the contrast in which Jehovah has placed them, like an oasis in a desert land, a fresh-water spring in the midst of the weary wilderness; across the pilgrim's path as he wends his way through toils, through trials and temptations, this precious portion seems to shed its cheering rays for his comfort and encouragement! From the dark cloud of judgment God reveals His own glorious light; in the midst of that fearful display of indignation, wrath, and fury against His enemies, we find goodness, grace, and glory abounding to His own. Let us for a moment or two notice the different points which present themselves in the chapter before us. "God is jealous," or, as you read in the margin, "JEHOVAH is a jealous God." Jealous! What does it mean? Simply this, He will not have the honour due to His Name ascribed to another, neither will He see with complacency the love of my heart going after any object but Himself. He is jealous over me, who have oftentimes wandered from Him. Look at Hosea ii. 5, 6: Israel may say, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink;" but Jehovah will be more than a match for His own. He says, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths." Such is my waywardness that I would stray after earthly things which make for my hurt and ruin, but, blessed be His Name, He has proved Himself "a jealous God," in wondrous love to me, and in vengeance upon His enemies and mine. As "a jealous God," having bound Himself by the most solemn obligation, He will have no mercy whatever on my wretched

flesh, on my fleshly inclinations, wanderings, or proclivities. He is jealous, and from all my idols He will cleanse me; and, blessed be His holy Name, in the day when the pride of His people shall be brought low, their idols He will utterly abolish, He will endear Himself to them as their everlasting All in the Son of His love, by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

"The Lord revengeth." Notice that! Is God a God of vengeance? Yes! "O God unto whom vengeance belongeth, show Thyself." This is the language of a child of grace, who has been brought into the experience of Jehovah's love, in whose heart that love has been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given unto it. Well can such an one afford to leave his cause, his circumstances, his character, and his all in the hands of Him who has declared that He will recompense tribulation to all that trouble His own people. Placed in the midst of defamation, falsehood, and deceit, in the midst of envying and enmity, when the devil and men are scheming to work the overthrow of a child of God; at such times will he be able to say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." I know that my *next of Kin* liveth, or I know that He who had the right to redeem me liveth; I know that the Avenger of the cause of His people liveth. Oh, precious resting-place is this, to know that my concerns are in the hand of One who is well able to manage all my affairs, many and interminable as they may appear in the world's estimation. He is a revenging God.

What a precious and glorious promise is this! "*Slow to anger.*" How slow *I* So slow that His anger never reaches His people, never overtakes them. Oh no! "*Slow to anger,*" the anger which He shall manifest against all His adversaries who are the foes and enemies of His redeemed. See! He *is* "*slow to anger.*" How many days would the wicked remain in the world without God's own despised elect ones? How many? No one can tell. The Avenger lingereth, and wrath tarrieth only for the sake of God's elect who live in the midst of a mass of corruption and rebellion. Until God shut Noah in the ark with Himself (for that is the blessed view of the case; the

command was, "Come thou into the ark "), until that moment, judgment lingered and wrath tarried; but the very moment he was shut in, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened,' the watery deluge passed on all, and the waves of God's terrible wrath swept the haters of His righteousness from off the earth. Look at the wonderful forbearance and patience recorded in Genesis xix. I love to linger upon these precious truths. We find Lot's heart was in Sodom, though his heart belonged to God. God's heart was on Lot, but Lot's affections were placed on the pleasures, comforts, and enjoyments of Sodom, that city of filthiness and abomination. Read verse 16: "And while he lingered" — lingered amidst the corruptions, blasphemy, and profanity of Sodom — "*while he lingered*, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two-daughters, the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth." Mark verse 22: "Haste thee, escape thither; *for I cannot do anything till thou become thither.*" Until Lot was out of Sodom, the judgment of God lingered; until Lot was safe in little Zoar, the wrath and fury of God was restrained. The same day the fire of God came down on Sodom (Luke xvii. 29.) He is "*great in power.*"

"Twas great to speak a world from naught,  
But greater to redeem."

It was great to call light out of darkness in the first creation; but as I experience the rising of the light of God amidst the darkness and dire confusion of my tried and tempted spirit, I bow down in awe and adoration before that light, while nature's sparks are lost in the brightness of His glory. What power is this? It is the power which produced a sinless Saviour in the womb of a poor sinful woman; *the power* which holds all things for my good and for JEHOVAH'S glory; *the power* which supplies my every want and necessity; *the power* which wrought out and brought in everlasting righteousness for me; *the power* by which a precious Christ overcame death, the grave, hell, Satan, and destruction; *the power* which subdued my

rebellious will and my enmity to His glorious Gospel, bringing every thought, imagination, and desire into willing captivity to the obedience of Christ. It is the resurrection-power of Jesus, for which Paul prayed so fervently," That I may know Him and *the power of His resurrection.*"

*"He will not at all acquit the wicked."* Stand I acquitted by and before Him? This can only be on the ground of His dear Son, my Substitute, Surety, and Saviour, being condemned for me, suffering for me, and presenting His blood and righteousness on my behalf. All out of Christ shall hear the sentence of eternal condemnation from His judgment-throne, and depart at His command into the vengeance of everlasting fire (Matt. xxv. 41).

"The LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm." We see this in the case of the Lord Jesus, through His life of suffering and perfect obedience here on earth. See what a whirlwind of human passion and devilish hatred He experienced! One time, when in the synagogue of Nazareth, He stood up and declared the discriminating grace of God, *that* congregation of free-willers and opposers of God's truths led Him out to the brow of the hill to cast Him down headlong; "but He, passing through the midst of them, *went His way.*" In gloomy dark Gethsemane, amidst the dark clouds of judgment which surrounded Him, He had His own way. In Pilate's judgment-hall, -when Peter denied Him, and all forsook Him, He had His own way. When His sacred feet and hands were transfixed to the accursed cross on Calvary's mount, even at that moment, as God-man, He had His own way, with sin, and death, and with Satan frustrating all his designs against the Church. God's way is a right way in which He will lead His own people. It may be — No! no "may be" here, it will be — through toil and tribulation, distress and disappointment, dreariness and weariness, He will lead His own right up to the heights of glory, and present them faultless, perfect, and complete in Himself. He has His own way in the whirlwind. What a mercy for me to know that in the whirlwind of changes, uncertainty, doubt, and fear, He has His own way with me! Dark

clouds may hover over me, terrible disappointments may distract me, and fearful temptations distress me, but, blessed be His Holy Name, as an elect vessel of mercy, with a little of His love shed abroad in my heart, begetting love to Him in return, He seals home His precious truths, saying, "I have My own way in the midst of all this."

"He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, and dryeth up all the rivers." What does this mean? All earth's comforts, all earth's enjoyments, all earth's pleasures are marred, God sends a blight on everything out of himself. Instead of experiencing His rich abounding mercy, misery prevails in my heart. Instead of receiving from His gracious hand the gifts of His providence as so many tokens for good, through, the cunning craftiness of the devil, and the deceitfulness of my own heart, I seem to read the very opposite upon all. You may depend upon it, my dear friends, if you belong to Him and are experimentally one with Him, this must be the experience of your hearts: —

"I break thy schemes of earthly joy.  
That thou may'st find thy All in Me."

"Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" Who can stand? Who? That favoured sinner who can sing with the spirit and with the understanding also, though it may be with more of desire than of assurance, —

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

That is the man, there is the woman, there is the child who stands when He appears. Does He appear now by the convicting power of the blessed Spirit, working sorrow and trouble in thy poor sad heart? Thy cry is, Search me still more and more. Lord; know what is in

my heart; and give me to know what I am in the light of Thy glorious perfections; meet me in all my need with Thyself, my Salvation and Supply. *The rocks are thrown down by Him.* But see! When flesh and heart faileth, and the world and all things therein shall pass away, the Lord shall be the Rock and the Strength of His people's heart, and their Portion for evermore. In the midst of this terrible description of Jehovah's wrath, anger, indignation, and fury, the words of grace come floating on the wings of the heavenly wind, and are brought with irresistible power to our hearts, "The Lord is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him." It is a precious privilege for His weary pilgrims to enter intelligently into the meaning of Psa. ci. 1, "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing." Mercy is a sweet theme, ay, mercy is a Precious theme to those who know their misery. But mark! We ear much about the mercy of God; we may preach mercy, peace, love, and grace, and professors will hear and never be offended; but let the salt of the covenant, ay, only a grain of the salt of the covenant in which God's discriminating and distinguishing grace, and in which the line of demarcation between the reprobate and the elect, the sons of Esau and the sons of Jacob, those who are loved with an everlasting love, and those, according to Malachi i. 4, "against whom the Lord has indignation for ever;" let this be declared ! see! Those who can listen to the sweet strains of mercy stand up in bold defiance of Jehovah and His glorious truths, and call into question the very wisdom that recorded such things in this blessed and glorious Book.

But in humble dependence upon God the ever-blessed Spirit may we, for a short time, contemplate the words contained in our text, "*The LORD is good.*"

- I. What God is in Himself, personally — "The LORD is good."
- II. What He is to His people, relatively — "A Stronghold in the day of trouble."
- III. What He is declaratively — "And He knoweth them that trust in Him."

I. "The LORD is good." This is the precious testimony of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. God is good, and all else is bad. Look through the whole range of the universe, where find you goodness? Read for yourselves the catalogue Paul has written down in Rom. iii., to prove the utter badness, depravity, incorrigibility of human nature. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psa. xiv. 2, 3; Rom. iii. 10 — 18). Have you noticed that little incident where the lawyer came to Jesus running, kneeling, and asking. Running, earnestness; kneeling, humility; asking, importunity. He said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" You see how a man, acquainted with legal terms, could bungle when he attempted to stand on free-grace ground. "*What must I do to inherit?*" A contradiction in terms. Jesus responded, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is God." Now we will look at this in the light of goodness experienced and enjoyed. See! Has God in the riches of His grace put you and me into possession of His goodness? Have we experienced a heart fluttering with adoration and awe in His solemn presence? Have we been lifted up to the height of Zion, yet mourn that we "sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar?" Yes, say you, I know something of that; I know what it is for God to go up from me in the place where He talked with me. Then you know something of Ephraim's experience, as described in the language of JEHOVAH Himself, "O Ephraim, what shall I do for thee?" Ephraim wandering from Me, Ephraim rebelling against Me, Ephraim calling into question My wisdom, love, and power, Ephraim manifesting his indifference to me. What shall I do to him? Damn him? No, no! What shall I do for him in a way of parental kindness, love, pity, and compassion. O Ephraim, "*your goodness!*" By nature he had none, by grace he had much. Your goodness is "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Is it not your experience, my friends! Well may we look at the declaration of the Saviour, "There is none

that doeth good," there is none that retaineth good; for even the elect vessels of mercy are poor earthen, leaky vessels after all, *they are*. Were it not for a covenant God holding all His goodness with undisturbed security in His own possession for His own children, nothing but miserable failure would manifest itself in each step of our earthly pilgrimage. Blessed be His holy Name for the glorious revelation He has given us of Himself in this precious portion of His Word, "The LORD is good." You will notice the word "LORD" is printed in capitals, therefore should read "JEHOVAH is good." By the name "GOD" He is generally spoken of, but by His covenant ties and titles He is little known. In the affections of His people He dwells, preserving them by His power, and satisfying them with His goodness (Jer. xxxi. 14). He is good! Good in His Trinity of Persons, good in His oneness of will, work, and ways for the salvation and glorification of His people. Goodness is JEHOVAH'S nature. Some would drag it down to the level of an attribute, but this cannot be. Mark you! God *has* power. God *has* patience, God *has* wisdom; but "JEHOVAH IS GOOD." What is His goodness? It is Himself, as one has well expressed : —

"God is goodness, and goodness is God."

Sovereign goodness ensures that every attribute is engaged in the salvation of the people of His choice, and ensures the safe conveyance of that goodness to the heart of each child loved with an everlasting love.

JEHOVAH the Father is good — the Father of His elect family who knows well how to manage His children. Turn to Luke xii. 32, a precious verse to some of you: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In the good pleasure, sovereign will, and determinate counsel of the Father, His goodness is revealed and communicated to an innumerable company of Adam's lost race.

JEHOVAH the Son is good — the Redeemer of His chosen flock. "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John x. 11). This is infinite goodness revealed in heaven's best gift — "His Son."

JEHOVAH the Spirit is good. Go to Psa. cxliii. 10, "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" — into the land of spiritual promise, Divine revelation, and covenant relationship.

In election we see the Father *willing*.

In redemption we see the Saviour *working*.

In regeneration we see the Holy Ghost *wooing and winning*.

This is the glorious threefold cord of sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating goodness which binds the whole election of grace together, and can never be broken.

The Father purposes, and goodness is *laid up* in Christ for needy sinners. Turn with me to that precious Psalm, a portion of which caused some of our hearts, last Tuesday night, to thrill with joy and gladness: "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the eons of men" (Psa. xxxi. 19). Jesus works *for*, and the blessed Spirit works *in*, us, thus we are brought into the possession and enjoyment of the goodness of the great Three-in-One Jehovah.

"Great Father of mercies, Thy Goodness we own,  
And the covenant love of Thy crucified Son;  
All praise to Thy Spirit, whose whisper Divine  
Seals mercy, and pardon, and righteousness mine."

"JEHOVAH is good." Notice that descriptive, blessed Psalm cvii., where every state and condition of life calls for redeemed and gathered sinners to "praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men." Weary wanderers (ver. 1

— 8); mourning captives (ver. 9 — 15); fickle fools (ver. 16 — 21); tempest-tossed mariners (ver. 23 — 31). Every place out of hell affords a theme for grateful praise to Jehovah who is good to His own. Covenant goodness gave us to Jesus “long before the world began,” preserves us amid all the dangers and snares of the wilderness, allures us to the company of Jesus, leads us into the presence-chamber to enjoy the smiles of our redeeming God, to be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His Name — “For the LORD is good” (Psa. c. 4, 5). Goodness goes before us in the way (Psa. xxi); goodness follows after at every step (Psa. xxiii. 6), and continueth every moment (Psa. lii. 1). Trials will abound; the world's hatred be endured, and hell's malice experienced; but JEHOVAH'S goodness shall not fail. Is He good to you? Has He begun His own good work of grace in you (Phil. i. 6)?

"The work which His Goodness began  
The arm of His strength will complete;  
His promise is Yea and Amen,  
And never was forfeited yet.

Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things Mow or above,  
Can make Him His purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from His love."

Blest with the sweet enjoyment of this goodness we know what that means, "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness" (Psa. cxlv. 7). When we get home we shall find eternity too short to utter all its praise.

II. Let us notice what He is *relatively* — “a Stronghold in the day of trouble."

Troubled ones of the Lord, notice that expression, "*day of trouble!*" Where does trouble dwell? Ask not the question! where does it not dwell under the sun in these vales of sin, suffering, and sorrow? But

there are some who appear not to know anything of trouble. Did you ever notice that wonderful expression of the tried and exercised Asaph, recorded in Psa. lxxiii.? Speaking of certain persons, he saith, „l They are not in trouble as other men.” "other MEN!" what does that mean? Asaph's "OTHER MEN" are they who know what trouble is. They are *other* altogether from those whose names are written in the earth, and whose hopes are bounded by the narrow limits of time and sense. "Other Men" are continually with God and upheld by His hand, guided with His counsel, and encouraged with the sweet earnest of future glory; though hated by the world, assaulted by the devil, and daily troubled with the burden of infirmity, imperfection, and sin. Turn to Job v. 7, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward ;" or, as we read in the margin, "*The* sons of the burning coal lift up to fly." This is an unspeakable mercy I Has the *live*, the burning, the blazing coal of unceasing love touched your lips and hearts (Isa. vi. 15)? You may ask. What meaneth this? See! It means that from the furnace of affliction, from the fierce fires of tribulation, "the sons of the burning coal shall fly." Where? Out of trouble, distress, and affliction these "OTHER MEN" cry unto the Lord; the sigh, the groan, the hope and expectation; ay, when there is no articulation, here are the sons of the burning coal, here are the sparks which fly upward to the source from whence they came, from whence all spiritual and Divine life flows, up to Him who hears in secret and rewards His own openly or otherwise. Trouble, what is its source? The devil is the source of all trouble. What is the spring from whence it flows? Sin!

Is it not a day of trouble when sin lies heavy on your souls, and your wanderings, brought to light by the Holy Ghost, tell their sad tale upon your anxious heart I Then you can sigh, if you cannot sing,

"Rock of Ages! cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee."

We see something of this in that wonderful scene described in Exodus xxxiii. and xxxiv. Moses requests to see God's glory: "And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Who can tell the delight of Moses' heart as the all-loving and almighty hand of his God placed him in the cleft of the rock, and revealed to him the glory of His goodness?" And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. This is sovereign goodness! How is it revealed \* According to the wants and necessities of God's poor children. See I

1. "*Merciful.*" JEHOVAH'S goodness to His miserable ones.
2. "*Gracious.*" His goodness flowing to His unworthy ones.
3. "*Long-suffering.*" His goodness bearing with His rebellious ones.
4. "*Truth.*" His goodness for His wavering ones.
5. "*Forgiveness.*" His goodness expressed to His sorrowing and confessing ones (See Psalm xxxii. 5, 6).

What a gloriously-gracious God is ours!" Abundant in goodness!" Bestowed in ALL-FULNESS by Jehovah the Father, reserved in undisturbed security by Jehovah the Son. Applied by the irresistible power of Jehovah the Spirit. "Keeping mercy for thousands!" A great mercy! He does not trust us with the keeping of it, for we should soon waste all in profligacy and riotous living. He keeps it for thousands, not for everybody. He is to His own "a Stronghold in the day of trouble." It is a day of trouble when Satan hurls his fiery darts, and doubts and fears produce a worse than Egyptian slavery, and a darkness more intolerable is felt. Jesus' wounds, and blood and righteousness afford a shelter to the sin-burdened and oppressed. Even in darkness and distress, under the shelter of atoning blood, elect ones are for ever safe, and in the enjoyment of this they can sing,

"Rage as ye will. O, ye portal of hell,  
Safe in the Rock do we ransom'd ones dwell." .

Hezekiah found it a day of trouble when that blustering fool Rabshakeh fumed and threatened. Hezekiah said, "This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy" (Isa. xxxvii. 3). He found Jehovah to be a Stronghold to him. He spread his case before the LORD who pledged His word — "I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake" (Isaiah xxxvii. 35). Days of trouble may, and will, come to God's children; but in each He will prove Himself a Stronghold to them. The day of death is drawing near, a day of trouble to poor nature. Many of God's children are, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage; but, blessed be God, when the moment of nature's extremity arrives, He will be true to His covenant promise, "I will be with thee." The fear of death shall be taken away, death shall be abolished in the experience of the fearing one, and life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). The day of trouble is His opportunity for the revelation of His sovereign power, infinite wisdom, and unwearied care. Pie is a very present Help in every time of trouble. Do notice this precious contrast! *A day of trouble. AN ETERNITY OF REST! A moment of light affliction. AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY!* "JEHOVAH is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble."

III. "*He knoweth them that trust in Him.*" The world knows not God, and the sigh of the oppressed is "the world knoweth us not;" yet such glory in the cause, "because it knew Him not." Blessed be His Name, we are unknown to the world, but well known to Him. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." This word "*knowledge*" has a wide signification. JEHOVAH knows them as His own property. His in purpose. His by purchase. His by power. None can erase their names from the roll of His elect. None can pluck them out of Jesus' hands. None can rob the Holy Ghost of the objects of His triumph. Through their wilderness wanderings He knows them and owns them. His is a

knowledge of approbation and appreciation, and though all earth and hell with troubles and temptations may assail them He will never disown them. Are they in sorrow? He says, "I know their sorrows!" Are they in trouble? He causes them to say to Him, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knowest my path" (Psalm cxlii. 3). Are they in want? Jesus will sweetly whisper, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him" (Matt. vi. 8).

See! He sees His own in His own glory! Are they surrounded with gloom, temptation, ay, and with sin? He sees them, He knows them, He owns them! "They shall be Mine in the day when I come to reckon up My jewels" (Mal. iii. 17). Jewels are jewels, wherever you may see them — in the dunghill, in the flood, in the furnace. Do you remember the terrible catastrophe to the Irish mail at Abergele? I remember a noble lord and his lady were burnt to cinders, their jewels were sought for, and all found, while their settings were destroyed. Blessed be His Name, His jewels of election-love shall all shine gloriously in His coronet, when all these things which now surround us shall be burnt up.

He knows our frame, and bears patiently with us.  
He knows our temptations, and brings His succour.  
He knows our transgressions, and forgives them.  
He knows our sorrows, and sweetly soothes them.  
He knows our accusers, and confounds them.  
He knows all our enemies, and scatters them.  
He knows our tears, and will wipe them all away.

"He knoweth them that trust in Him." All trust in everything else but Jehovah has been burnt up or taken away. These trusted in the law, but it cursed them; they trusted in their own heart, which deceived them; they trusted in their religious duties, which disappointed them; they trusted in priests, prophets, and preachers, who dissatisfied them; but they are weaned from everything of and from themselves, and nothing in heaven or earth will *t* do for them but "JEHOVAH,"

who "is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and knoweth them that trust in Him." My heart quivers while it cries tremblingly before Him, "This God is my God for ever and ever , He will be my Guide even unto death."

May He add His blessing for His Name's sake! Amen.

Hymn Sung At The Commencement Of The Service.

What various names JEHOVAH bears I  
What various forms His kindness wears!  
But none so much my heart expands  
As when He as my Father stands.

Is God my Father? He'll instruct,  
And all my child-like steps conduct;  
And when I sin I must expect  
He'll with a Father's hand correct.

Is God my Father? All my care  
I'll bring to Him, and leave it there;  
His wisdom and His love I'll trust,  
In sorrows and in straits the worst.

Is God my Father? Then His love  
Is fix'd on me, nor can remove;  
And since He owns me as His child,  
I can't be from His face exiled.

God, as my Father, does engage  
To give me heaven, when I'm of age;  
To Him, my Portion, I shall come;  
My Father's dwelling is my home.

Joseph Irons.

# V. HALTING SINNERS ASSEMBLED TOGETHER WITH JESUS.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Feb. 4th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation : and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever."

— Micah iv. 6, 7.

"The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," for in every book, every chapter, every verse, and in every word, we have something respecting Christ personal or Christ mystical. We may not be able to see this, but our inability to see, our lack of understanding, alters not the fact. God has revealed all essential truth for the instruction, comfort, and edification of His people in Christ Jesus. There is no superfluity in God's Holy Word, nothing too much, nothing too little. Each precept, prophecy, and promise points to the Lord Jesus Christ. The promises point to Him as the glorious Performer of the promise; the precepts point to Him as the gracious Fulfiller thereof ; prophecy points to Him as the One who reveals all dark and hidden mysteries — who brings to light the mind, purpose, and will of Jehovah concerning His own elect.

Let us look for a moment or two at the preface that stands at the head of this chapter. It speaks of the glory, peace, kingdom, and victory of the Church. The glory of the Church is settled in JEHOVAH'S covenant of grace, revealed in the Gospel of His grace, and displayed in the salvation and glorification of His people. Jesus is the Covenant given to them and for them. What would a covenant be to me without the Covenantee? And what can I find in the declaration concerning covenant grace, covenant love, covenant people, covenant salvation, without the presence of Him whom God gave for a Covenant of the people? I find that Jehovah is the glory of His people, according to Isaiah lx.: "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." And as He is my Salvation, He also bears the "glory. Am I justified? He is my Righteousness? Am I delivered from trials, troubles, and temptations? He is my Deliverer. He says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." The peace of the Church flows through the blood and righteousness of Jesus. "He is our Peace" (Eph. ii. 14). "Having made peace through the blood of His cross' (Col. i. 20). "And the work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah xxxii. 17). It matters not whether quietness or trouble be experienced by me; Christ in the perfection of His righteousness, Christ is the completeness of His salvation, is my Peace in the presence of God. "And this Man shall be the Peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Micah v. 5). When troubles and trials, persecutions, and perplexities abound, He is my Peace in the presence of the Father. The Church is graciously brought into experimental possession of a kingdom — the kingdom of God — which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Matthew writes of the "*the kingdom of heaven*" the Church in the midst of, and influenced by, her earthly surroundings. John speaks of "*the kingdom of God*" the Church of God near to Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places, enjoying His presence, and feasting upon His love. The kingdom is founded upon the immutable sovereignty of Jehovah, and can never be moved. The victory of the

Church is complete in the triumphs achieved by the Captain of her salvation, the Commander of the elect armies, the Conqueror over the world, sin, Satan, death, and hell.

Having glanced at the preface, let us notice the preceding context. Here, exceeding great and precious promises are given in rich profusion, and the communion of saints in the latter days is sweetly hinted at. "In the last days it shall come to pass." Mark the certainty expressed! It is not "In the last days it *may*" but "it *shall* come to pass that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it." No doubt this refers to the return of the true worship of God with His ancient people to the holy mount of Jerusalem, in the days of Cyrus, Darius, and the Maccabees; but its spiritual and experimental signification to us is, that true, spiritual, heart-felt worship should be established in the Person of Jesus, and the whole Church of God exalted, taught, and upheld in Him by the Holy Ghost. It is no small mercy to be able to see God's Gospel, and to trace out the experience and varied exercises of the true Israel, in Old Testament Scripture. Turn with me to Hebrews i. 1, that grand, "anti-Ritualistic epistle," in which the apostle proves the fleeting nature of all ordinances and outward signs, and that a new and lasting dispensation had dawned. He commences, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He reveals Himself, not by dead forms and carnal ordinances, but by a living, reigning, and all-glorious Person — "HIS SON." "*These last days*" — this last dispensation of grace, this wind-up of all things. Adam was created free from any taint of sin; but left to the freedom of his will, he fell from the height of earthly dignity and privilege in which God had placed him. The patriarchal

dispensation faded and passed away. Then came the Mosaic rule, in which Jehovah revealed Himself to a chosen people in types and shadows, sacrifices and offerings, ceremonies and ordinances; but all these have served their purpose, waxed old, and vanished away before the brightness of the glory of Him who is the substance of all. Christ is come, and we now live in "*the last days*" the dispensation of the Spirit, who brings home the glorious truths of the Gospel to the hearts of God's elect, when, where, and just as He pleases.

To the mountain of the house of the LORD a people shall flow. What is a mountain?' It is a portion of earth raised above the common level. This carries our spirits to Zion, God's desire, God's rest, God's delight (Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14). Here we see a favoured people raised from sin and death, exalted above the common mass of mankind, into eternal and indissoluble 'union with JEHOVAH-JESUS, by electing, invincible and sovereign grace. "But ye are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). This is the mountain of the house of the Lord, to which many people shall flow in earnest expectation, lively hope, and sincere desire. Now notice the language of those who wend their way to Zion with their faces thitherward!" *Come, and let us go up.*" Surely they have learned this from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. See!" *Come* now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18). "*Come* unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). "*Come! Cornel COME!* is the covenant command of the Gospel of the grace of God, to be obeyed by all those to whom it is addressed. "*Come, let us go up.*" Notice that "*go up,*" not *down*. Why is this? Simply because when God exalts, He first humbles: when He raises up, He first brings low; when He heals, He first wounds; when He communicates His own life, He first kills. So these persons having

been brought into the knowledge of their true state by nature, down as low as sin, Satan, and self could bring them, now cry for deliverance therefrom, and, under the gracious teaching of the blessed Spirit, the language of their heart one to another is, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob: *and He will teach us of His ways.*" He will not leave His prophets or ministers to do it; but *He will teach us of His ways;* and we will walk in His paths; we will, when He teaches us of His ways. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths peace. Pleasant ways when we can look into the face of a smiling God and experience His reconciling power in our heart. Paths of pleasantness; paths sprinkled with atoning blood; paths in which He keeps the feet of His people from stumbling; paths in which He graciously reveals Himself as the Counselor and Guide of His people. "For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." I will direct your attention to several portions of God's Word in reference to these two declarations. Look at Psa. cx. "The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies." What is this rod of His strength? His own glorious Gospel, as you read in the Romans i. 16, 17: — "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," &c. But mark that expression, "*the rod of His strength.*" Oftentimes we have taken this to refer to a rod of chastisement or correction, an instrument of punishment in the hand of an exasperated God. But, my dear friends, there is a more blessed meaning to this word *rod*. What is it?" Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." When spiritual death is experienced, tell me, you who know Him, what is it that comforts and cheers your heart when troubles and trials surround you; when your poor spirits are depressed with fear, trembling, and perplexity. Is it not this, that all things are working together for your good? God has His measuring rod, not a rod to thrash His children; but that by which He measures out all their pains, sorrows, and troubles. O what a mercy for me to know that in unchanging love He has measured out to me every affliction and disappointment. Herein I find my comfort and consolation!

"Our sorrows in the scale He weighs,  
And measures out our pains;  
The wildest storm His word obeys,  
His word its rage restrains."

"*And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" In this present dispensation of grace it goes forth from the new Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all; it goes forth out of spiritual Zion when His electing, pardoning, and uninfluenced love is manifested. "The *law*." Why does it say *law*? Because law is an assertion of authority and sovereign power; so the Gospel of Jehovah is His own glorious law for the assertions of His love, grace, pity, and compassion. "And the *word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" The Word made flesh: the covenant Word, the creating Word, the communicating Word, the Word by which we have fellowship with Him — the Word is gone forth from the spiritual Jerusalem. Ofttimes it goes forth from the heart of those whom He has distinguished as preachers, teachers, or expositors of the Word. What am I, or what should I be, if I stood here simply to comment on the written Word? if I had not the blessed assurance that the uncreated Word was with me, to minister unto your anxious minds, to broken-hearted, tried, and tempted sinners? My dear friends, I tell you before the Lord, it is only the assurance and realisation of this, leads, supports, and strengthens me, when I ascend these stairs, wishing and desiring that the testimony may be made a comfort and a consolation to His own children. But the time of peace shall come, as it is set before us in the next two verses, and which is experienced in the heart of those that are brought under the power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "For all people will walk, every one in the name of his god." Have we not here a picture of the present state of affairs on every hand? for we find persons are setting up their gods many, and then-lords many, while to us "there is only One God the Father, and One Lord Jesus Christ." Now listen! "*We will*;" a hint here. Let us be careful in making use of these two words; for it often happens when a person says *I will*, he is almost sure to do the opposite. We have an

instance of this in the parable where one promised to work in his father's vineyard and went not; while the other who said he would not, went. "*We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.*" We will do so, God helping us.

Now, then, let us, in humble dependence on the guidance of the blessed Spirit, look at the passage which I have read to you by way of a text. "*In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth.*" "*In that day,*" *the day* of Jehovah's power; *the day* when His dew comes on our branch; *the day* when we are brought into the enjoyment of His loving kindness and tender mercy; *the day* when we are experimentally established in His kingdom; *the day* in which we can say we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us — this is the Gospel day. "In that day," saith Jehovah. Jehovah the Father said it in covenant before the worlds were formed; Jehovah the Son said it in response; these were the two contracting parties; and the Holy Ghost said it also, as the Witness to the covenant between the Father and the Son; and He saith it now in the preaching of God's blessed Word., "*In that day" saith Jehovah, "will I assemble her that halteth.*" In the midst of the ruins of the fall, in the regions of ignorance, enmity, and rebellion against God, the chosen and redeemed family are scattered. Scattered in Jehovah's purpose, the moment Adam fell; and He drove out the man. What man? It does not simply say He drove out Adam, but He drove out the man; and from that moment to this, man, by nature, has had no standing in the presence of Infinite Excellency. He is driven out from Jehovah's presence, and scattered through all the nations of the earth; yet ignorant of his true position. But the text speaks of a people who are scattered amongst the peoples of the earth. These are scattered experimentally: when quickened into spiritual life, they know their lost, ruined, and cursed state. Scattered in their hopes and expectations, with no standing before a heart-searching God, and no knowledge of an interest in His salvation. Here is a precious promise, "*I will assemble.*" Have you noticed that in Ezekiel xxxiv.?" So will I seek out My sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day,"

&c. And where will He assemble them? Into one locality, into one spot of the earth, as in Old Testament days, when the tribes went up to worship at Jerusalem? No, no, but according to that precious prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xl. 10): "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and *to Him shall the gathering of the people be*; "the assembling of the people shall be to Him. Where is this glorious Him? Where? See!" Where two or three *are gathered*," not where two or three meet; but *are gathered* by the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the all-attracting charms of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst." It is not to this mountain, not to this or that consecrated spot; no, not to the communion table; which so-called priests or presumers style the altar, the most abominable and filthy place in the whole church, a place of blasphemy, where awful imposition is practised; for you may depend upon it, that no greater impostors live in our day than those wretched creatures called clergymen, who arrogate to themselves the right and title of sacrificing priests. Pretty clergymen they are too! What is the meaning of the word? God's lot, God's heritage, God's chosen, that is, God's people — a scattered people assembled round the person of a crucified and risen Head ; yet this worldly and carnal priesthood, in the face of the oath which they took on their knees before God and their bishop, presume to a sacrificial position, arrogating to themselves what God has ignored. But how blessed it is to turn away from all this, to know that in all places where Jesus' name is recorded by the Holy Ghost, there His heart and His eye shall be perpetually! That is the place where the Father seeketh spiritual worshippers to "worship Him in spirit and in truth," where a precious Christ is exalted, and God's truth, God's covenant, God's salvation is dealt out to the waiting and expecting hearts of the true Israel of God.

He, whose sovereign and distinguishing favour assembled them in His purpose of grace and mercy before the words were framed, now sees them scattered to the ends of the earth, knows their wanderings, wants, and woes, and at the set time of favour sends His good Spirit,

who convinces them of sin, and leads them to the feet of Jesus. This is the spot where the living in Jerusalem love to experience the assembling power of the good Shepherd, where the sheep pass under the hands of Him that telleth them; — THE FEET OF JESUS! Far before that sentimental phrase, *the foot of the cross*. I love to be found at His sacred feet, who once bled and died upon the accursed cross, for me. I love to assemble in spirit with His chosen few, and from the slopes of Olivet see Him rising to the heights of glory for me, yea, rising far above all heavens. I love to behold Him as the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne, beautiful in His lowliness as the Lamb of God, glorious in His sovereignty as my King and my God. Are there any halting ones here this morning? Those who have fallen upon that stone and are broken in heart and spirit, not those upon whom the stone falls, and are ground to powder; but those who halt, who fall, who are broken, and who are raised, restored, and refreshed by the gracious hand of the Omnipotent Gatherer? I ask not for the *very proper, pious, and precise*, who are always on their legs, your modest, meek, and mild ones who can talk smooth things, but the moment Jehovah's glorious sovereignty, His right to save or damn whom He will, is declared, *piety* and *placidity* vanish and the enmity of Satan's brood is displayed. Blessed be God, the lame take the prey; weaklings are carried, and the halting and maimed ones are assembled together by our glorious Captain and Commander. Such, experiencing their weakness, are the objects of His unceasing compassion and care; their desire and determination is, "We will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever;" but Satan will put the determination to the test, and each child of God shall halt under the burden of the flesh, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the continued tribulations which surround and beset his path. To the third heaven of unspeakable privilege and sweet revelation he may be raised, but the thorn in the flesh will distress, the messenger of Satan will buffet, and the crook in the lot will produce fresh cries for His presence which is salvation (Psalm xlii. 5 — margin).

Let us turn to a few portions of God's Word, where we shall see that God's people, however highly favoured or richly gifted they may be,

at some time or other, *halt* in their walk, *fail* in their enjoyments, and *fall* in their feelings. Yet,

"When our dearest comforts fall  
Before His sovereign will,  
He never takes away our all,  
Himself He gives us still."

The everlasting arms are underneath and uphold the whole election of grace, and while they may fall *fouly*, fall *finally* they never can.

Notice Gen. xii. 4 — 20, xx. 1, 2. Abraham the friend of God, and the father of the faithful, who, if there was one in creation who ought to have stood firm in the faith surely it was he; but, though highly blessed and richly endowed with spiritual favours, *he halted*. Into Egypt and Gerar he journeyed, his heart failed him, his doubts and fears perplexed him, cankering care and worldly anxiety assailed him. In one case he said to his wife, "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee." In the temptation at Gerar, "Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah." Call ye not this halting! Now look at that wonderful chapter, Gen xv. The Word of Jehovah was revealed to him as his gracious Protector, faithful Provider, and covenant Promiser; but, "when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell him" (verse 12). He was a man of like passions with all the tried and tempted people of God. Where are *you*? Know ye anything of the halting, the horror of great darkness, a darkness that can be felt — a darkness which preys upon your spirits until your hope and expectation are perished and gone (Lam. iii. 18), and you are brought to acknowledge

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform,  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm?"

Blessings upon His sacred name, He hath His way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, through which He will safely guide His tempest-tossed children.

Look at that precious narrative given to us in Gen. xxxii. 24: "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." Who was this mighty Wrestler? It is the Angel of JEHOVAH'S presence — the Man Christ Jesus. He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh. Jacob *halts*, Jacob fails, Jacob prevails. His weakness must be known and felt, and the strength of God experienced by him. Out of weakness he was made strong, and "strengthened with all might according to His glorious power," he rejoiced in the possession of the blessing of JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Covenant Wrestler. Look at this praying, pleading prince of God as he is described at the close of this glorious narrative. "And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and *he halted upon Ms thigh*" (verse 31). Those who experience the covenant compassions of Israel's God are the most sensible of their halting day by day.

Another halter! Who is he? The meekest of all men upon the face of the earth. O that I were like him, and could take a lesson out of his book! Wait a moment or two. Read Numbers xx. 1 — 13. Israel thirsts and murmurs for water. God commands Moses to speak to the rock, and it shall give forth *his* water. Mark well that personal pronoun, "*Ms water.*" But Moses with his rod *smote the rock* twice, and contrary to the command of God *spoke to the people*. In the madness of his spirit he cried, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" O my dear friends, if you meet with a child of God, whatever may be his weakness or infirmity, be careful what you call him — be careful as to what you say concerning him; for God will not have His children called by wrong names with impunity; nor will He have them addressed as "*rebels.*" Moses was angered greatly at the waters of strife, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and the consequence was that into the good land over the Jordan he was not privileged to enter. The meekest of all men in

his meekness *halted*; yet the God of all grace, the God of patience, while He connived not at his sin, bore with him in his infirmity.

Have you not noticed the various haltings of David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and the beloved of his God? On the housetop, as he beheld the beauty of Bathsheba, *he halted*, he fell. As the monarch of a mighty kingdom, and the commander of victorious hosts, *he halted* when, in the pride of his heart, he ordered the numbering of the people. These haltings were graciously overruled by God to the outpouring of those sorrowful expressions of true repentance, which we love to linger over in the Book of Psalms. O what a mercy! These plaintive strains have cheered and encouraged many a weary, halting, pilgrim's fainting heart.

Now look at that wonderful book of the prophet Hosea. There we have a graphic account of the exercises, experiences, aye, and extravagancies of the child of God under the appellation, Ephraim. Notice his waywardness, his wanderings, his determination to work his own way, assert his own will, and choose his own idols. God commands!" Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (chap. iv. 17). What! to be lost at last? No, no! let him run the length of his tether until he is surfeited; or, "let him alone," leave him to Me, speak not against him, your meddling will not *mend*, but rather *mar* him. Though he has wandered from Me and rebelled against Me, he is My dear son. In every chapter of Hosea haltings abound, but sovereign goodness cries, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together, I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man" (chap. xi. 8, 9).

And what shall I say more on this painful but precious subject from the Old Testament Scriptures? Samson, with all his great strength, halted, aye, even unto death; but Jehovah has assembled him with His worthies. Rahab halted when she received the spies in peace,

and told lies as to their whereabouts. Blessed be God, Abraham halted, Jacob halted, Moses halted, David halted, Samson halted, Rahab halted; and now the covenant determination of Jehovah is fulfilled, the halting ones are assembled before the presence of His glory, and, with all their halting, failing, and falling, not a hoof is left behind.

We now come to New Testament Scripture, and what find we here? Has human nature improved? Is the flesh of those who are brought under the power of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus better than that of others? Not a whit! Look at Peter — Peter, blessed with a gracious revelation of God's Christ to him and in him, favoured with the company and counsel of the blessed Man whose grace-filled lips spoke words such as man never spake before or since. Yet, when the hour of trial, the moment of weakness arrived, where was he? "Peter followed Him afar off" (Matt. xxvi. 58). *He halted.* Now we see him denying his Master (ver. 70); "And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man" (ver. 72); "Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the Man" (ver. 74). Does the Lord cast off and disown His halting one? NO! He will bring him to know himself, and mourn over his halting. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord; and Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke xxii. 61). Ah! that was a look of loving conviction, a look of gracious remembrance, a look of gentle restoration. After His resurrection, Jesus remembered, in tenderest love, His poor halting disciple; by His angel at the sepulchre He remembers him by name, "Tell His disciples *and Peter.*" While at the sea of Tiberias, amongst the assembled ones, He sweetly drew from a heart which knew its own bitterness and grief on account of his base denial the gracious confession, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John xxi. 17). But notice well, Peter's halting ceased not here. Immediately after Jesus counselled him to mind his own business in respect to John, "Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me" (ver. 21, 22). Years after this he

halted, so that Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed;" and not only so, but Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," *halted*, being "carried away with their dissimulation" (Gal. ii. 11 — 13).

Let us look at this word "*halteth*" in another light. Do you not remember that expression on Carmel's mount, when the prophet of fire poured forth his withering invectives, and mocked the worshippers of Baal?" How long *halt ye* between two opinions or thoughts?" Know ye what it is to halt between two puzzling and perplexing exercises of mind? I do! Worldly contrivances or the Father's will, which? (See Matt. vi. 24 — 34.) Turn with me to that illustration in Gen. xxv. 22, 23: Rebekah was in a state of nature's trial and anxiety, two opposites struggled together within her, "And she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD." God told her that two nations, two manner of people should be separated from her, and "the elder shall serve the younger." In this we see the two seeds, the two natures, flesh and spirit, nature and grace, the old man of sin and the new man of grace. O ye children of the living God, you know what is the meaning of this wrestling, struggling, halting. You would do good, but evil is present with you: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). Ye would, but cannot sing! Ye would, but cannot pray! "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). You are blest with the evidence of life, but oppressed with the experience of death, in the midst of which you sigh, If I am dead, why do I experience the workings of life? if I am alive unto God, how is it I experience this death? Cheer up, old friend! These are blessed tokens of Jesus' love to thee and of His life in thee.

Look again (Phil. i. 23, 24)! "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful to you." Have you ever been there? Afflictions, anxieties, cares, crosses,

disappointment, and dissatisfaction abounding — walking in darkness and no light, incessant war and sighing for peace, sorrow and no joy, mourning and no consolation! Then, you have sighed for the bright and glorious morning without clouds, the dawn of heaven's eternal day, a sight of Emmanuel's unveiled glory: *but* God's time for your entrance into the home of the glorified had not arrived, so you must wait His bidding.

"But hush, my soul, nor dare repine,  
The time thy God appoints is best,  
While here to do His will be mine,  
And His to fix my time of rest."

When left to ourselves even for a moment, *we halt*, we fall; but O how precious to know that JEHOVAH'S word is pledged, His promise is given, His oath stands good, to assemble His halting ones, bending before His throne of grace, to commune with Him there, sitting at His table to partake of His provisions of love, and eventually before Him in glory blest with His unceasing smile, lost in His love to adore Him for evermore. Glorious certainty! Marvellous beauty!" I WILL." He assembles the halting ones in His name, in His fear, at His feet, His hands their security, His heart their home! The time has gone! God help-us to look at the passage again to-night. To Whom be all praise, power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN SUNG AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SERVICE.

How watchful is the loving Lord,  
How sweet His providential Word,  
    To children that believe!  
Your very hairs are number'd all;  
Not one by force or chance can fall  
    Without your Father's leave.

No cross nor bliss, no loss nor gain,  
    No health nor sickness, ease nor pain,  
Can give themselves a birth;  
The Lord so rules by His command,  
Nor good nor ill can stir a hand,  
    Unless He send them forth.

Since Thou so kind and watchful art,  
    To guard my head, and guard my heart,  
And guard my very hair, —  
Teach me with child-like mind to sit  
And sing at my dear Saviour's feet  
    Without distrust or fear.

So, like a pilgrim, let me wait,  
    Contented well in every state,  
Till all my warfare ends;  
Live in a calm and cheerful mood,  
And find that all things work for good,  
    Which Jesus kindly sends.

John Berridge.

## VI. THE GATHERER AND THE GATHERED.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Feb. 4th, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her (hat I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation : and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.”

— Micah iv. 6, 7.

We were led this morning to meditate on the suggestive preface to this chapter, and beheld therein the glory, the peace, the kingdom, and the victory of the Church secured to her in the person of her great and glorious Head. We also noticed several of the salient points presented in the preceding context of this portion, then endeavoured to see the day when JEHOVAH works sovereignly and graciously in assembling and gathering together His elect and despised people: and notice His determination to do this as set forth in the declaration, “*saith the Lord;*” for if He speaks, it must be done, it must be accomplished. “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,” or, as we read in Psalm xxxiii. 9, “He spake, and IT WAS” — the word “*done*” is in italics. He only has to speak, nay, but to will, and that which He wills, exists. He condescends to speak

for the instruction, guidance, and comfort of His people, and they know no voice but His for their comfort, confirmation, and establishment in grace. The longing desire of every heaven-born soul in private, in the assemblies of God's saints, or as they walk together in their twos and threes, in isolation, and sometimes in soul desolation, is, "Let me hear Thy voice." Is this the longing and desire of many hearts, big with hope and expectation, within these walls to-night? Yes, I know it is the very throbbing of many hearts in eager anticipation to hear His voice and feast upon His love.

"In that day, saith the Lord." That is quite sufficient for me; for if He speaks, it must be accomplished, it must be done. He speaks, and His mind is declared, His will is accomplished. He saith, "In that day *I will.*" Notice those precious words in Zephaniah iii. 17, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty;" *in the midst of thee* collectively, *in the midst of thee* individually, in thy heart and in thy affections, "*He is mighty*" — *mighty to save* thee from all thy sins, from all thy sorrows, from all thy fears. *He is mighty* to triumph over all thy foes, to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil — to render him ineffectual in his designs against the Church and people of the living God. "*He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love,*" *He will* be silent in His love, He has not one upbraiding word for thee, "*He will rejoice over thee with singing.*" It is not sufficient for the prophet to speak thus, for JEHOVAH Himself cries out in blessed agreement therewith, "*I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.*"

"*In that day, saith the Lord, I will gather her that is driven out.*" Gather whom? The scattered ones, His sons and His daughters, His people scattered abroad. Notice the glorious truths of Divine sovereignty and personal election which fell from the lips of Caiaphas the high priest, as recorded in John xi. 52: "He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that

were scattered abroad." *Scattered*, by the fall of Adam, *scattered* through their sins and iniquities, *scattered* by their doubts and fears, *scattered* by that accursed unbelief and enmity which ever dwells and abides in them, and which will cling to them as long as they remain in the flesh. Scattered; but God saith, "*I will assemble her, I will gather her.*" Here we have association, organization, and order. Mark you, there is nothing of disorder or disorganization with our God; all things ordered by His gracious will, and all things governed by His gracious hand. "Ordered in all things and sure." In the very place where *we* behold disarrangement and disorder, God sees the glorious perfection of order, sees "all things working together for good, to them that love Him, to them who are the called according to His purpose." "*I will assemble, I will gather.*" Here is association; and what upon earth next to Himself do the children of the living God long for, more than spiritual association one with another in the bonds of covenant love? As I pass on from place to place and meet with poor and needy ones, especially those cut off from communion with the visible Church, I find their mourning complaint is, for the company of those who are one with them in the faith and fear of God, that they may compare notes, and speak one to another concerning what He has purposed, promised, and performed. Yet, in the face of all their complaining, there shall be association, there shall be communion, there shall be organization and perfect order in the Church and family of JEHOVAH.

"*I will assemble, I will gather.*" Whom? *Her* that halteth. We noticed faithful but halting Abraham, meek but halting Moses, beloved but halting David, favoured but halting Ephraim, whom Jehovah would not let go. Yes; we find according to that marvellous book of Hosea, Ephraim changing, Ephraim halting, Ephraim rebelling, and Ephraim wandering, yet the reiteration of Jehovah is, that He will assemble and gather together Ephraim with the rest of His elect, His highly-favoured ones. We beheld zealous, honest-hearted Peter; but Peter, though zealous, halting. We saw another. Who is he? "A good man and full of the Holy Ghost;" why surely, this is a man who will walk without stumbling, without halting, and without falling! But

read for yourselves the latter part of Acts xv. You see "the contention was so sharp between them," Paul and Barnabas, that Paul must go this way and Barnabas that. Just one word in reference to this fact. You notice in other portions of the Acts of the Apostles, that when the apostles met together to confer on any subject other than that of union with and salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, wherever they met together for the purpose of managing their own affairs, or to lay down rules, laws, or regulations, for the purpose of bringing about order and arrangement in the affairs of the Church — we have no occasion to go out of this chapter to find God putting His veto on such acts of the apostles, thus proving that apostolic acts are not to take the place of His marvellous acts, that apostolic planning and scheming shall not usurp the place of the sovereign will and the sovereign purposes of JEHOVAH. Here is a good man and full of the Holy Ghost; but he is sharp, contentious, *halting*.

O how blessed it is to know, and that by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that though we are beset with the same temptations, compassed about with the same infirmities, and subject to like passions with the Scripture saints, yet we are partakers of the same grace, and upheld by the same loving Hand. Ofttimes we experience searchings of heart as to our position before God; we look for evidences within, for marks and tokens of His love; but instead of evidences, we find witnesses in the court of conscience, testifying that we are still human, that we carry about with us a body of sin and of death; we -would do good, but evil is present with us; we would sing His praises, but our hearts are heavy; we would confess our faults and sins before His mercy-seat, but the mind appears to be a barren heath, a blank; we would converse upon what He hath done for our soul, but the kind Remembrancer, who must bring those things up in the memory, seems to be far away from us; we would abound with love and gratitude before Him, but instead of this, the plaintive song of dear old John Newton suits us better —

"'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?"

Burdened with sin, tempted by the devil, cumbered with cares, and sick of self, we sigh "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better;" but there is a necessity that we should abide in the flesh. O ye halting, driven out, and afflicted ones, it is no small mercy to see that all the saints whose biographies are recorded in God's most Holy Word, were men and women with the same failures, faults, and falls, which we lament and mourn over in ourselves. As the eye of faith descries beyond the skies a precious Christ sitting on the throne of His glory, wearing that crown which belongs to Him and to Him alone, we think of the halting ones *here*, but *there* we behold them. Where? Ask old John Kent: he tells you —

"There David shines without a stain.  
    Uriah's blood can ne'er be known;  
For like a mill-stone in the main,  
    Are all his black transgressions thrown.

Rahab the harlot, loved by Thee.  
    Shall never sink to Tophet's flame,  
When Jesus suffered on the tree,  
    The Book of Life contained her name."

O look at the long list of martyrs for the truth as given in Heb. xi. There you behold the assembled ones — the gathered ones. They bowed in worship here below as pilgrims and strangers; up yonder they bow before the throne, crying, "Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

We proceed to notice the words, "*I will gather them that is driven out.*" "DRIVEN OUT!" Primarily this refers to the Jews being driven out of their own land, driven away from the privileges and immunities that God had showered upon them. But all this was typical of God's dealings with His people, the true Israel, throughout

all time. I am fully warranted in saying this, from the statement of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. x. 11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (or *types* — see margin), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." We find farther warrant in Acts xv. 14 — 16, where James quotes from the last chapter of the prophet Amos, to prove the certainty of the things that were then transpiring — the tabernacle of David, which was in ruins, being raised again through the preaching of God's Gospel; not having respect to any future age or dispensation whatever, but having respect to the time then being. So we, in sweet meditation on this precious portion, behold God dealing with His own Israel; and as we behold this, we rest not satisfied without a personal and experimental interest therein. Here we read His determination to gather and His purpose to assemble. "*I will gather.*" Whom wilt Thou gather?" I will gather her that was driven out." Now, mark! The children of Israel were brought into the Promised Land, not because of their own righteousness, or by the power of their own arm, but they were brought in through the good pleasure, sovereign will, and free favour of JEHOVAH. This is a precious type of His bringing His own people through this wilderness of sin, and through the Jordan of judgment, for that is the simple meaning of the word Jordan, *judgment*; so He brings us up through the Jordan of judgment into the land of spiritual promise and Divine revelation, and there we richly experience our oneness with Him, and His oneness with us. Nothing but this will satisfy a living soul: Me to know my personal identity with my Lord and my Master! I love not only to sit at His feet, but also at His table; not only at His table, but to lean on His bosom; not only so, but I love to enter into His very heart, to know that every pulsation of that heart is for me; I want to hear His voice speaking in accents of love and fond affection: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," or, as we read in the margin, "have I extended lovingkindness unto thee." So that I can, with child-like confidence, say, "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. ii. 20).

I oftentimes long to see His face, I want to behold His power and His glory; but instead of this, where am I?" Driven out!" How am I driven out? Even as the saints of the Most High God in the days of old were oftentimes driven out of His sacred presence. What are we to understand by this driving out? It has reference to compulsion and force contrary to the mind and will of the persons acted upon. Adam and Eve were *driven out* of Paradise (Gen. iii. 24). You find Moses and Aaron *driven out* from the presence of Pharaoh (Exod. x. 11). You find professors and hypocrites *driven out* from the temple with a whip of small cords laid on their backs by the hands of "gentle Jesus" (John ii. 15). But Jesus is truly gentle to His own, —

"His flock, His own peculiar care,  
Though simply now they seem to roam,  
Are led or *driven* only where  
He brings them best and safest home."

*Driven out* oftentimes by the power of indwelling sin, *driven out* by the surging and seethings of corruption, *driven out* by the disorders of a wretched imagination, *driven out* by doubts and fears, which prevail and rise when hope is fainting and almost expiring within me; *driven out*, as in the case of Jacob. See! Jacob enjoys the presence of his God and his Lord, he knows it to be the house of God, and the gate of heaven; but almost immediately he quails, he fears, he beholds not JEHOVAH'S face, traces not JEHOVAH'S finger in his marvellous history, he imagines his wife and his little ones shall perish by the hand of his enraged brother Esau; but his God was better to him than all his fears. *Driven out*, not only through indwelling sin and the force of circumstances on our wretched imaginations, but by the power, cunning, craft, and subtlety of Satan; Satan working in my discontented, self-pitying nature; Satan working in my rebellious will; Satan working in my carnal mind, which is in itself enmity against God. But, oh! what a

comfort it is for the children of the living God to know that all these things happen not by chance, but according to His unerring wisdom, and according to His unbending and irrevocable decrees. Yes, all coming, lasting, and ending, as pleases my best and truest Friend.

See! "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil (Matt. iv. 1). "And immediately the Spirit *driveth* Him into the wilderness" (Mark i. 12). A marvellous declaration, not one more so in all the Book of God. If this was the case with a precious Christ, if this was the experience of the Head, it must be and it shall be that of the members. Now, for a moment look at Jacob. Jacob is communing with his God, sweetly experiencing the blessedness of the promise which He makes over to him; we have it in Gen. xxxv.; but mark the 13th verse, only known by those brought into experimental union with the God of Jacob, "And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him;" in the very place where He had conveyed His promise to his heart, He went up, and in going up, Jacob driven out. You see the same in the latter part of Gen. xviii. Here is the sovereignty of Jehovah revealed again in the experience of His child: "And the LORD went his way as soon as He had left communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned unto his place." Not according to the Arminian and free-will gloss which says, Oh, if Abraham had only continued asking! Such rubbish! contrary to the mind and revelation of JEHOVAH. It is not, If Abraham would, but *what God did*. "And Abraham went to his own place." Did he like it *I* He did not. Was he contented? He was not. The experience of his heart no doubt was that which is so beautifully described in Psa. lxxiii., where David cries, "O God, Thou art my God!" When was God David's God? When he was in the rich experience of God's love? Yes, and also when driven out he sighed and cried for it. "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee." That word, "*early*," having reference to the dawning and rising of the Sun of Righteousness on the soul. "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see Thy

Power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." [ere is a driven out one. I would now have you notice that little narrative given in Mark xi., where the Lord Jesus sent two of His disciples to a certain spot to find an ass; they found him — a representative of God's elect and redeemed asses — "they found the ass tied." Are you not oftentimes tied" "*It was tied by door.*" A very blessed spot to be tied to. It was tied by the door *without* longing to be within; not only tied by the door without, but "*where two ways met.*" Here we have a halting position. Which way shall we take? Here is nature, here is grace; here is the flesh, here is the Spirit; here is my mind, here is God's will. Which way shall I take? I know not which way to take, only as the Sent One comes and leads me into the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. "They found the ass tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met, and they loosed him, and brought him to Jesus.

"*I will gather her that was driven out.*" We not only find God's children driven out, as I have attempted to describe, but they are at times driven out by the inconsistencies, through the overbearing and imperious conduct of those who ought to be guides, companions, and comforters in the Church. The moment a person in office arrogates to himself a position, with the determination to be somebody in the Church, and magnifies himself because of his office, that very moment the soul of some poor timid child of God is sure to be crushed and bruised, and from true communion *driven out*. Do not go away and say that I have been personal, for, thank God, I have every reason to be thankful for His sending the very opposite spirit anion? us. Such timid and retiring ones are oftentimes driven out, driven out by the scourge of laws and regulations, driven out through the lack of loving sympathy and the strife of tongues. May it be our lot, while we remain together as minister and people, to vie with each other to the ignoring of self, the humbling of pride, and the exaltation of a precious Christ in our midst, and in our hearts!

"*I will gather her that is driven out*" by doubt. Doubting my sonship! Is that true?" If Thou be the Son of God," said the tempter to Jesus. He said that to Jesus; he will say it to you and to me. The prince of the world came to Jesus and found nothing in Him to work upon; he comes to us and he finds everything to work upon; he works upon our evil nature, and fathers his own lies and injections upon us. He says, "If thou wert a child of God wouldst thou not be overflowing with love and gratitude to that God whom thou sayest has done such great and glorious things for thee? If thou wert a child of God wouldst thou not rejoice in the realization of pardon for thy sins? instead of which thou art bowed down to the earth, and sinking almost into hell with fear. If thou wert a child of God wouldst thou not manifest His work and speak of His glorious acts to those with whom you come in contact? but instead of that you are mute and are dumb." Know you anything of these temptations and trials? See, you that know what it is to face the stern realities of city life, on the 'Change, on the Mart, or on your business pursuits; tell me, do you not often experience within you *a driving out*, when you hear of the prosperity and peace of worldlings, some rolling in wealth, all paying their allegiance to their king and god; and you, through fear, and through shame, yea, through silent determination, cannot speak a word for the honour and glory of your King?

Do you not experience driving out here? But this is God's truth, "I will gather." "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. xlix. 10); and, "I will gather them one by one" (Isa. xxvi. 12) — not in shoals, not in crowds, not in multitudes, but "*one by one*" and you shall be brought to Zion. But see! Job declares, "that the rich" — Who are they? Those who are full and increased with their own goods, those who are taken up with what they possess." "The rich shall not be gathered" (Job xxvii. 19). Who shall be gathered? Look at 1 Sam. xxii.; we find that David and his men escaped to the cave of Adullam, where those in distress, in debt, and discontented, were gathered to David. See! The distressed ones, the discontented ones, those in debt, who have nothing to pay, are driven out and gathered in by our spiritual David, to enjoy His unsearchable riches, to

experience the love of the Father's heart and the blessings of His covenant.

"I will gather her that was driven out, and *her that I have afflicted.*" He does not say I will gather the afflicted one, *but "her that I have afflicted."* Turn with me to Job v. 6, "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust." That is, afflictions come not by chance. Turn to Thes. iii. 3, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." The appointment of the person to the affliction, and the appointment of the affliction to the person. Afflictions arise from various causes. Affliction, what is it? It is oppression; we see Israel afflicted (oppressed) in Egypt, but, blessed be God, the more they were afflicted, the more they grew; and so it is with God's Zion. Go to Mark iv. 17, there you find affliction spoken of as persecution, because of the Word. This comes not by chance, but according to the declaration of our Saviour in John xvii., speaking to His Father, "I have given them Thy Word, and the world hath hated them." In John xv. 19, He pointedly declares, "Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Because you are My favoured people, the world will hate and persecute you. Not only oppression without, and persecution or the Word's sake; but there is the affliction that every child of God experiences when JEHOVAH'S spiritual, fiery, and perfect law is brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost, when in the light of that holy law all is dark within, and in the perfection of that law I see my imperfections; when that glorious straight edge is brought to bear on my perversity, how crooked I appear in my own eye, what must I be to the gaze of Infinite Excellency? Through the perfection of the glorious law I see that which I looked on before as so many virtues deserving heaven, to be so many vices deserving God's eternal wrath. When He reveals, and I see the sorrows, agonies, wounds, and distresses of a precious Christ in Gethsemane's gloomy vale, or amidst the wild heights of Calvary, and I see the nails which pierced His sacred hands were my accursed sins; when I behold the spear entering His side and head, and bringing therefrom blood and water — blood my redemption, water my qualification to

enjoy His presence, the presence of my Father for ever — it is then I bow my head before Him and cry, Lord, why me? why me? Why such love to one so rebellious and unworthy? The sweet questionings of love come home to my exercised heart: —

"Didst Thou for me, my Saviour, brave  
The scoff, the scourge, the gall,  
The nails, the thorns, the spear, the grave,  
While I deserved them all.?"

*"And her that I have afflicted."* He afflicts in His providence, He lets the wind out of His fist, He sends the lightnings out of His treasures, diseases fly on the right hand and on the left, and, blessed be God's holy Name, while philosophers, who are utter fools in the eyes of God, are trembling and looking for remedies to stay the progress of disease and death, the child of God on the heights of Zion, the child of God at the feet of Jesus, the child of God leaning upon the bosom of eternal love, can smile in the midst of the wildest storms, trusting in His all-wise and all-gracious decrees concerning His own. O precious truth! Christ is Head over all things to His Church. He sends afflictions when He will and where He will, and sanctifies every one of them to His people's good and to His own glory. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psa. xxxiv. 19); and He brings him to look up and say, "Lord, it is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa. cxix. 71). The afflicted may not be able to say so in affliction, for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). The Psalmist had been sweetly taught the design and effect of afflictions as seen coming from the hand of God. He looked back and, in adoring gratitude, confessed, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word." He looked up and, in profound subjection to JEHOVAH'S sovereign will, acknowledged, "I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa. cxix. 67 — 75).

*"And I will make her that halted a remnant."* Are not the halting ones in the present day a remnant indeed? Go to Manchester and you will find thousands who will cry out on the Sunday, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep . . . there is no health in us;" but converse with them on the Monday, and they scout the very idea. And can this be wondered at when we read of a bishop appearing on the stage with play-actors, telling them how many of their profession he had associated with, and what good sort of folk they were. Is not this a preaching of smooth things, a daubing with untempered mortar? Yes. He also wounded God's despised remnant in condescending to place "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress" in the same rank with "Robinson Crusoe." Well, blessed be God, the name of the unlearned but heaven-taught tinker of Bedford will shine with ever-increasing luster when the names of learned and men-pleasing prelates shall have sunk into obscurity. But where find we those whom JEHOVAH claims as His own, saying, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5)? He has them safely hidden, reserved, and preserved. "A remnant shall be saved" (Rom. ix. 27). What is a remnant? That which is left after the separation, removal, or destruction of a part; the residue, the rest, the remainder. In trade the remnant is the fag-end, the refuse or meaner part of a piece, torn off, not presentable. Is not this the state of God's elect now? Like their Master, God's First Elect, they are despised and rejected of men. "Hated of all men for His Name's sake." Yet, blessed be His glorious Name, He will gather the halting, make her a remnant, and save her in Himself with an everlasting salvation. You, who believe and love these things, are you not accounted eccentric, peculiar, strange? Yes, the world looks on and wonders when and where your oddities will end. Precious and glorious position and privilege! Though abhorred of men, yet eternally loved of God.

*"And her that was cast far off a strong nation."* Cast far off by sin, Satan, the world, and by false brethren; and sometimes apparently cast far off from His love, sighing, "Cast me not away from Thy

presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (Psalm li. 11, 12). Even then He will be true to His promise, "I will make her that was cast far off a strong nation." This is the nation chosen and blessed in Christ (Psalm xxxiii. 12). A nation scattered and peeled, but gathered to Christ. Peter writes to it thus, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, a peculiar people" (chap. ii. 9). This is the nation whose God is JEHOVAH, a righteous nation, the keeper of His truth, with its strong city Zion, whose impregnable bulwarks are God's covenant salvation (Isaiah xxvi. i. 2). A nation strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (Eph. iii. 16).

*"And the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever."* "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall betake themselves to it" (Isaiah xiv. 32). Here He is exalted "far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." He hath all things under His feet, and sits enthroned Head over all things to the Church (Eph. i. 21, 22). He sits upon His throne, and rules in judgment over all Zion's foes; but reigns in Zion by His rich, invincible, sovereign love. All the persons of His elect are in His gracious hands, and He arranges, disposes, and settles all their blessings, changes, sorrows, and trials in infinite wisdom, unchanging affection, and illimitable power. Listen to His declaration to His Father: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John xvii. 2). "All power is His in heaven and in earth" (Matt, xxviii. 18). "Sin hath reigned unto death, but grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 21). Glorious King! Mighty Monarch! He reigns from henceforth, that is, now and for ever; and as He is revealed by the Holy Ghost to our adoring hearts, we cry out, "CROWN HIM LORD OF ALL, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

The time will soon come when all the halting sons of Jacob, all the afflicted and despised children of God, all the scattered and peeled ones, all those of His who were and are cast far off, shall be gathered by His grace, and assembled around His throne to "see His face and never sin," and join in the grand chorus of unceasing praise,

"HALLELUJAH! FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"

Hymn.

JEHOVAH bids His heralds go.  
The blessed Gospel trumpet blow;  
And Israel's outcasts, dead in sin,  
By sovereign grace are gathered in.

The dear Redeemer knows His own,  
Views them with pleasure from His throne;  
And gathers all His chosen band,  
Of every tribe, from every land.

Though lost and ruin'd, lame and blind,  
He leaves not one of them behind;  
They cost no less than precious blood;  
And He will bring them home to God.

The Father sent Him forth to save,  
All that in covenant He gave:  
Responsible for every soul,  
He gathers in and saves the whole.

Joseph Irons.

## VII. THE LORD GOD IS A SUN.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
Feb. 25th, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"For the Lord God is a Sun and Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

— Psalm lxxxiv. 11, 12.

THE first word of this blessed portion, "FOR," stands like a guide-post directing the minds of those who are brought into a spiritual and intelligent appreciation of the truth of God's Word to that which He reveals in the preceding context. We will look, not simply at the desire expressed by the Psalmist in the verse immediately preceding the text, but to his position and experience at the time these words were uttered and penned down for the instruction and comfort of the Church of God throughout all succeeding ages here below. The preface tells us that he is "longing for the communion of the sanctuary," or longing for "the courts of God's house," to enter into His gates with "thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise," to be truly thankful unto Him, and to speak good of His Name, to throw off the spirit of heaviness,- and to experience in His courts great joy, wearing the mantle of gratitude and the garment of praise and rejoicing. In the contemplation of this, though in exile, his heart breaks forth in inspired strains, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles,

O Lord of hosts!" Notice that which occupied his mind, *the tabernacles of JEHOVAH*; but, most of all, JEHOVAH Himself, as revealed in these tabernacles. Nay, let us still further notice Him as He is revealed according to David's peculiar circumstances, manifold necessities and daily experiences, "O Lord of hosts." David in doubt, David in dread, David in danger, yet from this spot he looks up, and acknowledges God as the one object of his heart, from whose worship and service he is exiled. "*THE LORD of hosts*" in heaven, on earth, and in all deep places, and according to that precious hymn which you find at the commencement of Irons' hymns, — "All things wait His nod."

Oh! it is no small mercy, when brought to experience darkness, gloom, and perplexity, to have the mind buoyed up, and that by the power and indwelling of God's ever-blessed Spirit with this precious fact: JEHOVAH for me, JEHOVAH with me, and JEHOVAH in me; whatever may be the circumstance with which I am surrounded, or the sadness which weighs down my troubled spirit, or the wants and anxieties which perplex and harass me.

"*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the LORD.*" As I read those precious words this morning, the thought flashed through my mind, how much of the Spirit is there manifested in these degenerate days? Not only desiring, but longing; not only longing, but fainting; and fainting, not simply to hear a man preach; not that. Not for the purpose of hearing this deeply-taught one, or this highly-favoured one, or this one with marvellous knowledge! No. But for the purpose of meeting with, and experiencing the company of, the living God. Let me ask you who are Bible readers and who love to rummage through your Bibles, to make it your business during the present week to notice that expression, "*the living God,*" in opposition to the dead gods and the idols of the heathen. "*The living God.*" Look at that mysterious man, very much like Melchisedec, he seemed to drop down from heaven, Elijah! From the mountains of Gilead he appeared, and commenced his discriminating ministry thus, "*As the Lord God of Israel liveth.*" He

had to do with a covenant God, and he had to do with a living God. "*As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand.*" He had to do with an upholding God. If you search through the Scriptures of truth you will find the saints whose histories are recorded therein, had to do with- a God living for them, living with them, and living in them. The Father on the throne of His heavenly grace, the Son living to make intercession for His people, and the Holy Ghost living and making intercession with longings, desires, and groanings, which pierce through the darkest cloud, or through the murkiest gloom, as it were with a lightning flash, and enter into the presence chamber of Deity. Entering, not because my prayer has come from the depths of my necessities, but because it came from Himself, and has returned again to Himself, the only Source and Cause of grace and joy to each child of His upon earth. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

"*Yea, the sparrow hath found au house.*" Any sparrows here this morning? What is the truth taught in this portion? If you will turn with me to Psa. cii. 7, you will see that it denotes *loneliness*: "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop." Turn to Luke xii. 6, we see it denotes *worthlessness*: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" Let us proceed a little further: "*And the swallow a nest for herself.*" Swallow! Yes, watch its movements! It is *the most restless bird in all creation*; and so the children of the living God oftentimes find themselves as sparrows in loneliness and isolation, at another time like swallows, restless, even when surrounded with the bounties and mercies of God. Such is the restlessness of their minds that they often seek, but never find, true peace for themselves apart from Him. But, saith David, God's sparrows and God's swallows sooner or later find a home, find a resting-place, and both in Himself.

"Even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." What are these altars?" Christ is our Sacrifice, Christ is our Altar." Here is the altar of burnt offering, on which the sacrifice of His humanity was offered to the Father. He is the golden Altar from whence rises

the sweet incense of His own intercession, through which His chosen and blood-bought people find acceptance with the Father, and sweet rest in Him. "*Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house.*" What is this house to His New Testament worshippers?" But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Heb. iii. 6). "Ye are God's building" (1 Cor. iii. 9). "Ye, also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5). These dwell in unity and in harmony with the saints of the Most High. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will still be praising Thee; blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee ;" not in himself, oh no. "*In whose heart are the ways of them.*" Whose ways? First, the way designed by the Father, the way opened up by His Son, and the way taught by the Holy Ghost; and, secondly, the way is peculiar to the elect and redeemed of God in this wilderness world.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools; *they go from strength to strength*; or, as we read in the margin, "*they go from company to company.*" Now, each of you know that the company you associated yourself with ten or twenty years ago, as far as knowledge and experience are concerned, will not do for you to-day; for there is a growing in the things of God, while there is no improvement whatever in our old natures. But the children of the living God know from heartfelt experience that there is a growing in the things of God. Mark 2 Pet. iii. 18, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." So these go from strength to strength, or from company to company, '-every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Appareth before God in want and in times of necessity during their pilgrimage; appeareth before God in the heavenlies, in possession both of grace and glory here and hereafter. "O lord of hosts, hear my prayer." Not only an exile, a worshipper and a pilgrim, but a beggar. "Give ear, O God of Jacob." This takes us back to the time when the hosts of God met the patriarchs in their wants, in their necessities, in their fears and dangers; but here we see the Lord of hosts encamping

round about His tried and tempted ones. "Give ear, O God of Jacob." He does not say, O God of Israel, the God of the prevailers, the God of princes, the God of those who experience power; but he cries, "O God of Jacob," Jacob the wavering, Jacob the halting, Jacob the trembling one. To all such Jacobs God will reveal Himself. "I am JEHOVAH, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6).

"Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed." In the light of such an expression as this, we may well repeat those precious words, —

"Not on me, Lord, not on me,  
I am all iniquity;  
Look on Thine Anointed One,  
Who, before Thy glorious throne,  
On His breast bears my poor name,  
All my load of sin and shame,  
Look on Him, My Surety."

For His sake "pardon my iniquity, for it is great." For His sake subdue the iniquities within me, over which I have no control. For His sake silence all my accusers without and within. For His sake chase away the gloom which pervades my pathway, and bring me into the sweets of Thy sacred and solemn presence. *Look upon the face of Thine Anointed* ; for a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God. Would you? Assuredly you would. Every soul within these walls this morning, touched by the rich and sovereign grace of God, with His love shed abroad in the heart, His Spirit enlightening the understanding, and your souls brought down to the footstool of sovereign mercy to experience the sweetness thereof, you can testify that a day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere — ay, even the meanest place amongst the children of God, with all their wants, necessities, and poverty. Mark you, this language is not the wild raving of the enthusiast or fanatic. No, it is the settled

conviction of a soul chastened in the presence of its God. Sooner would I share with God's children their losses and crosses, reproach and shame, than dwell in the tents of wickedness, or with all that this world calls good and great.

"FOR!" This is our guide-post, pointing from the text to the rich experience and spiritual knowledge of JEHOVAH as set forth throughout the former part of this precious Psalm. "*FOR the LORD is a Sun and Shield: the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.*"

Let us now look at this portion of God's most Holy Word, asking the Spirit's guidance.

I. — The characters describing the people of God. 1. They walk uprightly. 2. They trust in Him.

II. — JEHOVAH, as He appears *for* them, *to* them, *with* them, and *in* them. 1. He is a Sun. 2. He is a Shield. 3. He is a Giver.

III. — Let us notice the blessings He gives to them. 1. Grace. 2. Glory. 3. Goodness.

IV. — May the Holy Ghost work in our hearts, causing us to join in the chorus of the heaven-bound travelers: "O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

V — We may notice that God has a people, and the characters by which they are described.

1. "*Them that walk uprightly.*" These are the people who are brought to know themselves as worse than nothing; but rejoice in the free, full, sovereign, uninfluenced grace of God, which brought them to know their uprightness in Jesus, their Saviour-God and Lord. Those who are left in ignorance of this glorious grace have respect only to their outward walk and conversation before men. Unitarians, Papists, and Arminians are all one in this matter. Mark you, they form a marvellous trinity! hail fellows, well met! They are one! Yes, outwardly. Their eyes are fixed upon outside trappings; they know

not that inside them is naught but death, while the living child of God is satisfied with nothing short of the living God Himself. What is uprightness? Where is it to be found? Not in mortal, according to the testimony of Psalms xiv. and liii. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God. They are all gone out of the way." His testimony is, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Look at the heart, from whence all motives spring; we see it as recorded in Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Only evil — always evil; no redeeming feature, no compensating quality to bring down God's goodness, love, or favour. Oh, no! "The heart is deceitful above all things." *All things!* More deceitful than Satan himself. Can this be true? It is true in the experience of every quickened and Spirit-taught child of God, and it is the truth of God's most Holy Word. Who are those that walk uprightly? Many would confine this to that uprightness of conduct which may be seen in many who are destitute of godliness. But we know they are those whom God by a sheer act of sovereign grace choose to Himself in the Son of His love. They are those who in time He quickens into spiritual life; those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in Him; not only Christ Jesus the Lord, but Christ Jesus "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The Way in which they walk, the Truth by which they are guided in their walk; and the Life by which they experience the motive-power in their walk. Without Christ the Way there is no walking; without Christ the Light there is nothing but stumbling; and without Christ the Life there is nothing but death. Then it is in the uprightness of Christ that I stand upright; it is in the righteousness of Christ that I am righteous; it is in Him, mark you, in Him who is my Righteousness, and in Him who is my uprightness, that I stand righteous, and walk uprightly before God. Notice this! The elect, redeemed, and living people of God not only stand upright, but they walk. Now walking is a sign of life, life communicated from the great and glorious Head ; I experience life in union with Jesus — and, walking in Him, I walk

with the Father, I walk in the paths of righteousness through the guidance of His blessed Spirit.

Amos, in his third chapter and third verse, asks the question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Can they? The question answers itself. No, two cannot walk together except they be agreed. But we read of certain persons in God's most Holy Word walking with Him. Let us just turn over to the book of Genesis, fifth chapter and twenty-fourth verse, "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Now, you read his interesting history, which is not a very long one; you get to know all that is recorded concerning him in this fifth chapter,, in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, and in the Epistle of Jude. Here we have his life, Jude gives his testimony, and Paul records his faith. As you read that given by the Holy Ghost in this fifth chapter, you find, to walk with God is vastly different to that fleshly mode of walking peculiar to Romish and Ritualistic associations. Look at those long-frocked gentry, and these ghostly-looking creatures whom, God knows, I hate to meet in the street; they would have us believe that their fleshly religion and creature-performances is walking with God. I unhesitatingly and deliberately say, such are walking with the devil. As an old friend of mine, who is now in glory, use to say, when he saw any of these creatures, "*Bradbury, I smell brimstone.*" Depend upon it, there was truth in the saying. Enoch looks a true picture of an old English gentleman and Christian. "And Enoch lived sixty-and five years, and begat Methuselah; and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters; and all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years, and Enoch walked with God" (Gen. xxv. 21 — 24). He walked with God, and reared a family; and that is what neither Pope, priest, nor presumers do. If they do, they are very quiet about it, and do not let us know anything of the matter.

Again, we turn over to the short history of Noah. We find him walking with God; and we turn to Abraham, and Abraham is walking and talking with God. Look at that sweet little bit of talk

which we have recorded in the eighteenth chapter. Abraham talked with God, and God talked with him as a friend. Here is walking; but did these walk uprightly? Yes, they did. What! Noah walking uprightly? Was he not seen in the vineyard, under the influence of the fruit of the vine which he had reared? Yes, he was; yet it is God's testimony, that "Noah was a just man, and upright in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. vi. 8, 9). Let legalists and merit-mongers speak as they like. These loved ones in God's sight and in the Son of His love, at that very moment, "though sinning, were free from all sin." No stain seen in them, no spot in them; they stood from the days of eternity, when, in the glass of Jehovah's decrees, He beheld them in all their virgin purity, and will stand until they are presented in glory — holy, unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight. Precious truth! perfect in Christ Jesus! Accepted in the Beloved! complete in Him. Go through the Scriptures in reference to the failings of God's children, and you who will, gather these together, and make therewith a whip of small cords, to drive God's children to be upright in their walk and conversation before men; failure will attend every attempt. O, blessed be God, the saints, though sinning, and mourning grievously because of their sins, are free from all sin. Do not run away and misrepresent me, saying, I give the reigns to licentiousness and looseness of living. You may point to the dry and cold Antinomian; he lives loosely enough: but the glorious declaration of JEHOVAH'S truth to living children in the possession of His fear; living children, with His love shed abroad in their heart; living children, who bow down daily mourning over their weaknesses, their waverings, and their wanderings, is, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Such will not revel in looseness of life, or live in sin; never, never! only through the subtlety and craft of the devil they may be entrapped, they may fall — but, blessed be God, if they fall, they shall rise again to the knowledge and enjoyment of their glorious perfection and their uprightness in the Son of JEHOVAH'S love. Here are the *upright* walkers; and,

2. *They trust in Him.* Do they? They do, and they have something to trust in Him for; their own weakness disappears as His strength is revealed to them in His most Holy Word. They are in want, they are beggars, they are cast out ones, and they are driven out ones — driven out by the surges of indwelling sin and corruption ; driven out by Satan's repeated assaults and temptations; driven out by the persecutions of the world and mere professors; yet they trust in Him. Turn with me to the third chapter of Zephaniah, twelfth verse, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Mark you, they are afflicted, and they are poor.

"Poor and afflicted, Lord, are Thine,  
Among the great unfit to shine:  
But though the world may think it strange.  
They would not with the world exchange."

They trust in Him who has unsearchable riches; they are afflicted, but they trust in Him, who is their health, cure, comfort, and consolation.

Look still further, at Psa. ix. 10, where you read, "And they that know Thy Name *will put their trust in Thee.*" It is sweet to be trusted, it is hard to be doubted, especially when there is a consciousness in the heart that our motives are right, and that our designs are pure in JEHOVAH'S sight. A blessed thing to be trusted; "*They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee.*" Let me ask, Can you trust a person you do not know? You are very foolish if you do. But here is a Person, known by oppressed and troubled ones, who put their trust in Him. See! they are a people in apparent danger, for saith Job, tried and tempted as he was, "*Though He slay me;*" He hath slain my children, my sons and my daughters, I trusted in Him then; and if He comes with His very sword over me to cut me down, "*yet will I trust in Him*" (Job. xiii. 15). There is trust! Look at our old friend Habakkuk, in that glorious third chapter of his; all natural resources failing, the herds cut off from the stall, the

fruit declining from the earth. He saith, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." There is trust! Oh, but say you, I have not been brought into such heights as these! Well, have you been brought into such depths as this? See Matt, xiv., "And Peter said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water; and He said, Come; and when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, *Lord, save me.*" "Lord," a glorious Object; "me," a miserable subject; "save," a glorious link uniting the two together. The hand of a precious Christ was extended, and caught hold of His sinking friend, and His powerful hand and arm raised him above the water. Now, then! Where are you this morning? In the heights or in the depths? "They that know Thy Name:" —

JEHOVAH-JIREH, the Provider for all their necessities (Gen. xxii. 14).

JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Healer of all their diseases (Exod. xv. 26).

JEHOVAH-NISSI, their Banner and Security in danger (Exod. xvii. 15).

JEHOVAH-SHALOM, their Peace in the midst of conflict (Judges vi. 24).

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the LORD their Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6).

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the LORD is there. Where? Wheresoever His people are found. Are they forsaken of men \* "The LORD is there." Are they afflicted, destitute, tormented? "The LORD is there." Do joys decline, hopes waver, expectations perish, and feelings fluctuate and fade away? "The LORD is there." That is in glory! say you. Yee, it is, and in grace, too, forgiving transgression, putting away sin, and subduing iniquity. In temptation, trial, and tribulation, His gracious promise is verified, "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa.

xliii. 2, 3). JEHOVAH-JESUS! "they that know Thy Name shall put their trust in Thee." All those who possess this God-wrought faith are strangers and pilgrims wandering with Him in a desert land, and though exiled from the service and worship of the sanctuary, yet not shut out from Him. "*In Him*" they walk uprightly, they trust "*in Him*." We now consider —

II. — JEHOVAH, as He appears *for* them, *to* them, *with them*, and *in* them. 1. A Sun. 2. A Shield. 3. A Giver.

1. "*The LORD God is a Sun.*" It says not, "The LORD God is *as* a Sun, but the LORD God is a Sun. As the natural sun is to the world, so is Christ the Sun of Righteousness to the new creation. Turn with me to Gen. i. 1 — 3, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." This is the creation of chaos, confusion, darkness. See! "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the LORD do all these things" (Isa. xlv. 7). JEHOVAH the Creator and Doer of all things. "And the Spirit of God moved." Now what have we in that word, "*moved.*" See! the Spirit of God is likened to a dove in many portions of God's Word; the Spirit brooded over chaos; as a bird broods over her eggs, so the Spirit of the living God brooded over chaos and over confusion. Out of chaos He brought perfection, out of confusion He brought order, and out of darkness He brought light; for as we come to the next verse we find, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" or, "Light be, and light was." "He spake, it was; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. xxxiii. 10). This, mark you, before the creation of these great luminaries which spangle and garnish the heavens (Job. xxvi. 13). Yes, before this there was light. From whence did light spring? From JEHOVAH Himself, the Fount and Source of all light. "For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Psa. xxxvi. 9). Both in the natural and spiritual creation God is the Source of all light. Turn to 2 Cor. iv. 6, and you find the apostle commenting on this, "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;" which word, "*face*" might be rendered *person*, "*in the person of Jesus Christ.*" Look at the two creations! In the old creation, which is God's, Satan is only an usurper here; sin, darkness, confusion, and disorder prevail; but in the new creation, righteousness, light, order, and uninterrupted peace for ever reign. Some of you may be ready to say you do not feel it. My dear friends, do not let us attempt to bring down the doing of the great JEHOVAH to our poor weak stretch of mind, not for a single moment; it is ours to bow down with awe and adoration, and worship before Him.

Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, and as His own glorious light comes forth upon us, we begin to understand, to feel, and to experience something of the depths of darkness. Talk about Egyptian darkness, the darkness that might be felt; spiritual darkness experienced in the child of God is so tangible that it can be felt, which Be completely enraps him that neither his desires, hopes, or prayers can pierce or penetrate it. Those who enter such a cloud as this fear indeed; as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, as he journeyed to Damascus, a light shone from heaven above the brightness of the midday sun." We, in these Northern climes cannot possibly realize the force of that expression. What know we of the brightness of God's sun as it shines in the East over Damascus? We know little, or nothing. But when God's light shone on Saul of Tarsus, "he could not see for the glory of that light;" the moment that light shines into the heart it discovers the darkness, the gloom, the filth, the murk, the desolation which reigns therein. Close up a room for weeks, or months, it may be for years, then enter; it is dark; but let only a ray of light from God's natural sun pierce through a crevice, you will detect the motes and the filth moving about within. Nay, still further, through the light shining in, you find, though the place which when shut up was in great beauty, cleanliness, and perfection, it is now filled with filth, dust, and dirt. So let your mind be garnished with all that education, refinement, accomplishment, and religion can do for it, when the light of God's truth enters what find you there? Sin,

guilt, rebellion, enmity, condemnation, an utter absence of love, faith, peace, or joy. But God reveals His new creation, upon which the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings (Mal. iv. 2)

*"The LORD God is a Sun."* Christ is the Sun and Centre of the spiritual firmament; He is the Light thereof, and out of Him all is darkness, sin, and death. Light is pure, nay, purity itself. God's snow descends upon this earth of ours, its whiteness and brilliancy dazzles our eyes, but the tread of our feet, and the sweep of our murky atmosphere soon rob it of its beauty. God's water flows sparkling like crystal, but one touch of the most delicate finger mars and pollutes it. But light, glorious light, knows nothing of mixture or pollution. Does this not speak of Jesus the LORD God our Sun? Pure He is as God, pure He was and is as man. To the depths of His people's sin He descended, through the murkiest regions of hypocrisy He passed, into contact with de cease and death He came; but none, or all of these combined, could make Him less pure. And so it is with the new creation of which He is the Beginning and the Head. Let the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shine into our heart, and not all the temptations of the devil and the works of his brood can for a moment stain or mar the fair beauty thereof. Light! it is God's light that makes manifest to us our sin and filth, then reveals Himself the Fountain of all grace, aye, the Fountain open for sin and uncleanness, where all elect ones are washed from every stain and from every spot.

*"The LORD God is a Sun."* "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Eccles. xi. 7). This world, though beautiful in ruins, has no charms for the natural eye if the cheering beams of the sun do not shine upon it. We walk along a path untrodden hitherto, and as the dark shades of night cover the earth we behold not the surrounding beauties, but grope and stumble like the blind. Let the sunlight smile upon our pathway, immediately we behold the face of nature robed in beauty, and feel our hearts moved

with adoring gratitude and cheerful praise. How much more pleasant to be blessed with the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness, in which we behold beauty where before we mourned over barrenness, we experience love where before we dreaded wrath, we rejoice in the possession of life where naught but death was our lot. We remember the return of the Arctic explorers a short time ago, who tell us something of the absence of the sun's light, and the consequent dreariness, desolation, and death. They tell us, also, with what joy they first beheld the return of the shining of God's natural sun. Tell me, you who have experienced the darkness of spiritual death, and may experience this morning a dreariness which you cannot explain to mortal, expressed in Psa. cxliii. 4, "*My heart within me is desolate;*" tell me, is it not a pleasant thing for your eyes to behold, by the eye of faith, the LORD God your Sun, the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings, bringing life, light, liberty, and love? The beauties and glories of redeeming love are seen the person and preciousness of Jesus are the soul's delight; He appears the "brightness of His Father's glory," "fairer than the children of men," "altogether lovely!"

*"The LORD God is a Sun."* "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5). He is the Author of spiritual fruitfulness; from yonder sun flows warmth and heat, and fructifying power; where it shines not, barren wastes are seen on every hand, life languishes, and vegetation perishes or appears not. So when God shines not in thy poor heart and mine. where are we? Do fruits of righteousness abound? No! these can only abound by Jesus Christ. See Phil. i. 11, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Only as the warmth and heat of God's love are experienced in my heart through Jesus the Sun of Righteousness, and that by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, can the fruit of love, of faith, of hope, of gentleness, of meekness, of temperance abound, and that not only in my heart, but also in my walk and conversation. Blessed and precious is it for the child of God to enjoy the light of His countenance or His presence, which is salvation. In the darkness of desertion sorrow fills the heart,

but in the light of the King's favour joys increase; "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. xxx. 5). The darkness of death is doleful to contemplate, but the joy of our heart is to know that our "Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." Those who experience the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings, shall soar away to the light, to the joys, and to the blessedness of heaven; while those who are left out in the cold of nature's night, and partake not of God's discriminating and distinguishing grace, shall be silent in the realms of never-ending darkness and despair. What think ye? Is the LORD God your Sun? The time has gone! We will ask Him to let us look at the rest of the portion to-night, and grant us His blessing for His own Name's sake. Amen.

#### Hymn Sung Before The Sermon.

The glories that adorn the sky,  
When midday sun is beaming high,  
    Without a cloudy frown,  
Are faint and few compared with Thine,  
O Sun of Righteousness, Divine!  
    Whose glories ne'er go down.

When on th' horizon of my soul,  
Where darkness reigned from pole to pole.  
    And wrapt up all in night,  
Thy heavenly glories deign to rise,  
Away the gloom of midnight flies,  
    And yields the sphere to light.

Majestic Orb! Thy rays can dart  
Their influence to the darkest heart,  
    And melt the frozen mind;  
Can drive drear winter's form away,  
Bring spring-like morn and summer's day,

And send forth fruits refined.

Great Source of light and life Divine.

Arise, and let this heart of mine

Now feel a quick'ning ray;

Now fertilize this barren ground,

Make fruits of holiness abound,

And shine to endless day.

JOSEPH IRONS.

## VIII. THE LORD GOD IS A SHIELD.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Evening,  
Feb. 25th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"For the Lord God is a Sun and Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

— Psalm lxxxiv. 11, 12.

THE Lord God is everything to His people, He is their Light in darkness, He is their Strength in weakness, He is their Salvation from sin, He is their Helper in distress, He is their Security in seasons of danger and of doubt, He is their Trust in trouble, and their Confidence oftentimes when unbelief and cursed indifference are experienced. He is their Sun, therefore He is their Light.

Oh, how blessed it is to know that in JEHOVAH we have a Sun! The sun which, as long as time lasts, will shine in yonder heavens, is a glorious figure of Him who will shine long as His own light endureth. Shine, though the clouds of doubts, fears, sorrows, and perplexities overshadow me, and though I may fear as I enter the cloud; yet the rich communication of His grace enables me to look up and to say —

"Often the clouds of deepest woe  
A sweet love-message bear;  
Dark though they seem, we cannot find  
A trace of anger there."

Fear not, ye saints, with such a God as this; fear not, with such glory shining, and that for you and me; fear not, though dark days may come, these are only to test and to prove the faith of His own giving, and the faith of His own working, to keep thee waiting for that glorious resurrection-morn — a morning without clouds, "when we shall be like Him, for we shall see. Him as He is."

But it is our lot to-night to proceed in our meditation upon the precious portion which I have read by way of text.

JEHOVAH a Sun to His people, and also a Shield. The very idea of a shield brings up to the mind something about warfare and conflict; the battle rages between the life of God and the power of Satan in the heart of every regenerated elect vessel of mercy, for as we are brought into experimental possession of Divine and eternal favour, as we grasp by our spiritual intelligence, and spiritual capacities the blessings which God hath treasured up for His people, the very grasp by the hand of faith, and that of God's own giving, is the sign for Satan's malignity, and for all hell's enmity. No sooner is a child of God brought into the light of JEHOVAH'S countenance, than Satan is there to resist him at every step. We see this in several portions of God's Word. Turn over to Job i. and ii. Do the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord? Satan is there also. Turn now to Zech. iii. There you have a chosen vessel of mercy before God, but Satan is at his right hand to resist him. There is sure to be the resistance of Satan against God's goodness and blessings, and against every Spirit-applied promise that we may experience. Now look still further: look to that marvellous epistle, "*The family epistle*," as I love to style the epistle to the Ephesians; notice the peculiar expression, *the heavenlies* (chap. i., ver. 3), the place of God's blessing His people before the worlds were formed;

ver. 20 of that chapter, the place of Christ's ascension and glory in union with the members of His mystical body. Look at chap, ii., ver. 6. It is a place of privilege and of communion. Look at chap, iii., ver. 10. You have the place of Divine revelation, the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty, where He communicates His family secrets. Turn to chap, vi., ver. 12 (margin), there you find the place of favour to be the scene of conflict, "For we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." In the margin, "Wicked spirits in high places." Are the children of God lifted up to heavenly places t Wicked spirits do contend with them; wicked spirits, evil natures, deceitful hearts, and an ungodly world in deadly antagonism with the life of God in the souls of His people.

In dwelling upon this, let me direct your attention to the peculiarity which appears in the writings of John. The Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are engaged in the everlasting salvation of a covenant people; but an opposer meets each of these persons; you will see the Father's will, and there is the *world* against it; the redeeming work of the Son, and the *devil* against it; the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, and the *flesh* against it. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii.). Not only in John's writings, but in those of Paul you always find the flesh opposed to the Spirit. In Gal. v. 17, you read, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Now the very moment a child of God is Drought into the experimental realization of his eternal relationship to the Father, the world opposes and questions the right and the title, the authority and the privilege, for that is the word in John i. 12,13. "To them gave He power (authority, the right or the privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Those of the Arminian way of thinking would make out that faith is the cause of our union to Christ, and the cause of our

introduction into His family. It is not so; we believe because we are born, for unless we are born, we cannot and we do not believe. But mark! the world in opposition, flagrant opposition to the Father, opposition to the Father's love, opposition to the Father's election and predestination, and opposition to the patrimony which He has bestowed on His own children in Christ Jesus. Let me be brought into an experimental realization of my oneness and union with the Christ of God, that moment Satan puts in an appearance, he is at my right hand to resist me. Let me have the witness of the Holy Ghost within, that I am a child of God, the flesh will harass and perplex me. It will not satisfy me to be looking for evidences from my feelings; I cannot do without them, and if I am alive I must have them, but I do not want them as a foundation for my faith. There is a great mistake made by many of God's children, and hence they find themselves building upon a shifting foundation, for their feelings are fluctuating, fading and fleeting. We may enjoy His sacred presence here to-night, but where are we before we go to sleep? perhaps at our wits' end. We may be on the very heights of spiritual enjoyment, but the tents of Kedar, and the gloomy vale of Meshech, may be our lot before to-morrow's dawn; these are blessed evidences, but the foundation for my faith is the person and the work of God's own Son, and that testified and witnessed to by the power and grace of the indwelling of God the ever blessed Spirit. See! The world without, the flesh within, and Satan combined are the adversaries of the peace of God's people. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, he is a mighty one, a marvellous intelligent being, not that monstrosity which is set before children, ay, and before big children, too, in representing him with horns and hoofs as a beast. Satan is a mighty spirit. Milton describes him, "INTELLECT WITHOUT GOD." If you want a beast, you had better look for that in degenerate, fallen and reprobate man. Satan! "Intellect without God!" Man is, as one has well said, a groveling beast at the best.

But how blessed it is for us to turn away from this dark subject, and look at the glorious light which JEHOVAH throws on His own truth! What is a shield? It is an instrument of defensive warfare. In

ancient times shields were composed of wood, and skins hardened, of iron, of brass, of silver, and of gold. We see Goliath of Gath, going out to war with a stripling of Israel, but the stripling hath no sword and no shield apparently to the eye of the hosts of the Philistines. He goes out in the name of the Lord his God, in His strength, and in the power of His might, shielded by Omnipotence, while the one who is defended on every hand, with his armour-bearer in front, is brought down, not by the skilful aim of David; Oh, no, but through the unerring guidance of the stone by God's own hand to the brow of the impious and blaspheming giant of Gath.

Mark you, some of God's children are fool-hardy, running into battle before' they are sent, thinking, by so doing, they will defend God's truth, and they will, rather than suffer defeat, join affinity with those upon whom God has put His mark and brand of reprobation, concerning whom, He says to His own children, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." You may depend upon it, the separating power is deeper, is more telling, is more searching, more distinguishing, more discriminating, the line of demarcation is clearer and finer than we oftentimes imagine. Is Ramoth Gilead to be taken out of the hand of God's enemies? Jehoshaphat joins in affinity with wretched Ahab for the accomplishment of the same; but God's curse is upon the whole transaction. Ahab is killed, and Jehoshaphat is greatly humbled (2 Chron. xviii.). At another time subsequently he enters into a commercial enterprise with the wicked Ahaziah: "Then Eliezer, the son of Dodavah of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken (at Ezion-geber) that they were not able to go to Tarshish" (2 Chron. xx. 35 — 37). Look again: when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin offered their aid in re-building the temple of Jerusalem, they were met with a stern denial. "But Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel" (Ezra iv. 1 — 3). It is not for God's children to join in affinity with the devil's brood, neither is

it the business of those whom God has separated by His regenerating grace and distinguishing favour, to join with the unregenerate even in the accomplishment of good and lawful objects. Josiah enters into an unequal yoke with the king of Assyria against the king of Egypt, in the conflict which ensued he was slain; but though slain, yet shielded by Omnipotence. It is not for us to go into any warfare at our own charges, or with the help and assistance of those who hate the LORD, and are enemies to His glorious truth.

Yet war will rage, the conflict will thicken, and it is a blessed privilege to realize a little cessation sometimes, and when wounded to find shelter and succour behind a welcome Shield. What is this Shield? It is God's Christ! The Shield which the glorious Armour-bearer, God the ever-blessed Spirit, carries before the people of God to battle. "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John xvi. 13, 14). God reveals Himself as the Shield of His people in a variety of ways. Let us look at a few of them : —

- I. — FAVOUR. "With *favour* wilt Thou compass him as with a *shield*" (Psa. v. 12).
- II. — SALVATION. "Thou hast also given me the *shield* of Thy *salvation*" (Psa. xviii. 35).
- III. — TRUTH. "His *truth* shall be thy *shield* and buckler" (Psa. xci. 4).
- IV. — FAITH. "Above all, taking the *shield of faith*" (Eph. vi. 16).
- V. — GOD'S ELECT. "The *shields of the earth* belong to God" (Psa. xlvii. 9).

I. — FAVOUR. Now for a short time let us look at the declaration JEHOVAH gives concerning the Shield He has provided for His own people. Turn with me to Psa. v. 12, we read, "For Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; *with favour -wilt Thou compass him as with*

*a shield.*" Here is the shield of favour. What! do you believe in favour? Certainly, my friends; I cannot help believing in favour; I cannot help believing in electing favour, in predestinating favour, in calling favour, in preserving favour, and in separating favour. How is it that I, at this moment, and I wish to speak the truth, as in His sacred and solemn presence, how it is that when I look back to the Sunday school class in Manchester, that I am distinguished as the only one to declare God's glorious Gospel, God's sovereign, electing grace? Nay, still further, the only one left to exalt His Name, speak of the glorious honour of His Majesty, and tell of His wondrous works? How is this? It is not because of anything good in me, for I can tell you the workings of sin and corruptions, the natural desires after earthly things, after the world's pleasures and enjoyments, after the world's fun and frolics, abounded in me. I believe there were more of these desires and determinations in me than in all the rest besides, yet he who would have ran into these with avidity, and would have drank them in greedily, stopped! His mouth stopped before God, then opened again to sound forth the glory of that grace which killed and then made alive, which humbled and then exalted. Ay, my dear friends, it is through a bubbling up within, too full to be expressed; the shedding abroad of God's rich, mighty, conquering and invincible love, sometimes when my heart is enlarged, at other times when crushed with sorrow, care and anxiety. See! I speak it before Him, I believe that death itself must come to silence this tongue, death itself must come to paralyze this brain, before I can cease to speak of the mercy, the grace, and the favour of my covenant God and Father to me. *Mine!* say you; *Mine!* says an evil heart of unbelief; *Mine!* says a tempting devil; how dare you to presume to such heights? Presume! I do not. To scale such heights I attempt not, but lifted out of my corrupt, accursed and wretched self to the enjoyment of such blessings, and such bounties, after seasons of doubts, of fears, and of indifference, and seasons of rebellion and murmurings against His sacred Majesty, were I not to speak well of my precious Jesus, the very stones would cry out. See! "In His favour is life" (Psa. xxx. 5), mercy (Isa. lx. 10), preservation (Psa. lxxxvi. 2), security (Psa. xli. 11); and the prayer of all favoured ones

is, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people; O visit me with Thy salvation" (Psa. cvi. 4).

II. — SALVATION. Not only the shield of favour, but in Psalm xviii. 35, we have a very blessed portion; may God take it home with power, and make it food and comfort to your souls. "Thou hast also given me *the shield of Thy salvation*, and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great." O, what a wonder of wonders, a mercy of mercies, to have a gentle God to deal with. He dealt with us in gentleness, kindness, and long-suffering, when we were under the power of sin, Satan, and the world; and oftentimes now when we are reeds bruised but not broken, when we are almost stifled in the smoke of our own corruptions and sins, He will not, He cannot quench the smoking flax. Oh, no!" *Thy gentleness hath made me great.*" Does the world look on and say, "We saw you do it?" He says, "My child, I don't condemn thee." Does Satan suggest in the court of conscience, thou art guilty of the sin unto death? He speaks in His own sweet words, "Thou shalt never perish." Do ten thousand devils thunder in thy poor heaving bosom, thou art sunk too low ever to rise again? He whispers. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is gentleness. Do sorrows swell as the sea? Art thou sinking in the floods of despondency, of doubt, and of fear? Art thou like the blind, groping thy way through the murk and gloom of depression, of dread, and of dreariness? He, thy God, will bring thee into the light; He, thy God, shall be thy Guide, and His gentleness shall prove to be thy greatness.

"*Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation.*" — THY SALVATION. Mark you, God's salvation. Why *Thy salvation*? Because He was the Author of it, He planned it before the worlds were formed, He chose the Person to execute and to accomplish it; He provided all the means, and fixed the time when the GodMan should make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness for His people. His predestinating providence arranged every trial, temptation, and tribulation that the Man of sorrows should endure

and experience here on earth; He provided also the robe of righteousness in the perfect obedience of the Son of His love; He provided in Him an Advocate to appear in His sacred presence on the behalf of those for whom He stood as Sponsor and Surety — He is the Responsible One. "He shall save His people from their sins," was the covenant promise, and He has accomplished the whole will of God. Whereby His people shall be put into a salvable state? No! That offers and proffers be made to them that they may be saved if they will? No, no! "He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21); He is mighty to save in the union of His two natures, God and Man — one Christ: God, eternal, infinite; Man, mortal, finite. In Him we see the Man Christ Jesus; in Him we see the God, JEHOVAH-JESUS; in Him we have perfect satisfaction given to the law and justice of God, and a perfect righteousness wrought out from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross. He thus accomplished the salvation of His people, and the defeat of all hell's designs against the Church. He rose again from the dead, and thus became our ever-living Saviour and Intercessor. Having "learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." He was perfect Man, and He was perfect God. The perfection of His salvation is opened up in His sufferings, in His spotless obedience, and in His ascension with great triumph into God's kingdom in heaven, where He ever lives to make intercession for all those that come to God by Him. Why do they come? Listen! "Christ hath Buffered the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18). That is the reason why we come; He brings us: yes. He fetches us; He picks us up in His arms of love, and puts us in His glorious Gospel chariot; ay, He puts us on His own breast, and He takes care of us through the wilderness, until we are safely housed with Him in glory. Oh, what a glorious salvation is this! a salvation in which all Satan's designs are frustrated and rendered ineffectual.

III. — TRUTH. We will now turn to Psalm xci. 4, "*IT is truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*" In these words God reveals a glorious shield, with which He covers His people. What is truth *I* Christ is

truth, the Father is truth, and the Spirit is truth. God, in His Trinity of Persons, revealed in the Son of His love, is truth; JEHOVAH, as He reveals Himself throughout the whole of His own blessed Word, is truth, Is that a shield? Yes! When? When the truth is presented by the Armour-bearer. Who is our Armour-bearer? God the ever-blessed Spirit. Now mark, I have been talking about salvation, favour, and truth as a shield ; but if I talk not from the heart — tried by Satan and taught by God the Holy Ghost — all my talking is mere presumption; as James Bourne so beautifully expresses: "Faith in the written Word, without the powerful application of God the ever-blessed Spirit, is presumption." Is truth my shield and my buckler? Yes, as the Spirit holds the truth before me, my head is covered in the day of battle with sin, ignorance, and error. We may talk about the truth, but have we been led into the truth? See!" He shall guide you into all truth. Not some truth, for as far as the letter of God's most Holy Word is concerned, the sacred writers were led into all truth necessary for the guidance and instruction of the Church of God throughout all time; and the canon of New Testament Scripture ends with a curse on those who should add to or take anything out of the Book (Rev. xxii. 18, 19). "*He shall lead you into all truth.*" Shall He? Yes, all the truth designed for me before the worlds were formed, up to this moment of time, He has led me into it as sure as I belong to Him. All the truth designed for my guidance, my instruction, my comfort, and my encouragement — and shall be led to see, to know, and to *apprehend*, for that is really the meaning of the word, where the apostle says, "That ye may be able to *comprehend* with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph iii. 18, 19). Truth, God's truth; truth, revealed truth; truth, inspired truth — is the only shield. Inspired truth, not inspired and simply written in a book, but written in the Book and breathed in our hearts, and written there by the power and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. I find no safeguard against error only as Christ, God's Truth, is formed in my heart the hope of glory.

IV. — FAITH. "*Above all, taking the shield of faith*" Is faith my shield? Well, if I comprehend and understand what faith is, as a spiritually and truly taught child of the living God, it is my shield. What is faith? It is my Christ. What is truth? It is my Christ. What is salvation? It is my Christ. What is favour? It is my Christ. No favour, no salvation, no truth, no faith apart from Christ. Thus, when I read, "*taking the shield of faith*" I just transpose the words; don't think I am wresting, don't think I am maneuvering with God's most Holy Word; "Taking FAITH'S SHIELD," or "*the shield of faith.*" What is the Word of God? It is God's Word. What is the shield of faith? It is faith's shield. What is faith's shield? Listen to God's description of it to the father of the faithful, the friend of God. Gen. xv. 1: "The Word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision." The Word of the Lord! Who is it? The Eternal Word, the Incarnate Word; it is the Word that speaks for me to God up yonder, and it is the Word that speaks for God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in me. It is the Word of God, quick and powerful. "The Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy Shield." "Abraham rejoiced to see His day." The Lord's-day, the day when the Word of the Lord said to Abram, I am thy Shield. And, blessed be His holy name, this is the shield of faith, or faith's shield, or that which faith holds up before the enemy, and the combined onslaughts of hell and Satan.

Turn over to Deut. xxxiii., last verse: "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the SHIELD of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." Look with me at Psalm cxv. 9 — 11: "O Israel! Ye pleaders! ye prevailers! ye princes! ye who know what it is to wrestle in the firm grip of the Covenant-Wrestler!" O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: He is their help and their SHIELD!" "O house of Aaron!" A worshipping people surrounding the Altar, where they find blessed communion with Him who is their Altar, Sacrifice, Food, yea, All in All!" O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their SHIELD. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the

LORD; He is their help and their SHIELD." Look at the thirteenth verse, "He will bless them that fear Him, *both small and great.*" That may suit some of you who fear Him; but your fear may be small, your trust and confidence very small; but however small these graces may be, they come from Himself, and He will have respect to the work of His own hands. Bless the LORD, "He is our help and SHIELD." A SHIELD to those whom He blesses with great things, and also to those who experience small things at His hand. "Above all, taking *the shield of faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. vi. 15).

V. — GOD'S ELECT. Let us turn to Psalm xlvii. 9: "The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for *the shields of the earth belong unto God*: He is greatly exalted." Who are the shields of the earth? As-rulers are a shield to their subjects, so are God's elect to the world at large. God made Moab a covert for His people, and Preserved it for their sake. Egypt at one time was the very hot-bed of persecution to God's Israel; at another time it afforded a shelter to Israel's God. For see! "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" (Hosea xi. 1 ; Matt. ii. 15). My Son, Israel of old! My Son, the Christ of God! My Son, the Holy Child Jesus, brought to the very spot where ancient Israel was oppressed and afflicted, to find a cradle, and a covert from the enemy. We look and see the world, Moab, Egypt, and Babylon existing only for the sake of God's people. Egypt sheltered God's Christ, and God's Christ sheltered Egypt. Sodom received God's Lot, and Lot was a shield round about Sodom; for while Lot lingered, judgment tarried; while Lot was in Sodom, no wrath was experienced; but the very moment the shield was gone, the very moment the screen which kept off the Divine vengeance had departed, that same day God's fire came down on Sodom. Oh, what do the wicked, what do those who despise God's sovereign election know of how much they owe to God's despised elect, who are shields to them as long as they remain amongst them. Does Abraham go down to Gerar, and deny his wife? Abimelech takes her; God warns Abimelech, so that he is kept from sin for Abraham's sake. Look again. The house of Obed-Edom was

greatly blessed, because the ark of God rested there. "The shields of the earth belong unto God." "Behold, O GOD, our SHIELD, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed. For the LORD is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our King" (Psalm lxxxiv. 9 ; lxxxix. 18).

We have seen the LORD God a Sun, then a Shield, now a Giver. "*The LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" He gives like a God, He does not half give, He does not descend to barter, He does not descend to price or reward on the part of those who are recipients of His Divine bounties. *He gives.* Not as the religious world would have us believe, that the Lord Jesus Christ entered into a kind of business transaction with the Father, that He should receive from Him so many blessings and so many bounties for a certain price paid down. No, no; the Father gave to Him a people who were His before the worlds were framed; a people who should be redeemed by the precious blood of their Surety, and brought by the Holy Ghost to receive the covenant blessings which the Father had freely handed over to them in the Son of His love. Look how this is set before us again and again. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also *freely give us all things*" (Rom. viii. 32). Look again: "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. ii. 12). "Freely given to us." "Freely have you received — spiritually, experimentally — freely give," or deal out. "*The Lord will give grace.*" Regenerating grace to every one whom He gave to His Son in the counsels of eternity. Saving grace in the hour of spiritual distress, of soul sorrow, when the heart is bowed down with heaviness, confessing its sins and iniquities; justifying grace when accusers abound in the world, in the court of conscience, and in the Church, too; justifying grace in the Son of His love, justifying grace by the sweet whisper of His Spirit; thus they stand holy in the Father's sovereign electing grace, unblameable in the person of Jesus Christ, and unreprouvable through the witnessing of the Spirit

within. Preserving grace when dangers are on every hand, -when bereavement is experienced, the Lord has taken away the desire of our eye with a stroke, vacancy exists in and upon everything, no true satisfaction is enjoyed, but disappointment and distraction meet our view; but, blessed be His Holy Name, through all this there is encouraging and comforting' grace. And when I fail or fall there is upholding and there is restoring grace. Not only so, the dark and trying hour is drawing near when our poor exercised heart and flesh may quake at the very idea of dissolution; but He has promised dying grace for a dying hour; He has promised reviving grace out of darkness, desolation, and death. Grace which will conduct me safe up to Himself in the very heights of glory.

*"He will give grace and glory."* He will give grace *with* His glory, He will give glory *with* His grace. Grace is the bud which shall expand into the full-blown flower, and appear in all its glorious perfection, when we shall see Him as He is. How blessed it is to contemplate this glorious truth — not only glory hereafter, but glory now!" The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John xvii. 22); and by-and-bye He will crown it all, and He will be our Crown of glory. Yes, blessed be His Holy Name, the last verse of the hymn we sang just now comes in very sweetly, —

"The bride eyes not her garments.  
    Bat her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze on glory,  
    But on my King of grace;  
Not on the crown He giveth,  
    But on His pierced hand:  
The Lamb is all the glory  
    Of Immanuel's land."

Glory shall dwell in the land of spiritual promise, glory shall dwell in the land of Divine revelation, glory shall dwell in the land of covenant relationship, and glory shall dwell wherever a child of God is to be found. It may be when the very throes of dissolution are

experienced, when pains are racking the body, "A mortal paleness on the cheek, but glory in the soul." "He will give grace and glory; ^ no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Himself He gives as our covenant Father and Provider; His own dear Son He gives as our covenant Saviour and Surety; His blessed Spirit He gives as the covenant Witness -to all the glorious transactions thereof. He gives us one heart and one way that we may fear Him for ever" (Jer. xxxii. 39). He gives us an understanding in Divine mysteries that we may know Him and enjoy Him for ever (1 John v. 20). No good will He withhold from His own. He makes afflictions, sufferings, trials, and temptations good to them, as they work in His gracious hands.

"Good when He gives, supremely good,  
Nor less when He denies;  
E'en crosses from His sovereign hand  
Are blessings in disguise."

Have you tried to feather your nest, and toiled to make your home cozy and comfortable? In the twinkling of an eye you discover the waster destroying, rust impairing, and the moth fretting and spoiling every pretty pleasure you have made for yourself. The fair beauty of all earth's blessings is marred by sin, and as you experience the pangs of bitter disappointment and dissatisfaction you cannot be left comfortless, cankering care and worrying anxiety work weariness in your exercised and burdened spirit; but the time will come when you will look up and thank the bountiful Giver of all good for providing the thorn in your nest, and appointing the crook in your lot, for the stirring up and shaking out of self and self-pleasing which you have painfully but profitably experienced. Then the gracious acknowledgment from your adoring heart will be, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation" (Psa. lxxviii. 19). One of the good things, one of the daily loads, one of the covenant benefits, is a broken heart, broken to be healed and comforted, refreshed and encouraged by the presence and

preciousness of a dear Redeemer. " No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

With the sweet realization of these new covenant blessings, we may well join in singing from grateful hearts the words at the close of this precious Psalm: —

"O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!"

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

Blessed with poverty of spirit and the possession of a kingdom.

Blessed with a mourning soul and everlasting consolation.

Blessed with spiritual hunger and unfailing provision.

Blessed with transgression forgiven, sin covered, iniquity not imputed, and the earnest of the reserved inheritance. Thus blessed, we shall eventually hear the voice of the Shepherd King on the throne, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

# IX. "THY GOD IN THE MIDST OF THEE."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
March 4th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

— Zeph. iii. 17.

A RICH cluster of exceeding great and precious promises to the Church of the living God is presented in the text, and not without design. JEHOVAH'S design in giving such a cluster of new covenant blessings is, that each of them shall in the set time of favour be spoken home to the hearts of those interested therein. The speaking home of these promises begets the spirit of prayer and supplication which shall certainly be followed by the performance thereof; not by the parties who are graciously operated upon, not by those to whom the precious promises are made, but by the faithful Promiser, by the gracious Provider, by the glorious Performer of all things for and in His people. But as we tread on new covenant ground this morning, and as guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into the sweet realisation of the glories surrounding us, may our hearts be cheered with the prospect lying before us; and experience the blessed hope which He has implanted in us, with the enjoyment of the possession of that grace which the Father has made over to us

in the Son of His love, the glorious Covenantee, and the Conservator of all spiritual blessings for His elect people. But let us look at the passage as it stands before us: —

I. — In its surroundings.

II. — Zion's God — "*The LORD thy God is mighty.*"

III. — His relationship to Zion — "*In the midst of thee.*"

IV. — His salvation — "*He will save.*"

V. — His joy — "*He will rejoice over thee with joy.*"

VI. — His immutability — "*He will rest in His love.*"

VII. — And then touch upon the glorious finale of these new covenant blessings as spoken by the mouth of the prophet — "*He will joy over thee with singing.*" We may just notice how JEHOVAH is perfectly one with the declaration of His own sent servant, for He immediately joins in, "*I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly.*"

I. — Look at the surroundings of the text, the circumstances under which these words were spoken, and the varied positions and privileges peculiar to God's Zion, God's Israel, God's Jerusalem. In verse 1, we find a sharp reproof to Jerusalem for divers sins; then there is an exhortation to wait for the restoration of Israel, under which we behold the restoring, confirming, and establishing grace of God, in the hearts of His own people. Then we come to a profusion of precious promises from verse 14 to the end of the chapter. But let us glance at the state and condition of Zion, of the people of the living God, as described in the context. Verse 12: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people." A people afflicted with sin, with Satan, with circumstances, and with adverse surroundings. A people "poor in spirit," destitute of all strength in themselves to produce anything whereby they may influence JEHOVAH'S favour. Utterly destitute of anything whereby they may come into His presence with acceptance, as far as their persons and performances are concerned. An *afflicted and poor people*; but a trusting people. "*And they shall trust in the Name of the Lord.*" They are a remnant; a remnant who, under the power and guidance of

God's ever-blessed Spirit, are led into all truth; they speak no lies in His sacred presence, no deceitful tongue is to be found in their mouth when dealing with Him; for, when under the guidance and grace of God's ever-blessed Spirit, they are confident of that purity which exists alone in Him, and are silent in the presence of His infinite Majesty. They look up to Him who opens His mouth for the dumb, pleads the cause of the poor, and maintains the right of His afflicted ones. But see! "They shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid; sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Notice these distinctions in this precious portion. First Zion, then Israel, and then Jerusalem. Is there a distinction without a difference, or a difference without a distinction? Nay, nothing superfluous in God's most Holy Word, not a superfluous metaphor, or declaration, or distinction; when He speaks of Zion, He speaks of something higher than the mere worship and service of JEHOVAH. Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship, but Zion where the elect and redeemed, through the rich and sovereign grace of God, rest in His covenant favour. "*Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel.*" I, a child of the living God, brought into the very height of Zion, the home of Jesus' love, experience a spiritual delight which makes my heart sing aloud for joy. As I am brought into an apprehension of my standing before God as a pleader, a prevailer, and a prince\* though, like Jacob, a weak and a weary one, will not my heart shout? Nay, as I am brought as a spiritual worshipper into the temple of my God, to realize His presence and feast on His love, will not my heart rejoice 'T It will, as He reveals to my heart these glorious truths: "The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem." To those who are the living in Jerusalem, to those who are brought by the rich and sovereign grace of God, to experience then" standing in that no mean city; those who have come to Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem which is above, is free, and the mother of all true believers (Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22 — 24).

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He, whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed thee for His own abode:  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou may'st smile at all Thy foes."

Yes, to this highly-favoured Zion the LORD addresses these precious words of comfort and encouragement, "*Fear thou not.*" Here we have good words and comfortable for the fearing, timid, and trembling children of the living God; but words of withering rebuke to those who boast of the possession of a stock of grace by which they can go on their way rejoicing every day of the week. Now, mark this: those who enjoy the highest points of spiritual privilege, are given also to experience the deepest depths of soul trouble, hence the necessity for the "*Fear not*" of the mighty God to the fearing in Jerusalem. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give yon the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

"*And to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.*" To Zion! Those elect, redeemed, and favoured souls who are brought to the very heights of spiritual privilege, to enjoy their oneness with JEHOVAH in His purposes of love, and rejoice in the revelation of His sovereign will, are oftentimes faint. Sweet encouragement flows to the fearful heart, when these words are carried home with power: "*Let not thine hands be slack.*" You may depend upon this, as the child of God, blessed with the rich favours of His Father's house, delighted with the everlasting and unchanging love of a Father's heart, looks and longs for his inheritance up yonder, he will be sure to meet with much rough tossing amid the surges of this troublesome world. As he breasts wave after wave of sin, sorrow, disappointment, and dissatisfaction, his strength will decrease, his hands will slacken, and the joy of his heart will be in the sound of these gracious words, which impart life and vigor: "*Let not thine hands be slack.*" Those

who know what it is to lift up their hands and hearts in the sanctuary, also experience the failing eye, the fainting heart, and the hands hanging down; but gracious words from Jesus' lips, words of loving sympathy from the heart of the ever-present King-Priest, words of power in the sweet whispers of the Holy Ghost, communicate strength which we experience not from any other source, or in any other circumstances. "When I am weak, then am I strong-" (2 Cor. xii. 10). "Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). It is then we understand something of that spoken of by Paul in Col. i. 11, "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power: unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Here, then, we have the surroundings of the text. Just glance at the words, "*In that day*;" a day of power, but it may be a day of trouble as well as a day of deliverance, a day of sorrow as well as a day of rejoicing; for, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm xxx. 5). We proceed to notice

II. — Zion's God — "*The LORD thy God is mighty.*" JEHOVAH thy God; this is a covenant God, in covenant relationship with a covenant people. A God who has planned all things for them, a God who performs all things for them, a God who showers every blessing and every mercy on them. JEHOVAH, One-in-three, and Three-in-One. The Father of His elect family, who appointed and anointed the Son as the Elder Brother of all His highly-favoured brethren; who sends and communicates His Spirit — the Holy Ghost — to be their Guide, Teacher, and Comforter. "*The LORD thy God.*" Thine. When did He become thine? Thine, in covenant before the worlds were framed; He handed thee over into the safe keeping of the responsible One. Thy God, as He made Himself so by His eternal act of sovereign election.

"Christ be my first Elect, He said,  
And choose our Souls in Christ our Head,  
Before He gave the mountains birth,  
Or laid foundations for the earth."

There we have JEHOVAH, the God of the people in *purpose*; but He reveals Himself as the God of His people by the *purchase* of them through the shedding of His dear Son's blood, bringing them from slavery, from captivity, and from Satan's drudgery to Himself, to experience the bounties of His house, and the blessings of His covenant. *JEHOVAH thy God, thy power. Almighty power, irresistible power, regenerating power, and restoring power; hence, He is described as the mighty God. "The LORD thy God is mighty."* We see this in reference to the Father. The heart of the child sometimes doubts His power and His love — not His creative power, nor His power in providence, but His special, His new covenant, His new creating, His resurrection power; that sovereign power of His which makes all the blessings of the covenant experimentally mine. The child of God sometimes questions this power in the court of conscience; but God comes down to His doubting ones and says, "Is anything too hard for the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 14)? Can anything be too hard for Him who created heaven and earth, and all things that dwell therein; He who upholds all things by the word of His power; He who holds all winds in His fists, and all waters in the hollow of His hands; He who has all creatures, circumstances, and influences at His behest; is any thing too hard for Him? No, blessed be God. See how we have His Christ revealed to us in that precious new-covenant Psalm lxxxix., where He tells us: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." I have laid help on the "Man of My right hand, the Son of Man whom I have made strong for Myself" (Psalm lxxx. 17). In which strength the salvation of His people is everlastingly secured to them. "*The mighty God.*" Look into many portions of God's most Holy Word, where He is thus set forth: see in Isaiah ix. 6. There the mighty One is revealed to us in incarnation: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, THE MIGHTY GOD." The infant in Bethlehem's manger! *Mighty* in His incarnation, *mighty* in manifestation, *mighty* in the exhibition of apparent weakness; for it is ours to know that in every exhibition of weakness

on the part of the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, there is a gracious display of His Omnipotence. "*Mighty to save,*" is the declaration of our victorious and triumphant Lord, as the prophetic vision of Isaiah beholds Him returning from the war with sin, death, and hell. See Isaiah lxi. 1 — 4. *Mighty!* He has put away all the transgressions of His people. *Mighty!* He has settled the solemn question of sin, between them and His Father. *Mighty!* Bringing in for them an everlasting righteousness. *Mighty!* In abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel. *Mighty!* to triumph over all my foes, subdue my iniquities, and hush my troubled soul to rest with His own sweet peace.

Look at the revelation of this mighty One in His resurrection! But mark well this solemn fact: the mighty God in resurrection can only be known through death, and felt necessity. While we are alive to anything in ourselves, a risen Christ will never be precious to us. Paul knew Him well, and in the light of that knowledge bewailed his own weakness, want, and wretchedness, prayed for himself thus: "That I may know Him, and *the power of His resurrection,* and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 10, 11). Again, he prayed for the saints at Ephesus, as recorded in the first chapter of his epistle to that Church in the 17th and following verses: That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is *the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.*" It is a glorious truth, but hateful to carnal reason, that the power set forth in the resurrection of Jesus, the power which called all worlds out of nothing, is the same which works precious faith in us, causing our rebellious wills to lie submissive under His feet, and our anxious spirits to rest patiently and quietly abiding His will.

The strength of a person is soon discovered in the nature of his will. We speak of parties being strong because of their possessing an unbending will and settled determination of disposition. Such an one we see in Prince Bismarck; with a fixedness of purpose and keen discernment he knows how to deal with the Pope and Popish conspirators against the State of which he is the chancellor. According to our judgment he is a man of giant mind, a great man, an astute statesman, a mighty prince. But as we turn from him to the great JEHOVAH, his might sinks into insignificance. God's might is displayed in the revelation of His sovereign will and absolute right over all things. See how this is declared in our text, "*He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.*" Will He? Yes, *He will*, and nothing can resist Him. When Nebuchadnezzar was brought to know his level with the beasts of the field, and his understanding returned unto him, he said, "I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and *He doeth according to His will* in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth"; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, "What doest Thou" (Dan. iv. 34, 35)? With this the children of God are taught to join in the words of Paul, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11).

"*The Lord thy God is mighty.*" Thy covenant God, thy redeeming God, thy forgiving God, thy restoring God. But it maybe that some of His tempted and tried children are saying, Such ground is too high for me to take; with the little life, light, and love I am in possession of, I cannot look Him in the face and say, "My God." Ah, my friends, God leads His eternally loved ones to the lowly vale of humiliation. Let us notice the low lands of sorrow, doubt, and fear; ay, and sometimes of unbelief and accursed indifference, through

which the saints of the Most High God must pass, and in the midst of which they are enabled to look up and claim covenant relationship with Him, their gracious and merciful Father.

"*Thy God reigneth,*" is a precious message to Zion, in the midst of the uncircumcised and the unclean; Zion, down in the dust of dejection and despondency; Zion, in the hands of the alien and oppressor; Zion, who had sold herself for naught, and was to be redeemed without money; Zion, in the midst of Egyptian affliction and Assyrian oppression. Here, then, in the midst of circumstances the most distressing, and experiences the most perplexing, God speaks to the hearts of His own, and gives them to realize His presence, His preciousness, and His power. Now if we turn over to Psa. xxxi. 14, we find a sweet and sensitive declaration of the Psalmist, and with him, sooner or later, the whole of God's dear children join, declare this precious fact, "But I trusted in Thee, O Lord; I said, *Thou art my God.*" In the time of trouble and anxiety, the soul is enabled to look up from the midst of the gloom wrought by Satan in our wretched surroundings, and to cry, "*My God.*"

It is blessed to hear these words flowing from an exercised but adoring heart, after a season of unbelief (John xx. 19 — 29). Jesus appeared to His disciples and shewed them His hands and His side; poor wavering, unbelieving, doubting Thomas was not there; the communication is made to him that the Lord had been with them. Thomas objects: "I win not believe." Jesus again appeared in their midst; He saith, "Thomas, reach hither thy finger." Notice the homely way in which a compassionate Jesus deals with His weak and unbelieving disciple, Thomas. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." Thomas, put thy hand into this side which was pierced for thee, which forms a clift in which thou shalt be hidden when the judgments of My Father are upon the earth. Poor' Thomas looks on adoringly, and saith, "*My Lord and my God.*" So Paul, in want and in necessity, too, as he is brought into sympathetic oneness with those who realized their necessities, said in Phil. iv. 19, "*My God.*" Mine,

in covenant before the worlds were formed. *My God*; He who redeemed me by His precious blood. *My God*; He who revealed Himself to me by the indwelling of His Spirit. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Look a little further. A time of desertion, a time of darkness, and a time of dread will oftentimes overtake the child of the living God; he who basks in the sunshine of Divine favour will know what it is to grope in the darkness of desertion. "Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and *my Lord hath forgotten me*" (Isa. xlix. 14). Mark that little personal pronoun, "*My*." "*My Lord hath forsaken me.*" See! It is not only the Lord thy God in covenant, the Lord thy God in creation, the Lord thy God in justification, the Lord thy God in sweet communion, but it is the LORD thy God in temptation, tribulation, darkness and desertion. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My Name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9).

III. — JEHOVAH'S relationship to Zion as expressed in the words, "*In the midst of thee.*" We will look in the first place at God in the midst of His covenant people in days of old. Those of us who are acquainted with our Bible, know what was the position of the tabernacle, the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, and the shekinah, which shone above the same, and from which JEHOVAH revealed Himself by Urim and Thummim, light and perfection, to His people. The ark of the covenant was always to be in the midst of God's resting people, and must always be in advance of His marching people. Mark! The ark of the covenant went before a marching, a wandering people; but when the people rested, it was because the Lord their God was in the midst of them. We see an allusion to this in that precious promise in Zech. ii. 5: "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory *in the midst of her.*" Again at ver. 10 and 11: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell *in the midst of thee*, saith the LORD, and thou shalt know that the Lord of

hosts hath sent Me unto thee." This is precious true as we look at Israel collectively, as we have it in that glorious declaration in Psa. xlvi., "*God is in the midst of her*" — in the midst of a tempted, tried and troubled people — "She shall not be moved, God shall help her and that right early."

Let us look at this expression as we find it recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, and on new covenant ground, "*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee.*" See how many times it occurs in connection with the precious work of our blessed Lord and Saviour here on earth. In the first place we behold Him, when only twelve years of age, lost by His mother and Joseph, who returned to Jerusalem to seek their lost Son, and found Him in the temple, *in the midst* of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. Here He is as the Holy Child Jesus, yet He is the Wisdom of God; He is young in years, but His lips are filled with grace; though a child, He spake as never man spake, and was *in the midst* of these as a Prophet. But we pass on, and behold Jesus, according to John xix. 18, brought to "Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and (mark the expression) *Jesus in the midst*" *In the midst* of what? See! *In the midst* of sin, rebellion, and lawlessness, judgment, darkness, and gloom; *in the midst*, as the very Chief of the malefactors; *in the midst*, as the very Paragon of profanity; *in the midst*, as the very Perfection of sin and lawlessness, according to the judgment of those who beheld Him there. Little did they know that at that very moment they were accomplishing the gracious purpose of JEHOVAH towards His Church and people, in the fulfillment of that prophecy, "He was numbered with the transgressors." "*In the midst* of sin, all the sin of His people laid upon Him. *In the midst* of judgment, the judgment and the suffering due to Zion experienced by her sinless Substitute on Calvary's bloody tree. But, blessed be God, this view of the subject continues not; we behold Him, according to Luke xxiv. 36, on resurrection ground; He stands *in the midst* of His terrified and affrighted brethren. It was as they were gathered together, that Jesus stood in their midst, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." On the ground

of accomplished redemption, and in resurrection life, a precious Christ alone can be found *in the midst* of a loving and eternally loved people; and according to His own covenant promise, which we find in Matt, xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered." I love to look at that word, "*gathered*," as the Holy Ghost has given it. It is not two or three assembled or met together, but "where two or three are *gathered*;" gathered by the irresistible power of God the Holy Spirit. "Gathered together in My Name," in the name of a precious Jesus, "There am I *in the midst of them*." But we look at another marvellous but precious declaration in John viii.; it is when the Scribes and Pharisees brought in a poor woman, whom they accused of having broken the seventh commandment; Jesus writes on the floor, and the words were ominous to them, they could not withstand the force of that writing, but passed out of His presence, one by one, "and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing *in the midst*." Of what? *In the midst* of the very perfections of Deity ; *in the midst* of that glorious grace which the Father had communicated to Him for her; *in the midst* of Jesus' loving sympathy, pity, and compassion. He speaks, "Woman, where are these thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more."

"Lord Jesus, are we One with Thee?  
O height, O depth of love!  
With Thee we died upon the tree,  
In Thee we live above."

The book of the Revelation gives us a glimpse of glory, of the glorified worshippers surrounding the throne, and of the Lamb as it had been slain *in the midst* thereof. The Lamb denotes His gentleness and meekness, the throne His majesty and sovereignty. The glorious day will soon arrive when we shall know what that means: "For the Lamb which is *in the midst* of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17).

"*The LORD thy God in the midst of thee.*" Where would you desire a precious Christ this morning? In the pulpit? You would not care much for the preacher if He were only there. It is Jesus *in the midst*, according to that precious statement in Col. i. 27, "*Christ in you the hope of glory.*" It is no small privilege to see the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty gathering around Him, and to know by blest experience that we form part of the family blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies: "According as He hath chosen us in Him that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. i. 3 — 5). This is the God and Father of His elect family displaying His lovingkindness and affection to them; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him." But Jesus is also represented as God *in the midst* of His people, the Good Shepherd *in the midst* of His flock, seeking, saving, providing, and preserving, leading to still waters, and to the pastures of Divine love and consolation. He is not only a Shepherd, but a Saviour; God *in the midst* of His redeemed brethren, conducting their prayers, and leading their praises. See Heb. ii. 12 : "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, *in the midst* of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." Oh, how blessed it is to know this, and to experience these glorious privileges which God the Holy Ghost reveals to us in this profusion of new covenant promises! We are now brought to notice,

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IV. — His salvation. "*He will save.*" Blessed be God, His salvation is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory, settled in purpose before the worlds were framed. Salvation is no after thought with Him. Oh, no! JEHOVAH is one eternal NOW, living in His own entirety, displaying His sovereignty in the choice, salvation, justification, regeneration, preservation, and eternal glorification of His own people in Christ Jesus, "who hath saved us" — it is a settled matter — "and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose' and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy i. 9). Not only in

purpose, but salvation accomplished by the blood-shedding and obedience of the dear Redeemer. See! "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). Not try to save, not do His utmost to save, or to do a part, and leave the other for men to fill up. Such an uncertain *Dagon* as that is set up in most pulpits in these our days, which has nothing to do with this eternal finished and complete salvation. It is my privilege to preach, and yours to listen, within the walls of Grove chapel, to a salvation complete in all its parts; and may the day be far distant when this poor stammering tongue, or this exercised mind, shall speak or think in this pulpit of anything else but the glory of a covenant God, and His sovereignty revealed in the salvation of whom *He will*, when *He will*, where *He will*, and just because *He will*. He gives no account of His matters which are bidden in the clouds of Divine mystery and concealment in which He covers Himself; but He will scatter confusion to reprobates, to devils, and to all hell. "*He will save.*" Yes, blessed be God, He did save in bearing the sins of His people, in enduring the punishment which they deserved, in bearing the judgment of His Father, and in going down into the depths of sorrow and suffering, the fruit of our transgressions. Salvation was accomplished. "It is finished!" filled heaven with rejoicing, and all hell with terror and confusion, and now fills the waiting hearts of true Zionites with thankfulness and gratitude. "*He will save.*" He has saved, He doth save, and He will save from all iniquity, from every sin, from every foe, from every perplexity, and give unto His children to know their inalienable inheritance in Himself, given unto them before the worlds were framed, and which neither hell, devils, nor evil influences can for a single moment rend from their grasp. He will not only save, but, —

V. — "*He will rejoice over thee with joy*" The joy of the LORD is the strength of His people (Neh. viii. 10). Glorious sight! JEHOVAH in His Trinity of Persons rejoicing over lost sinners, wandering sheep, and wayward sons. The Father *will* rejoice, the Son *will* rejoice, the Holy Ghost *will* rejoice, the Covenant Three-in-One *will* rejoice. If you wish to see something of this rejoicing, turn

to that blessed fifteenth of Luke, where you find a glorious One-in-Three parable. In *redemption* the good Shepherd goes out over waste and wild, seeking His lost sheep, and stops not until He finds it; "And when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders, *rejoicing*. And when He cometh home, He calleth together His friends and neighbours, saying unto them, *Rejoice with Me*, for I have found My sheep which was lost." In *regeneration* the house must be swept, and the piece of silver of intrinsic value is found, and the Spirit in and with the bride rejoices. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The third part of the parable reveals the lost son; the Father saw him afar off, the Father had compassion, the Father ran, the Father fell on his neck, the Father kissed him. Then notice the joy, the rejoicing, the Divine merry-making revealed in this precious chapter.

"*He will rejoice over thee with joy.*" What kind of joy is this? It is exceeding joy (Jude 24). Not simply a God full, but a God overflowing with joy. May some drops of that joy which makes the heart to bubble up with gratitude before Him, fall on us this morning. Turn with me to Isa. lxii. 5: "For as a young man marryeth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so *shall thy God rejoice over thee.*" The covenant Bridegroom rejoices over His bride, the Church, with joy ineffable and uninterrupted, and communicates the same in measure to His mourning ones. His joy is exceeding, in His time their's is full (John xv. 11). Look at yon mother! She watches, with care and anxiety, over the son of her womb, as he lies in his cradle; the hectic flush and feverish start seem to indicate that ere long the loved one will be torn from her embrace; but God restores him! Tell me, can you pourtray the joy of that mother's heart? The lad grows in waywardness, rebelliousness, and profligacy, a constant source of grief to her; but by the words of His lips he is kept from the paths of the destroyer, and lives to be the joy and rejoicing of a fond mother's heart. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you"

(Isa. lxvi. 13). This is the joy of the heart of God in Christ. He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

VI. — Notice His immutability. "*He will rest in His love*" Where does our God find rest? Nowhere out of the Son of His love. Where does Jesus find rest? In the everlasting welfare of His blood-bought ones. Where does the Holy Ghost find rest? In the comfort and consolation of His quickened ones. Our covenant God rests in His promises, which are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Are His people changeable? He says, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). He rests, or is silent, in His love. Do sins and iniquities abound in their fears and imaginations? He says, "Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more" (neb. x. 17). Do accusers appear? He says, "Fear not, I am with thee." Let legalists and merit-mongers accuse one of God's elect, Jesus speaks, "I do not condemn thee, go, and sin no more."

VII. — We can only just touch upon the glorious finale of this chorus of new covenant blessings; "*He will joy over thee with singing.*" The Father rejoices over them to do them good f Jer. xxxii. 41). The Saviour sings in the midst of His redeemed brethren (Heb. ii. 12). The Spirit sings in the heart of the quickened and living family (Song ii. 10 — 12). See!" My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing is come." Mark! the words, "*of birds,*" are in italics. It is the time of the singing of the blessed THREE-IN-ONE by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit, for "the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land." This is the experience of Divine joy, the rich realization of the truth that "the joy of JEHOVAH is thy strength," and "His glory is great in thy salvation."

May He add His blessing for His Name's sake. Amen.

## X. "A TRIED STONE."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Evening,  
March 11th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste."

— Isa. xxviii. 16.

THIS precious portion reveals rest, resignation, and refreshment in the midst of darkness, indignation, and reproof. Almost the whole of the chapter is taken up with reproving the Jews, and especially the rulers, for their untowardness, hypocrisy, and incorrigibility. In the verses immediately preceding the text, the priests and prophets are charged with drunkenness and filthiness; but this refers to spiritual matters; the minds of such were given over to strong delusion that they should believe a lie (2 Thes. ii. 11). From the ninth verse to the thirteenth we have the subjects of Divine teaching described, and the effect of the communication of the precepts stated. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts." Wise and prudent ones blinded, while babes are spiritually enlightened. Children capable of understanding sound doctrine when communicated by the only true Teacher, God the ever blessed Spirit. Now, listen to what the precept is to all such despisers of God's

covenant truth!" But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; *that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*" (ver. 13). This is the effect of "precept upon precept, line upon line." The more I tug and toil with the precepts and the farther I am carried away from Him whom my soul loves, from the sweet enjoyment of that rest and refreshing experienced by weary pilgrims in the glorious fact that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). Christ is my precept Fulfiller, He has magnified the law, and made it honourable (Isa. xlii. 21), brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. ix. 24), an obedience without spot or flaw, in which His people stand everlastingly justified and accepted in the presence of the Father.

"Wherefore hear the Word of the LORD, ye scornful men that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves" (ver. 14, 15). Strong language this, is it not? We cannot for a moment think that the parties addressed adopted such terms; I do not think they did; but He who searcheth the heart and knoweth all men was fully cognizant of all their impious wills and determinations. He, therefore, uses language strong and pungent, language suited to the nature of the case, and shows up these fleshly *willers and workers* in their true colours, while He meets His weary and oppressed ones with sweet words of encouragement, hope, and promise. Do notice the strong language of exposure and judgment in the 15th verse, and that of encouragement and mercy in the words of the text. May we, in humble dependence upon God the ever-blessed Spirit — without whose grace and guidance all our preaching and hearing will be profitless — look at the portion before us: "Therefore, thus saith the LORD God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Let us notice —

I. — The Builder — "*Behold, I lay.*"

II. — The place — "*In Zion.*"

III. — The foundation — "*A foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.*"

IV. — The effects — "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*"

I. — The Builder, JEHOVAH GOD. "*Behold, I lay.*" God knew what miserable failure would attend all human plans and arrangements, and what disappointment all such would yield to His tried and exercised people. He, therefore, laid a firm foundation in His unchanging councils, upon which His elect Church should be built with undisturbed security. He engaged, He promised, He swore that failure should not be found in His plan, and that misadventure should not be found in His glorious work. "*Behold, I lay!*" *Behold!* Some one has well said, "When that word, '*Behold?*' stands at the door of a passage, depend upon it there is something wonderful and precious within." If God the Holy Ghost opens the door and gives us a gracious entrance into the chambers of Divine revelation, our eyes will be feasted and our hearts delighted with the wondrous things of covenant love and grace. "*T lay.*" This indicates to us the sovereignty of Jehovah, for everything that is done is done *for* Himself; all that is accomplished in the Church for His glory is accomplished *by* Himself. That personal pronoun "I" can only be seen in its beauty and perfection as shining in the revelation of JEHOVAH, Three-in-One. He looked on those glorious intelligences surrounding His throne; in the glass of His decrees He saw the myriads of mankind, but not one equal to the work of salvation, preservation, and glorification. The silence of eternity was broken: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7). Read the portion from which Paul quotes these words (Psa. xl. 7, 8): "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." In this blessed One He saw, and appointed, and laid the foundation firm and secure. He is God f He is God-Man! Jehovah knew well the strength needed to bear the

sins, sorrows, and sufferings of His people, with the floods of penal wrath which must have overwhelmed them; He knew what was required to maintain inviolate the perfection of His attributes, the glory of His Person, and the display of His unchanging love, therefore He declares His decree, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty" (Psa. lxxxix. 19). He selected for the foundation of His spiritual house, the Man, His Fellow; JEHOVAH JESUS, His Equal; "Emmanuel, God with us."

This foundation is laid by God in the incarnation of His dear Son. "By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation," is the chaste language of England's Litany. A mystery, indeed! to think that He who is the Mighty God should *be laid* in the womb of a poor sinful woman. *He was laid* indeed, from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, encompassed with our infirmities, and laden with our guilt. *He was laid* still lower as "a sure foundation," when, as we see in His death, the Father *laid upon Him all the iniquities of all His people*; when in the very depths of condemnation and wrath *He was laid*, that His elect and redeemed ones might never experience a single penal pang. In the grave *He was laid* that He might smash Satan's power, abolish death, bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel, and cause His people to shout, "O grave, where is thy victory?" "*Behold, I lay.*" In the incarnation, sorrows, sufferings, death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, God has laid a sure foundation for the hope and faith of His people to be built upon, and upon which they remain unshaken and secure amid the storms, temptations, trials and tribulations of life; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, He will cause them to face Him without amazement or fear, while the hypocrites in Zion shall be filled with fearfulness and trembling, and shall fade away before the brightness of His glory.

II. — The place — "*In Zion.*" Not Zion literally, for that spot was not the scene of the birth, obedience, sufferings, and death of Jesus; but Zion, JEHOVAH'S desire and rest. Look at those three names, Israel, Jerusalem, Zion! Each denotes a feature of God-wrought

experience. Israel, pleading and prevailing; Jerusalem, worshipping and rejoicing; Zion, reigning and ruling. Israel, alone with God in *prayer*; Jerusalem, association with the saints in *praise*; Zion, oneness with JEHOVAH in *power*. The temple was in Jerusalem where men worshipped; the palace was on Zion where God dwelt. "In Judah is God known; His Name is great in Israel. In Salem is His tabernacle, and *His dwelling-place in Zion*" (Pea. lxxvi. 1, 2). Zion, the display of royalty, kingly power, government and Divine sovereignty. Here we see JEHOVAH'S sovereign right to choose whom He will to salvation, and for the display of His riches of grace and glory by Jesus Christ. The height of Zion is the height of covenant privilege, the blessed spot to which the God-sent minister will endeavour to direct and lead the poor of His people, and will never rest satisfied except such are experimentally one with Him in these blessed and eternal realities. Zion is God's people, God's Church in *purpose*, by *purchase*, and by *power*. Now let me ask you, What interest have you therein? Has God laid His foundation in your hearts for faith, and hope, and love? See you to this, "Christ in you the Hope of glory" (Col. i. 27).

III. — The foundation — "*A foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.*" A foundation is laid in a chosen, prepared, settled, and permanent spot. Such is God's foundation, Christ; such is God's spot, Zion. "A body hast Thou prepared Me," in which dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (Heb. x. 5; Col. ii. 9), and from which proceeds all the salvation, grace, and glory of God to His Church built thereupon. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11).

1. "*A stone.*" Speculators would have us believe that God had His eye upon Hezekiah here; but precious faith sees a precious Christ. "To\* whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" (1 Pet. ii. 4). Let us look at a few portions of the Word where Jesus is represented as a stone. Turn to Gen. xlix. 24: Jacob on his dying bed blesses his children, and in

Joseph's blessing says, "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Then comes a parenthesis — mark it well — (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel). From whence? Springing from the loins of Joseph! No! "For," says Paul (Heb. vii. 14), "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah," and not from Joseph. Why then the parenthesis? Consult the marginal references (Gen. xlv. 11). Here Joseph speaks as the preserver and nourisher of his father and his brethren. "And there will I nourish thee, lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast come to poverty." Look at chap. xlvii. 12: "And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household with bread, according to their families." Margin, "*As a little child is nourished.*" Joseph was the preserver of Judah, and "*from thence*" — providentially, but not in the line of natural descent — "*the Stone of Israel.*" The experimental truth of Jacob's parenthesis to our exercised hearts is that from the Stone of Israel, though it is an incongruity to carnal minds, flows true sympathy and succour to the whole of the living stones built thereon.

Turn now to Psa. cxviii. 22. This may be called a resurrection Psalm, one appointed in the service of the established Church for Easter-day. Christ speaks, "The LORD hath chastened Me sore, but He hath not given Me over unto death. Open to Me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, I will praise the Name of the LORD. This gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise Thee for Thou hast heard Me, and art become My salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner." If you turn to 1 Pet. ii. 4 — 8, you will see that Peter's Spirit-guided eyes were on the text, and on Psa. cxviii., and proves therefrom that Christ the foundation stone is the resurrection and the life to all built upon Him.

We pass on to Acts iv. 10 — 12. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him

doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the Stone which was set at naught of you builders which is become the Head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Mark that "*must*" not *may*. "Whereby we *must* be saved." There is a Divine necessity, the foundation for our salvation has been laid, and the salvation of the Church *must* appear in every stone built upon it.



Now look at Rom. ix. 33. "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." A terrible declaration to all not on the foundation. The truth of the whole of this chapter is God's sovereignty, His absolute right to do as He will in the election or rejection of sinful men. Sovereignty rises from the foundation, and is acknowledged by all those who rest their soul's salvation on Christ and Christ alone.

Turn to Eph. ii. 19. "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 a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This is unity. The foundation and the building are one. One heart, one way, one faith, one hope, one Lord. Precious truth! Glorious foundation! Firm, stable, abiding! A foundation for our hope, faith, confidence, salvation and security when storms are raging around and conflict abounds within.

2. "*A tried stone*" — "Behold I lay in Zion *a tried stone*." It is a precious privilege to see the hand of God in every part of the life of His Son, the Man of sorrows, here upon earth. Was He laid low? JEHOVAH was above it all. Was He tempted of the devil? He was led by the Spirit. Was He cursed by some? With greater gentleness than David possessed He could say, "Let him curse for the Lord hath bidden him." Now we know by heartfelt experience that there are

precious few in these degenerate days who acknowledge God's sovereignty, and those who do have this false charge thrown into their face, Oh, you make God to be the Author of sin! The child of God does no such thing, he traces a Father's pathway in the dark clouds of mystery, and that which he cannot understand he leaves to His gracious will to unfold when He pleases, and if He wills not, to bow in submission to His authority and glorious sovereignty. Language fails to describe the fulness and preciousness of the deep couched beneath these three short words, "*a tried stone*." A stone tested and proved, a stone which has borne all the weight placed upon it to prove its solidity, strength, suitability, and durability. Who are they by whom this stone has been tested and tried? In covenant He was proved equal to every engagement, each attribute of JEHOVAH in all its glorious perfection seen in Him who thus became to His people their salvation and their strength.

"*A tried stone*." Throughout a life of sorrow and suffering He was tried by friends and foes. No sooner does He appear in this world of sin and death than the enmity of Satan through his brood is manifested against Him. Look at the hellish cruelty of that blood-thirsty "Herod in destroying the little ones at Bethlehem. Was the infant Christ destroyed? No! All the craft, cunning, and counsels of hell were vain, and came to naught. As a Man "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," He was tried with the proud world's scorn. His character was assailed with such vile taunts as these: "A gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," which latter was a lie from their lips, but is made blessedly true by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the heart of those who know they are sinners indeed. Wretched hypocrites and Pharisees meant something malicious and devilish when they uttered the words, "Friend of sinners;" but the precious title, sent forth in scorn and derision, is welcomed as life and power when brought home to the tried, tempted, and anxious hearts of the children of God for their comfort and encouragement. Look still further, He is persecuted and defamed in every step He takes. Does He go about doing good, and easting out devils by His power .' His gracious

miracles are so many signs for the world's enmity and opposition, and His patient spirit is grieved with the sneer, "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils" (Matt. ix. 34). Not only is He defamed and persecuted, but utterly despised. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John i. 11). There is a peculiarity in that verse which we who are only acquainted with the English version cannot see. It is this: He came unto His own possessions, His own inheritance, His own land; but His own people, His own brethren, received Him not. Notice those two precious words in John xiii. 1, "Having loved *His own* which were in the world He loved them to the end." It does not say His own Church. His own people, His own flock; but "*His own*," a term of the most affectionate endearment, showing that His Church is everything to Him. Yet "*His own* received Him not." This is not merely true of the Jews as- a nation, but of all elect vessels of mercy who despise and turn away from Him, until, by the irresistible power of God the ever-blessed Spirit, He makes a place for Himself in their sin-stricken and broken hearts. Rejected of men is a precious Christ! Despised of men is a kind, loving, and affectionate Jesus!" *His own*" can well but mournfully say, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isa. liii. 3). In the house of His friends He was tried indeed and in truth. One friend betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all forsook Him. David opens his mouth, but Jesus in prophecy speaks, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company" (Psa. lv. 12 — 14). Is not our Jesus, God's Christ, "*a tried 'Stone?'*" Mark you! As assuredly as He was tried in each of these particular points, so shall we His members be tried more or less. We may strive with all our might and wisdom to put them on one side, but 'sooner or later, in the bitterness of our souls, we shall experience them.; and our mercy is to know that the bitterness is but the forerunner of that

sweetness flowing in pardon and acceptance through the wounds, and blood, and righteousness of Jesus, as we sit at His sacred feet and rest our heads on His affectionate bosom. Paul knew something of this which caused him, in enumerating that long string of perils he had experienced, to insert, "*in perils among false brethren*" (2 Cor. xi. 26). Jesus knew that in all its fulness and entirety.

"*A tried stone.*" Jesus was tried and denied by His loving and warm-hearted Peter. Tried in His patience, meekness, and gentleness, when He showed to His disciples that He must suffer, die, and rise again; and Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Pity Thyself, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. xvi. 22). Is it not marvellous that the sayings of the Wisdom of God should be contradicted, and accounted as foolishness? On another occasion. Peter promised, in ignorance of his own weakness and of God's purpose, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Matt. xxvi. 35; Mark xiv. 29). There we have a profession of friendship, attachment, and fidelity to our blessed Lord. How was it maintained by Peter? Not at all. He followed his Master afar off; he thrice denied Him in His very hearing, and that with oaths and curses, "I know not the Man!" Was not a loving Saviour tried? He was; but blessings on His Name, His patience, love, and meekness bore it, all. He turned, He looked, and that look wrought godly sorrow in Peter's soul, only known by those who are brought to know and feel His love. But look still further — He is betrayed, denied; *the tried Stone* must be tried still more — "And they all forsook Him and fled." I told you that sooner or later we must experience fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Paul prayed for this (see Phil. iii. 10), "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." Well, the Lord knows I do pray "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection;" but I do not pray for "fellowship with Him in His sufferings," and it is a question with me — I speak not dogmatically — whether Paul ever repeated that desire. Ah, we little think of what is involved in such a prayer — sorrow, suffering, dejection, desertion, temptation, tribulation. Do I desire these? No!

But I know I must have them. Jesus, *the tried Stone*, experienced them all to the full, and drank to the dregs the cup of Divine fury; now, it is mine to pray for the sweet realization of a Father's love and the enjoyment of His home and heart. Follow our blessed Lord in spirit to the judgment hall. He is beaten on the head with a reed, and crowned with cruel thorns, the smiters made long furrows on His back, and from His cheeks plucked of the hair. Still His patience holds out, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). Our blessed Jesus was tried to the uttermost, and, blessings on His sacred Name, He stood every test.

"*A tried stone.*" We must hasten on. Not only is He tried at the hand of friends and foes, but fiends also appear to tempt and try. On the banks of the Jordan the voice of the Father was heard, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). "Then," at that very moment, "was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (ch. iv. 1). The devil always spies his opportunity, which is a time of want and weakness on the part of those whom he tempts. Is Jesus an hungered? Satan tempts: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." O that accursed "*if.*" With it Jesus was tried, but He was proof against every trial; *the tried Stone* is perfect and complete in every part. Does the world assail Him? Are men and devils arrayed against Him? Do all the schemes of hell appear to bear Him down? See! The lower He is brought and the more glorious He shines. The greater His appearance of weakness before men, and the greater His mighty power is experienced in the hearts of His people. How blessed to see Jesus tempted, tried, and proved in all points as we are, that He might be able to succour all His tempted ones. We now come to notice the Stone in His severest trial. To Gethsemane He must go, to grapple hard with justice, sin, and hell, on our behalf. He cries, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Tell me, Can we experience a thousandth part of the bitterness of that cry, of those sorrows in our room and stead? Look at the words in this light; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even *to die.*" *To die* rather than come in contact with an assaulting devil! Contact with that hideous monster,

SIN! Contact with condemnation and wrath! *To die.* ' Is this, or has it been the truth in our heart's experience? I have been asked many times, Have Satan's temptations been such that your weak nature has shuddered at the prospect? Have his assaults brought your tried spirits to succumb to the wretched circumstances surrounding you that you would have hastened the moment of dissolution? I can without hesitation answer, Yes. Turn to Ezekiel xxxvi. 31 : "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." Self hateful, sin a burden, surroundings dark and gloomy, and the soul sorrowful, ay, surcharged with sorrow, cause many a poor tired pilgrim to long for something to come and put an end to so miserable an existence. But it is blessed for us to know that our precious and adorable Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, is our succour in all our temptations, and cheers us with the knowledge and experience of that sympathy which flows alone from Him, *the tried Stone*, and the foundation of all that is good, great, and glorious, for His people.

*The tried Stone* is still further tried in fellowship with "*His own.*" He said to the favoured three, "Tarry ye here, and watch." There was a precept for them. He went about a stone's cast from them and fell on His face, crying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He waits — not an answer. He looks — not a ray of light from the dark cloud of sin, judgment, and death, which fell upon Him. He sought for solace and sympathy from the three whom He had left to watch and pray, but they were fast asleep. That was obeying the precept! *The tried Stone* endured this testing; no lash, no rod, no threat, but words of loving affection and heartfelt sympathy, "Sleep on now and take your rest." On Calvary's heights He was tried by God, men, and devils. He cried, "*I thirst.*" That was a thirst never experienced before or since. See! If all the thirst and torments of the lost could be brought together in one spot and to one person, all would not equal the sufferings of Zion's King and Lord, when He cried, "*I thirst.*"

But who can tell the sorrows of His desolate heart, when He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Surely He was tried as none other ever could be, and here we have proof positive that He stood the test. Forsaken, yet "*My God, My God*" Satan could not persuade Him out of that, he could not claim one advantage over Him. Blessed be His holy Name for those precious words, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). Let us notice now how this Stone has been tried in the faith and experience of God's people. Ever since His exaltation with great triumph into His kingdom in heaven His Deity has been denied, His manhood questioned, His character reviled, His doctrines ridiculed, His salvation hated, and Himself persecuted in the persons of His members. But He remains ever the same foundation stone, tried, firm, and abiding, sustaining the faith, confirming the hope, and encouraging the heart of all who trust in Him.

See how He was tried in Abraham's faith and failures; He revealed Himself to Abraham who rejoiced to see His day. He hid Himself from Abraham who wavered and fell. Moses tried His patience and love to the utmost in that marvellous request, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin — ; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written" (Exodus xxxii. 32). Was this prayer answered? Never! The tried Stone is ever the same in patient grace and loving consideration to His weak and weary ones. In the sweet experience of which Moses sang, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. xxxii. 4). He was tried by David in his various sins against his covenant God, out of every one of which he was graciously delivered; but when, with his weary head upon his dying pillow, he surveyed the disorders of his house and kingdom, he could with confidence say, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). The Stone was tried, the Foundation held good. So in the case of Job, from the depths of sorrow and affliction, he looked up and said, "I

*know that my Redeemer*" — my Next-of-kin, the One who has the right to redeem, to vindicate my character, to avenge me of all my adversaries — "*liveth*" Look at the dying thief! One moment blaspheming and reviling a forsaken and suffering Jesus, the next moment acknowledging His sovereignty and praying unto Him. Jesus looks love down to the depths of the heart of the dying blasphemer, and the cry goes forth, "Lord, remember me." "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," is the gracious reply. Papists and others would have us believe that Paradise is below, an intermediate state. Well, to an intermediate *state* I object not; but if you tell me of an intermediate *place*, I tell you, you do not know what you are talking about. It is "absent from the body and present with the Lord." Paradise! Where is it? "Caught *up* to Paradise," the third heaven, where Jesus ever lives in the presence of His Father for His people. The period or state existing between the departure of the redeemed spirit from the body, and the moment when the whole election of grace shall be presented perfect and complete, will not display that full glory and bliss which all the saints shall share with their rejoicing Lord, when all the children are safe round their Father at home, and the glorified ones all bow and join in that full chorus of everlasting praise, "Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever."

"*A tried Stone.*" Some may be now saying, Is it possible that Christ can or will save me; I who have tried Him day-by-day, can He save such a mass of corruption as I feel myself to be f" Ah, my dear friends, the dead know not anything. Look at Mary Magdalene out of whom Christ cast seven devils. Seven! The very perfection of devilry. Seven! Diversity, every species of devilry. Yet the very perfection of Divine love, Christ Jesus, cast the very perfection of hellish enmity out of poor Mary. From the first dawn of consciousness I rebelled against Him, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, yet —

"Determined to *save*, He watched o'er my path  
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death;

And can He have taught me to trust in His Name,  
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

No! His lovingkindness is such that He will not let His loved ones sink into hell, and as He brings them to enjoy the sunshine of His love they melt into nothing and adore at His feet. I love to "lie passive in His hands and know no will but His;" but left to myself, to my surmisings and schemings, to have my own way, and to speak my own words, I display my folly. Here I am brought to ask for wisdom from Him who is wisdom itself, and to seek for resignation from the meek and lowly One who was tried by God, tried by devils, tried by friends, tried by foes, and *tried by ME*. Blessed be God, He is a tried Stone, and a trying Stone.

"What think ye of Christ is the test,  
To try both your state and your scheme,  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him."

3. "*A precious Corner-stone.*" He is precious in His solidity, permanency, and durability. A corner-stone supports the superstructure: He is the support, the strength, the Rock of His people's heart and their portion for ever. A corner-stone unites. He gathers together His elect of many nations, many languages, many differences, into one fellowship of love. He knits the whole together, makes it compact, cements it with His own most precious blood. He is the Upholder from disorder and ruin, and the Preserver from decay and destruction. Dear old Medley sweetly sang —

"In every office He sustains,  
In every victory He gains.  
In every counsel of His will,  
He's precious to His people still."

IV. — "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*" Who is this believer? There are believing hypocrites, believing devils, and

believing elect ones. "He makes the believer and gives him His crown." "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29). This believing is always accompanied with the fear and love of God, a hatred of sin and intense desires after Him. Have you faith of His own giving? It is "the faith of the operation of God" (Col. ii. 12), the faith that worketh by love (Gal. v. 6), the faith that purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9), the faith that overcometh the world (1 John v. 4), the faith that clings to the Saviour's garment, and says, "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me." It is the faith that lives in the sunshine of prosperity, and gives not up the ghost in adversity. It shines the brightest in the furnace. "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7). Tried faith stands the test because it springs from Him who first trusted the Father, and who sees to it that each member of His Church built upon Him shall receive life, nourishment, and vitality from Himself alone.

*"Shall not make haste."* Shall not hastily catch at anything to escape danger, death, and damnation; but as taught of God shall wait only upon Him. What is worth possessing is worth waiting for. Possessing Jesus and built upon Him, we shall not make haste to sin, or to run hastily after the world's ways; but sitting at His feet — the feet of a precious Christ — know what it is in the twinkling of an eye to find ourselves in the chariots of Amminadib, the chariots of God's willing people, with hearts burning, with longings and desires for brighter and more blessed revelations of Himself. Amen.

# XI. JEHOSHAPHAT.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
March 18th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee.”

— 2 Chron. xx. 12.

THE character of Jehoshaphat, as given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is full of interest to the living and intelligent children of God. When I say intelligent children I allude, not to human knowledge and understanding, but to that which is from above, given without human aid or power. I allude to those who are in possession of such minds as are described in the various epistles, who have an understanding given unto them, and they know it. See 1 John v. 20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." I have oftentimes found persons deficient in their apprehension of natural things, persons with weak minds, possessing marvellous understandings in the things of God, rich views of the Divine mind and will, and clear comprehensions of the ways and works of God in them. Yes, I have sat me down by the sick and dying beds of those who have been looked upon as perfect

simpletons by the world, who were well schooled in the truths of God, and understood something of the mystery of iniquity dwelling in their wretched flesh, and "of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Ah! the mystery of iniquity is too deep for human minds to fathom, or for the Spirit taught family ever to discover. And what I have said before so say I again, and I believe I have greater warrant now, from painful yet profitable experience, for saying it, Should God open up to my gaze all the vileness and abomination of my wicked heart, the very sight would drive me mad. Oh, this is marvellously true; it is not the language of a visionary, but of one who longs to know more and more of himself, not in the old Adam nature, but in union with the last Adam, blessed with all spiritual blessings, and with the rich and varied supplies of grace and glory made over to His own in Him.

Well, it is a blessed privilege for us to have such an ungarnished history as this given of Jehoshaphat, and so precious a prayer as that read for our instruction and edification this morning. Some have styled Jehoshaphat and Josiah, those *pious* kings. I do not think that either of them would thank these pietists for the compliment, for I thoroughly believe that when we hear of *piety* we may be on the look-out for hypocrisy, and when we hear of *decidedly pious young men* we may expect to see *decided young hypocrites*. Let us notice the character of Jehoshaphat as recorded by the Holy Ghost. Sometimes he displayed great prudence before God, at other times a marvellous lack of it. Sometimes willing to wait JEHOVAH'S will, and see how He would work His own will for him and in him; at another time with his busy, bustling, restless, wretched flesh determined to do God's work in his own way, and on his own account. Do you know anything about such favors and failures as these? Have you never quivered with eagerness to put forth your puny hand to steady God's ark when you conceived it was in danger? Beware of spiritual leprosy and paralysis! God will do and take care of His own work, and as He looks on all our ways and doings He is ready to give us to feel our inability in every attempt of ours in the flesh to do anything for Him, for His cause, or for His

glory. See! Ramoth-Gilead was in the hands of the enemies of God. Turn with me to chap, xviii. ver. 1, and notice the conduct of Jehoshaphat: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." Look at the third verse: "And Ahab, king of Israel, said unto Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-Gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the Word of the Lord to-day." You see he had respect to the Word and covenant of JEHOVAH, knowing that everything communicated to him by the Word of the LORD would be true, and all else false. "Therefore, the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?" Jehoshaphat had his doubts and fears in reference to the step and course he had taken. See! He had the Word of God in view. Ahab had his wretched prophets in view. This is the fashion in the religious world, prophets, priests, preachers, religion, education, reason, or any thing preferred to the Word of the LORD. The children of God may rest assured that when they have any person or opinion standing between their judgment and the Word they are occupying dangerous ground. We read that Micaiah the faithful prophet was sent for, who could not be influenced or persuaded to speak contrary to the revelation of the living God. His message was the very opposite to that of the four hundred. Look at the close of the chapter, at the humiliation of Jehoshaphat, and the destruction of Ahab and his hosts, and see what was God's judgment on the action of him who evidently thought he was *working for God*. God's veto will be seen upon all the actions of His people arising from human counsel, and not done in accordance with His sovereign will, purpose, and pleasure. We come to the next chapter, where it is recorded that Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet Jehoshaphat, and said unto him, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee

from before the LORD." Yet is it not marvellously true that this good man (he was a good man, like Barnabas, but all his goodness was derived from his Head), after the experience of defeat in the case of Ahab, after the godly counsel of Jehu, after the manifestation of God's favour to him in causing his enemies, Seir, Ammon, and Moab, to devour each other; after beholding God as the Doer of all things in His gracious sovereignty over them for His people, joins in affinity with the wicked Ahaziah, king of Israel, and enters into a commercial enterprise with him? But mark the sequel, "Eliezer prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish." God's curse was manifest on every fleshly transaction of Jehoshaphat, and it will be so with thee and me. Jehoshaphat, a gracious man, a highly-favoured long, a devout worshipper of the covenant God of Israel, yet a man of like passions, failings, and infirmities with ourselves.

Let us observe the circumstances surrounding the text, under which Jehoshaphat poured out his prayer unto God. "It came to pass that the children of Moab and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle." Let us look at this in the light of the 10th and 11th verses: "And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab, and Mount Seir, *whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade*, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit." It was the desire of Israel to make an onslaught on Ammon and Moab, as we read in Num. xx.; but here Jehoshaphat acknowledges God's sovereignty in restraining the children of Israel from warring with Moab, and also in giving them possession of the Promised Land, and yet retaining His right to that which He had put them into actual possession of. "*To cast us out of Thy possession.*" This is a lesson for many of God's poor children who are put into experimental possession of many spiritual blessings, but who are hawking them

about as their own, saying, "*My experience, my frames, my feelings!*" Depend upon it, the more great I in doctrine, experience, and practice, is prostrate before God, and in our hearts, God is glorified, and His own sweet peace will more abound in us. We will, in humble dependence upon the grace and guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, notice the conduct of Jehoshaphat at this juncture. "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (ver. 3). Mark that! It is a nice little lesson for Disraeli and Gladstone, and the Queen upon the throne. Let me ask, Do they publicly acknowledge and take counsel with the God of heaven *i* Look at the Conference at Constantinople, and the cabinet councils of this country; in them all you see God ignored. Conservatives are fitted against Liberals, and Liberals against Conservatives, but ask you, What counsel do these seek at the hand of the LORD? what setting of themselves to seek His face when difficulties arise? Let Woolwich and Devonport answer! Arsenals busy, ironclads in readiness, troops prepared; but where is JEHOVAH? Out of the reckoning altogether; no place for Him in the councils. I ask, What may we expect? Who? Some may be desponding, and send out their pamphlets. and prophesies, declaring that God's judgments are coming upon us as a nation. But to what nation do we belong? Surely to a more glorious; one than that requiring ironclads and troops to defend it. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Psa. xxxiii. 12). This is the holy nation exalted far above all the nations of the earth, from whose heights the people thereof can look down upon the commotions and tumults of this world without fear or amazement, as the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps their heart and mind in the knowledge and love of Him. Nations are founded, nations flourish, and nations fade away; God sends the waster to destroy, and nations cease to be; but the nation which God has chosen, and over which He reigns as King, the nation which has salvation for walls and bulwarks, with JEHOVAH as a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it, shall stand amid "the wreck of matter and the

crush of worlds," and all the inhabitants thereof shall worship before Him through a long eternity, rejoicing in Him as their All-in-all.

Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the LORD and proclaim a fast throughout all Judah, and Judah gathered themselves together to seek the LORD. They were of one heart and one mind no bickering, no contention, all were agreed, the work was of God, and He was pleased to manifest Himself at every point. Where are we in regard to His work of grace within us, and to His works of providence around us? How precious the privilege, when dangers and difficulties abound, like Hezekiah, speak not a word to mortal, but lay our case before the LORD; or, like Jehoshaphat. set to seek the LORD. Look at the worthies whose histories are recorded in God's most Holy Word, who, in times of toil, trial, and tribulation, found vent for their sorrows, and sweet relief in God-breathed prayer. Mark you, you may pray until your throats are sore, and then find all your praying vain, if God warm not your heart with His love, nor chasten your spirit with His fear. If this be your state and condition, you had better cease your speaking, close your lips, and mock Him not with meaningless words, but see to it what that means, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6). Let us now notice the prayer and the plea of Jehoshaphat: "*0 LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?*" Jehoshaphat's God is a glorious Sovereign, for, according to the whole tenor of his prayer, God was the Designer and Doer of all things for Jehoshaphat, with Jehoshaphat, and in Jehoshaphat. He is a covenant God for a covenant people, as we learn from the first words of the prayer, "*0 LORD God of our fathers;*" but we also have a precious confession of His sovereignty, "*Art Thou not God in heaven, and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?*" In Jehoshaphat praying before the court in the house of the Lord, we have an interesting picture with varied tints necessary to show forth

that which truly existed in him, and also exists in the living children of God. He ascribes all glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, and sovereignty to JEHOVAH. Jehoshaphat was a God-sent king; in fact, all kings are sent, all crowns are worn, all sceptres are swayed at His bidding, as Dr. Watts expresses *so* fully in one of his hymns:

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"Keep silence all created things,  
And wait your Hater's nod;  
My soul stands trembling while she sings  
The honours of her God.

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown  
Hang on His firm decree;  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave TO BE."

All things exist at His behest for the display of His own glory and for the good of His covenant people. Jehoshaphat was a gracious king in possession of a new heart, not of "another heart" (1 Sam. x. 9) like Saul. Saul, as I told you a short time ago, was a type of the devil — David a type of Christ in His rejection — Solomon a type of Christ reigning and ruling in peace — the revolt in the reign of Rehoboam a type of the conflict which every child of God experiences subsequent to the reign of Satan in a state of nature, subsequent to the enjoyment of oneness with a once despised but now reigning Christ, our glorious Solomon.

Glorious sovereignty! "*And rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?*" Ah, my friends, we are apt to forget this precious truth, that the hearts of all men are in JEHOVAH'S hands; that their dispositions are according to His sovereign will and pleasure; that the movements of every mind are arranged in infinite wisdom; that He reigns and rules over all things in heaven and in earth, and in all deep places; that He does according to His will with men or devils, His own children or hypocrites; with those who lean upon the bosom

of everlasting love, or with those who are found knocking at Mercy's door; those who rejoice in His covenant salvation, or those who despise the very mention of His precious name. See how Paul rejoices in this glorious fact: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11). And again, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). How many of us believe this? It is all very well for me to be thus preaching, when perhaps before I have done I may be worried with my wretched surmisings, trying to take God's work into my own hands and thus prove, in the face of all the grace He has bestowed upon me, what a miserable fool I am. Is it not a mercy for us to know that we have to do with a gracious and all-wise God who is with us in all places withersoever we may be brought or driven, and is for us in all influences and circumstances, causing us to sing sometimes, —

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies.  
Ever gracious, ever wise:  
All my times are in Thy hand.  
All events at Thy command.

His decree who form'd the earth,  
Fix'd my first and second birth;  
Parents, native place, and time.  
All appointed were by Him.

Plagues and death around me fly.  
Till He bids I cannot die:  
Not a single shaft can hit,  
Till the God of love sees fit?"

You believe that! Do you? I do, and I bless God for the faith of His own giving and of His own working in me, which is sometimes accompanied with a "bubbling up" which cannot be uttered.

See! In His hand there is power and might so that none is able to withstand Him. He is a glorious Prince, a gracious Provider, and sovereign Protector to His people. Do you know anything of want and necessity? Blessed be His holy Name, He has such a kindly and compassionate respect to His poor and needy ones — His lonely sparrows. "I am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop," said David. Mark well the encouraging words of David's Lord to lonely, longing souls: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing! and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. x. 29 — 31); and one of my Father's sparrows cannot fall to the ground to pick a crumb, but my Father in His all-wise providence appointed the time for the sparrow to fall and provided a crumb for the sparrow to pick. This is God's glorious truth! Who is so great a God as our God, who puts all nature under contribution for the good of His children! He opened the mouth of an *ass* to rebuke a false prophet, He caused a *cock* to crow conviction to the heart of poor Peter, He sent one *raven* as a *butcher* and another as a *baker* to minister to the wants of poor, lonely, sorrow-stricken Elijah by the brook Cherith. He rules over the heathen! He rules over all things for the good of His own. We must pass on. He is a sovereign God! He is a providing God! Notice this, —

"*Art not Thou our God?*" Our God! Why, - this is personal possession! Possession of what? A gracious experience? Yes, and something more — a gracious covenant God. Jehoshaphat put JEHOVAH in remembrance of favors past, present might, and deliverances wrought for His people. He is *our God* in covenant. according to that precious first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before

Him." We believe not in election as a cold, dry doctrine, but as a grand, glorious, comforting reality.

"*Our God*" in incarnation. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood. He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is. the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). Who are those experiencing fear of death? Every one of God's children at one time or other. What death do they fear? Not simply dissolution, for, blessed be His holy Name, many of "His own" are delivered from the fear of that; but every child of God knows the dread of that spiritual deadness described in the language of Paul, "*In deaths oft.*" Think of "Emmanuel, God with us!" God in our nature. *Omnipotence* moving in a real human arm. *Omniscience* beaming in real human eyes. Everlasting love flowing through the sympathies of His tender heart.

"*Our God*" in redemption. He showed Himself ours in giving Himself for us, putting away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, spoiling principalities and powers, defeating Satan's designs, plucking out death's sting, and spoiling the grave. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. iii. 13). "He gave Himself for our sins that He might *deliver us from this present evil world*, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. i. 4). "Who gave Himself for us, that He might *redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence" (Psalm lxxii. 14). He speaks most blessedly to His weary wanderers, His sorrowing, struggling children: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction : repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes"(Hosea xiii. 15). As He graciously reveals Himself to His redeemed, their adoring hearts cry out, "Lo, this is *our God*; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and

rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah xxv. 9). "*Our God*" in regeneration, restoration, and confirmation, by the power, grace, and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. "*Our God*," our Provider in every necessity, our Deliverer from every distress, our Protector in every danger, our Comforter in every sorrow. "*Art Thou not our God?*" With hearts overflowing with spiritual joy and gratitude we can sing, —

"This God is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend,  
Whose love is as great as His power,  
And neither knows measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home:  
We'll praise Him for all that is past,  
And" —

we'll ask Him for grace to enable us to —

“trust Him for all that's to come.”

"Art Thou not our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend for ever" (ver. 7)? O what wondrous grace! O what marvellous friendship! The gift, for ever! The friendship, not for a day or two, nor for as long as Abraham believed or behaved himself! A God and friendship of that description would not be worth two pence-halfpenny to Abraham, to you, or to me. Abraham's God revealed Himself to him in the bonds of eternal, uninterrupted friendship. Ah, say you, I wish I could experience that! So do I. But, mark this! Abraham did not always experience it; he knew what it was to hunger and thirst after the enjoyment of the eternal, unchangeable, and uninterrupted friendship of God. But notice: "Who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel." Have we been brought through the Jordan of judgment into the Promised Land? Canaan was not the type of the heavenly glory

as many think; but of the land of spiritual promise, Divine revelation, and covenant relationship which we enjoy down here. Our daily experience is, "the Canaanites are etui in the land," yet they are driven out. Who drives them out?" *Thou didst drive them out.*" Not we drive them out by our prayers, consistency, or the use of the so-called means of grace! You may try your hand at these things, but, as assuredly as God has begun His own good work of grace in you,. miserable failure will attend every attempt, you will not succeed in driving one inbred lust or corruption out of you. This is God's own work, His right, His prerogative by the power of His indwelling Spirit, as He opens up the treasures of His grace in the person and work of the Captain of our salvation. As the inhabitants of Ai and Jericho fled and fell before the appearance of Joshua, so sin, Satan, death, and hell all fly at the appearance of Him who fights His people's battles, subdues their iniquities, scatters their doubts, and brings their unruly wills into subjection to His own sweet law of love. Has He ever driven our enemies before Him? A sight of His bleeding wounds dispels all fears, while love flowing from His once broken heart subdues all enmity within.

But let us pass on. *"And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy Name."* Solomon's temple. Where is it? It has ceased to be! God has crumbled its massive foundations, marred its beauty, spoiled its carved work, scattered its riches, and proclaimed to erring Christendom, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord, and what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things" (Acts vii. 48 — 50)? But God has taken Solomon's temple and made of it a type of a more glorious temple which Satan and his brood attempt persistently, but ineffectually to destroy. See John ii. 19, 20: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of His body," in which all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt. *"And have built Thee a sanctuary."* Does not this remind you of that precious declaration in Isa. viii. 14?" And He shall be for a Sanctuary." And do you not remember that comforting

promise in Ezek. xi. 16, "I will be to them as a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come?" Blessed be God, He has made the Man Christ Jesus to be our Hiding-place from the wind of Divine fury, our Covert from the tempest of eternal wrath which shall overtake all the adversaries of His Zion, our Shelter and Shade when temptations and tribulations abound. Let us notice the next verse in reference to the Sanctuary, "*If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence (for Thy Name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help.*" This reminds us of the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Let me ask you, How long would it take to pray that prayer which is the longest recorded in God's most Holy Word? Forty minutes? No! no! Twenty minutes? No. Quarter of an hour? No. Go through the prayer deliberately, and it will not occupy more than eight and a-half minutes of your time. You who love to make long prayers before men, to the weariness and distress of many weaklings in faith, take a pattern from the best Exemplar: "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, *and continued all night in prayer to God*" (Luke vi. 12). Solomon prayed, "When they shall pray toward this place, hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place; and when Thou hearest, forgive" (1 Kings viii). Solomon counseled, "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. v. 2). Are we in affliction? Then we shall cry unto Him, and, bless His Name, He will be true to His promise, and hear and help. Are we afraid of the sword of justice? "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). Are we afraid of judgment?" There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). Are we afraid of that pestilence, sin?" Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. vi. 14). Are you afraid of famine?" He will keep them alive in famine: in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psa. xxxiii. 19, xxxvii. 19). Are evils dreaded? See! "If we stand before this house and in Thy presence (for Thy Name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help." Does not this speak of Jesus our House of Refuge, our Sanctuary?

Certainly. As we stand before Him, the Sanctuary which God has provided, and behold with the eye of faith His sinless body broken, and His perfect work accepted for us, we rejoice in the knowledge of our deliverance from evil, and our security from danger. We rejoice in Him our Go-between, our Umpire, our Daysman, who argues and prevails on our behalf. He pleads, the Father blesses; He intercedes, the Father bestows abundant grace, goodness, and glory through Him alone.

We now come to ver. 10 and 11, which I noticed before, to shew the ungrateful conduct of those of Mount Seir, the Ammonites and Moabites. Favour had been shown to them, but they returned it not. See Isa. xxvi. 10: "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD." But it is blessed for us to know that JEHOVAH'S Name is in this Temple, this Sanctuary, this Christ before whom, and in whom, we stand in all times of toil, trial, and tribulation. Blessed be His glorious Name, His purposes of love in Christ Jesus cannot falter, His promises cannot fail, while the performance of all is sure to the seed royal of heaven. Is it possible that we can be brought into living oneness with Him? into the experimental possession of the promises of God which are all Yea and Amen in Him? into the enjoyment of the words of life and salvation given to Him before all worlds — words with which we pray to Him and praise His precious Name? Yes! Jehoshaphat was, and why not we? He complained of the invaders and intruders who came to put him out of the possession God had given him, and so do we. Now notice his position in the presence of His God; notice his prayer: —

*"O our God, wilt Thou not judge them?"* "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. vii. 1), are words often misinterpreted, for the rest of the chapter shows plainly that God's people cannot help but judge as they behold the fruits of different trees, presented before their eyes. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If I come across a person professing godliness, who always speaks in the language of the

children of Ashdod, and never a glowing word comes bubbling out of his heart into mine, what am I to say of such? Well, perhaps I had better keep my lips closed to all but Jesus concerning him, while my judgment is dead against him. But what can my judgment be concerning those who on the Sunday are found assembled with God's people, and on the Monday delighted with the frivolities, follies, and trumperies of the world? According to their fruits, so will be my judgment. But it is sweet when we are brought to the footstool of sovereign mercy and enabled to leave all our hard cases in the hands of the Redeemer of His elect, the Vindicator of my character, and the Avenger of all my spiritual adversaries. Mark well those precious portions, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. ii. 8). "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm" (Psa. cv. 15). "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thess. i. 6).

*"For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us."* What know we of such an experience as this? A great company of afflictions, doubts, fears, carnal lusts, fleshly desires, and hellish assaults! What say ye to this?" *We have no might against this great company.*" What must be done? *"Neither know we what to do."* "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). But here we see Jehoshaphat sweetly taught what to do. *"Our eyes are upon Thee!"* Have you *the eyes of faith* which love to look upon Zion's Deliverer in all seasons of danger and distress? Have you *the enlightened eyes of spiritual understanding* which delight to revel amid the heights and depths of covenant revelation? Have you *the eyes of fond affection* which glory alone in admiring and adoring the beauty of Jesus? Such sights cause our wondering hearts to cry out with the bride, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!"

In the subsequent part of this precious chapter we see God active, His people passive, and their enemies defeated. Look at ver. 15.

Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, said, "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid or dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not your's, but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in the battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them, for the LORD will be with you" (ver. 15 and 17). So it was. they went out on the morrow and saw the enemies of JEHOVAH and of His people all set the one against the other, and destroyed by each others' hands. So you may rest assured, as we are brought by the sovereign power of God to rest in His love, abide His bidding, and wait His time, so shall we look on, see and be satisfied with His salvation, and experience the sweetness of that covenant command: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psa. xlvi.) Then will our adoring hearts cry out in every trial and triumph, in every sorrow and salvation: "It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

May the LORD add His blessing for His Name's sake! Amen.

## XII. "THE LORD'S PRAYER."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Good Friday Morning,  
March 80th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

— John xvii. 24.

THIS chapter may be well styled the Holy of holies of New Testament Scripture. It is the opening up of the deep mysteries of the everlasting covenant by the only Expounder and Interpreter thereof. It is a breathing into the ears of the Father of those covenant desires and determinations which existed, do exist, and will exist in the mind of the Covenantee until the whole election of grace is safely housed with Him in glory. It has been rightly called, "The Lord's Prayer," for such indeed it is. In it we have a pattern or model of that unceasing intercession which goes up before the throne of God on the behalf of those whose characters are minutely described in the various portions of God's blessed Book. I love to look at things just as God the Spirit states them without any human gloss or garnishing. Now look at the description of the persons whom Jesus represents, prays for, and oftentimes visits with His love, confirming their little faith and encouraging their fainting hope. Turn with me to that blessed winding up of the fifty-third chapter of the prophecies

of Isaiah: "H\* made intercession for the transgressors." We, on whom a Divine necessity has been laid by the convicting power of God the Holy Ghost to see, mourn over and confess our manifold transgressions, bless and praise His holy Name for so precious a declaration as that. Oh, if it had said, according to the fashionable evangelical religion of the day, He made intercession for believers: where should we be? But we see light in God's light, and thank Him for such precious instances as those given in Luke xxiv. 41, and John xi. 25. Luke brings to our notice and acquaintance those who were *joyful unbelievers*, while the Lord Jesus Christ introduces us to the company of *dead believers*. Here are a few on resurrection ground messed with such a display of Divine grace and love that they wonder, Can it be possible for such transgressors to have any part or lot in so great a salvation, so glorious a covenant, so precious a Saviour? There are others, like busy, bustling, unbelieving Martha — do not think I am throwing stones at Martha, for I believe there are many like her here this morning — to whom the words of Jesus are applicable, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: *he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*" Mark that! Believing in Jesus, yet dead. Do you know what that means? You cannot discover a pulsation of Divine life in you; innumerable transgressions are a burden to you; your corruption and depravity distress you; your wretched surroundings perplex you; and a body of sin and of death so bears you down that you cannot command a single desire heavenward, homeward, Godward; yet, let any suggestion come derogatory to the character, sacrifice, or all-prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, and, tell me, don't you feel your heart beating with life, your spirit stirred with indignation, and your whole feelings repellent to the accusations of Satan and the world against the glorious Person and perfect work of Emmanuel?

Let us now, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at this chapter with its precious heart-breathings of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of His people; and though it may be that I have mentioned before some of the truths which I shall repeat this morning, depend upon it, for me

to do so is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Those who cannot bear a repetition of the glorious truths of God's Gospel, give lamentable evidence of their being in the cold and icy region of a barren profession. There may be a profession of sound and clear truth, and we find sometimes that truth is as cold as it is clear. I like the truth as a lady in the North said to me the other day, "It came warm from the heart, warming our poor hearts, and scorching all who hate it." Yes, it is a blessed lot to experience truth brought home warm to the heart; truth accompanied by faith, hope, and fear. Love shed abroad in the heart by the ever blessed Spirit which begets love to Him in return, melting the heart and overflowing the eyes. Let us notice —

I. — The manner and nature of this prayer as expressed in the three first words — "*Father, I will.*"

II. — The persons interested — "*That they also whom Thou hast given Me.*"

III. — The desire of His heart for them — "*Be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.*"

IV. — The ground upon which His desire or demand is based — "*For Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*"

I. — The manner and nature of this prayer — "*Father, I will.*" Heard ye ever such a prayer as this? Do you find in the whole compass of Divine revelation another person pleading on the same ground of assurance, ay, of authority? As Toplady so sweetly sang: —

“With cries and tears He offer'd up  
His humble suit below;  
But with authority He asks,  
Enthroned in glory now.”

With authority He demands the salvation, preservation, and glorification of His people. He has the sole right to do so — a right conferred upon Him by the Father before the worlds were framed, a right with which He was invested when the Holy Ghost was poured

upon Him without measure, a right also on the ground of accomplished redemption and perfected obedience. Now, if we turn over the pages of our Bibles, we shall notice a few of the prayers recorded of the most highly-favoured saints. In Gen. xviii. we see the LORD approaches Abraham and Abraham draws near. What is his plea? "Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Look at the prayer of Nehemiah i. 6: "Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee; both I and my father's house have sinned." We will now turn to the prayer of Daniel, as recorded in his ninth chapter. Surely if we can find one who had a right to stand before God on the ground of his moral rectitude and consistent walk before men, it is Daniel. But mark well his prayer: "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee." Look well at that peculiar plea in ver. 19: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." Now the Lord Jesus does not say, "*for Thine own sake*;" but His request is grounded upon what He was with the Father before the world was. He does not say, "*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive*;" but, "*Father, I will*." That is the all-prevalent covenant command.

Now I would ask, How do we approach God *i* Well, if we adopt the language of the general confession of England's Church, our state will be thus expressed: "Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." See!

The language of every child of the living God in reference to the commands of God written upon tables of stone; ay, and also to the precepts, injunctions, and exhortations of the New Testament is, I *have not* kept one. We stand before God in our relationship to Adam the first as sinners in deed and in truth. Sinners by birth, sinners in thought, sinners in look, sinners in mind, sinners altogether. As dear old John Kershaw once told me, a Lancashire man said to him: "*The finished work of Jesus that you have been preaching just suits me; finished sinners sorely need a finished salvation.*" Those who are *finished* by the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, who see themselves in their crookedness according to the straight edge of God's holy law, who know themselves as lighter than vanity as weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, whose confession is, not like the punctilious Pharisee who prays by the clock and sets apart his seven stations in the day; but as broken-hearted sinners beholding the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus, and seeing themselves in the light of His glorious perfections, "We *have NOT.*" This experience is not after fleshly preparation, or when appearing in the assembly; but, as we walk by the way, as we sit in retirement, as we lay our weary heads upon our pillow, just when the Spirit of God graciously works in us, and at no other time.

But, is it not our mercy to know that in covenant One stood forth and said, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me; I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. xl. 7, 8; Heb. x. 7 — 10)? Now mark well, He did His Father's will, He obeyed His Father's law! When? This was true even before He had an apparent existence in the flesh, in accordance with the chaste and hallowed language of the "Te Deum," in the Church service — "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb;" it was true when He hung upon His virgin mother's breast; ay, it was true from His first appearance in Bethlehem's lowly manger to His last sigh on Calvary's bloody tree. Then and there He appeared in perfect identification with ourselves, and in Him we have a perfect righteousness, a perfect obedience to God's law and will, no

swerving from the mind, purpose, and pleasure of His Father. He could look up, and with the confidence of an ever obedient Son, say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). "ALWAYS!" No confession of sin from His sacred lips! No acknowledgment of failure from His exercised and troubled heart! Oh, no. But with sweet assurance He looks His Father in the face, and throughout this blessed seventeenth of John, says, "*I have.*" What? I have fulfilled every covenant engagement with Thee, to which Thy blessed Spirit is witness in the heart of each child of Thine, up to this moment of time. Not one covenant blessing committed to My trust before the worlds were framed has been lacking in the experience of the weakest lamb in the flock, or of the feeblest child in the family. "*I have.*" Precious declaration! There is that fulness in the short expressions of God's most Holy Word, which yields comfort and consolation to the hearts of God's poor children when applied by the Holy Ghost. Look at the terms of the covenant of grace given in Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, and quoted by Paul in 2 Cor. vi. 16, "*I will* be their God, and *they shall* be My people." Look again at Heb. viii. 10, x. 16. No *ifs*, *buts*, or *peradventures* here. No doubts, fears, or unbelief experienced when God's sovereign *will* is revealed and made into a gracious *shall* in our poor hearts. We glory in His covenant *shalls* and *wills*; but here we have fresh revelations of JEHOVAH'S covenant faithfulness; for as the righteous Servant, the faithful Steward renders an account of His service, He says at every point, "*I have.*" No failure in the glorious work of Jesus. No imperfection in His obedience, no flaw in the satisfaction He gave to outraged justice, no defect in His intercession, no misadventure in the conveyance of any blessing which the Father had treasured up in Him for His people. Let us notice how the God-Man Mediator repeats these precious "*I haves.*"

Fourth verse: "*I have* glorified Thee on the earth; *I have* finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." My dear friends, I speak advisably when I say, were you to go into a thousand places of worship this morning, I will be bound to say, in the presence of Him with whom we have to do, that if you ask preacher and people for

what purpose did the Lord Jesus Christ come into the world, the answer would invariably be, *To save sinners*. There is truth in *that*, but it is not *the* truth. See! He came into the world to do *that* which Adam did not, *that* which I by nature neither could nor would do. He came to glorify His Father, and in the glorification of the Father the everlasting salvation of His people was secured. It is blessed to know that in Him JEHOVAH'S attributes sustained no loss, covenant determinations know no miscarriage, and not one decree bears upon it an appearance of imperfection. All these gloriously upheld by our only Mediator and Advocate, according to Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." All this in the person and work of Jesus. Holiness maintained! Justice satisfied! Truth vindicated! And see! Mercy flowing, life bestowed, and love communicated in sweetest harmony with all those attributes which appeared dead set against the salvation of the children of the living God. "*I have glorified Thee on the earth.*" Father, I have kept every command, and every precept of Thy most holy law. Father. Thou didst look into this heart of Mine when Satan tempted Me, when the world derided Me, when Judas betrayed Me, when Peter denied Me, when all forsook Me; but Father, didst Thou see failure in My obedience to Thy sixth commandment. "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not be angry with Thy brother?" The Father answers, No! When I was charged with being the associate of adulterers and adulteresses, didst Thou see any breach of the seventh? The Father answers, No! When Satan showed Me all the kingdoms of the world, and said; "All these will I give Thee," didst Thou see a breach of Thy tenth command, "Thou shalt not covet?" The Father answers. No! God was glorified in the justifying obedience and sufferings of Jesus; and with the full consciousness of this He says, "*I have glorified Thee on the earth.*" "*On the earth*" which is cursed for man's sake. Think about that! Turn to Gen. iii. 14 — 17, we find the serpent cursed, the ground cursed, but no curse *pronounced upon* man. Every child of God who is brought to enjoy his position of blessing in heavenly places in Christ, knows well, that, whether in

the midst of nature's beauties, or in those spots which the hand of man has marred, disappointment, decay, and death, are written upon the -whole. "*On the earth,*" the scene of man's sin, and folly, and shame, God is glorified in the person of a real Man, and all elect ones shall be glorified in Him. "*I have* finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Obedience finished! Sufferings finished! Salvation finished for finished sinners! Christ does not say, I have attempted something, or I have done something whereby men may be saved if they will; Oh, no! but, I have saved them in glorifying Thee. They are eternally saved on the ground of what I have done and suffered. Precious truth! God is just and the Justifier of every believing soul in union with Him. He is a just God and a Saviour.

Sixth verse: "*I have* manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." Go through the Old Testament and you will find a variety of names describing God according to the wants and necessities of His own children. He appears to Abraham as, "I the Almighty God" (Gen. xvii. 1). What does that mean? A God with an arm all power, and a bosom all love. A wonderful Name! A full-breasted God! "His love is as great as His power," and all those for whom He gave Himself as their Portion must come into the possession of the same. "God Almighty!" The Omnipotent, full-breasted God of many paps. Here we see the breasts of Divine consolation which His children love to suck, and from which they draw sweet nourishment and refreshment. He is also described as JEHOVAH-JIREH, The LORD will provide. In this precious title He whispers to His tried and tempted ones, I will see to all thy necessities, leave them with Me. "Stand still" (Exod. xiv. 13); "Sit still" (Isa. xxx. 7); "Be still" (Psa. xlvi. 10). This reminds me of hearing of the poor old woman who, when laid aside and nearing her journey's end, with scarcely a creature comfort in the world, on being asked how she did, replied, "The Lord has graciously laid me aside from doing, but He comes and whispers so sweetly in my ears, 'Betty, lie still and cough.'" This is an example of suffering affliction, patient resignation, and firm reliance upon God, which may well make many of us ashamed of ourselves. He is also JEHOVAII-

ROPHI, The Healer of all His people's diseases. Do foes abound on every hand? He is JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Banner, Shelter, and Security, of all His elect and ransomed host. Does the conflict thicken? He is JEHOVAH-SHALOM, The LORD send peace. Do transgressions and iniquities prevail against us? He is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, The LORD our Righteousness. But in the New Testament He is revealed in His new covenant character and name, Father. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, His First Elect, and the Father of all His elect brethren. Jesus identified with His brethren in their flesh, suffered, bled, died, rose again, and entered heaven's highest glory for them. From thence He sends down the Holy Ghost into the hearts of all the members of His mystical body, convincing them of sin, and blessing them with the assurance that they are born of God, and crying in them and for them, Abba, Father. Each, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Each desiring as new-born babes the sincere milk of the Word. Each brought into communication, communion and conversation with the Brother beloved who reveals the blessedness of Divine relationship. See how He speaks to Mary after His resurrection: "Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

"My God, my Father! blissful name!  
O may I call Thee mine?  
May I with sweet assurance claim  
A portion so Divine?"

Eighth verse: "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me." "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68); ay, and the words of prayer and supplication; for if we are found at the throne of the heavenly grace, it will be with the words which the Spirit indites and inspires in our exercised hearts; words which flow into our souls with melting and humbling power from the grace-filled lips of the great King-Priest. What is prayer? Parks, of Openshaw, was right when he said — and

my heart danced with joy as I heard the never-to-be-forgotten words — "*Prayer is simply asking God for that which He in His purpose before time designed to give, and into possession of which His children come by the power of the Holy Ghost.*" Such is prayer, and all the rest is polluted breath and fleshly prating. O how precious for me to know that those words which flowed from my troubled heart and fell from my faltering lips this morning with some little sweetness were given by the Father to the Covenantee for me before all worlds! Can we believe it? Yes, we can when He works in us by the power of His Spirit, and causes us to sing His praises in those sweet hymns which are made a source of comfort to our hearts.

Twelfth verse: "*Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept.*" Precious Keeper! Here we have the eternal preservation and security of every elect vessel of mercy — "*I have kept.*"

"What from Christ that soul shall sever,  
Hound by everlasting bands.  
Once in Him, in Him for ever,  
Thus th' eternal covenant stands:  
None shall pluck thee  
From the Strength of Israel's hands."

Fourteenth verse: "*I have given them Thy Word.*" In ver. 8, He says, "*I have given unto them the words.*" Why this difference? Because in the verse before us we have Jesus as much as saying, "*I give Myself for them and to them.*" Jesus Himself, the Eternal Word (John i. 1), the Covenant Word (Hag. ii. 5), the Creating Word (Psa. xxxiii. 6), the Incarnate Word (John i. 14), the Communing Word (Luke xxiv. 32). What a mercy to know that I have everything I need in Jesus! What do I need? My heart is so cold sometimes; but let Him speak to me and in me by His blessed Spirit, and my heart burns with love. I want freedom in prayer and supplication. Listen! There is One who, when thou canst not pray, is praying for thee! There is One who, when thou canst not sing, is singing for thee! He is JEHOVAH-JESUS, thy Word to the Father up yonder!

JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Word of JEHOVAH the Father to thee down here by the witness and indwelling of JEHOVAH the Spirit. "*I have given them Thy Word and the world hath hated them.*" The world cannot do anything else; you may try to stroke the world down as much as you like, but if the Word appears in you the world's hatred with Satan's malignity will be manifest against you.

Twenty-second verse: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me *I have given them.*" The glory of His grace, salvation, righteousness, and intercession. What a glorious salvation! The Father of glory planned it, the King of glory executed it, and the Spirit of glory applies it. The Father gives the light of the knowledge of His glory in the person of Jesus Christ, which is the earnest of an eternal weight of glory which awaits the elect and pilgrim people of God. We now notice, —

II. — The persons interested — "*Those whom Thou hast given Me.*" You will find this expression occurring six times in this chapter. In ver. 2, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to *as many as Thou hast given Him.*" Let me caution you as to ver. 3, which is almost invariably misquoted. Many say, "This is life eternal to know Thee;" but Jesus did not say so. Mark His words: "And this is life eternal *that they might know Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Who are the persons who possess eternal life in the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ?" *As many as Thou hast given Me,*" is the answer of the God-Man. This is distinguishing grace! discriminating mercy! Now look at ver. 6: "I have manifested Thy Name unto *the men which Thou gavest Me* out of the world; Thine they were, and *Thou gavest them Me.*" Go on to ver. 9: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, *but for them which Thou hast given Me,* for they are Thine." Look at ver. 11: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name *those whom Thou hast given Me,* that they may be one, as we are." Then we come to the words of the text: "Father, I will that they also, *whom Thou hast given Me,* be with Me where I am." Here we have a peculiar people described; given to Christ, living in Christ, taught by

Christ, preserved in Christ, with Christ! Now notice the blessed evidence given by Him to each of the given ones in John vi. 37. "All," a wonderful word, big with Divine meaning. "All," this word is neither masculine nor feminine, but neuter. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me." All what? All the persons, blessings, words, promises, glory, and dominion. Yes, all the persons by power, all the words in prayer and praise, all the promises in pleas and petitions, all the glory and dominion from adoring hearts. "*Shall come.*" Have we come?" *To whom coming* as unto a living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious" (1 Pet. ii.). "But *ye are come* unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. xii. 22). How did we come? See! "*They shall come* with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them" (Jer. xxxi. 9). "*They shall come*" broken-hearted, and the good Physician shall heal them. "*They shall come*" with "nothing to pay," and He will frankly forgive them. "*They shall come,*" and His gracious promise is, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Such a glorious Gospel as this makes the elect, redeemed, and regenerate people of God shout aloud for joy, and bless His Name. We are now brought to consider, —

III. — The desire of Jesus' heart for His given ones — "That they may be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me." "*With Me!*" Out of the world? No! for He prays, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world" (ver. 15). He declares, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (ver. 18). *With Me* in testimony. *With Me* in rejection. "*With Me* in all My temptations." *With Me* in the midst of a worshipping and adoring people. Is it not the longing and desire of every Spirit-quicken sinner to be where there is a precious testimony of God's love and care, a full-weight Gospel? No keeping back a part; but communicating that which a loving Father gives. And what He gives them that they gather (Psa. civ. 28).

"*With Me where I am.*" Turn to John xiv. 2, 3: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." What a kind, compassionate, and considerate Saviour is this Jesus of ours! Are there any here who are mourning His absence? This is a sweet promise: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." He will come again to take all His loved and redeemed ones to His glory-home. He has gone on before to take possession of His people's eternal and uninterrupted joy. He has gone to appear as the first-fruits of a glorious harvest; and as sure as He is gone, so shall each sheaf and each corn of wheat be presented before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. "*That they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me.*" Oh, what a mercy to know that He is now before the throne of the Father *for me*, and that the Father is looking upon Him with infinite delight and ineffable joy, a joy which I cannot even attempt to express! and just think, shall we share the same joy? One with Him we must behold His glory, look upon that face which was once marred as no man's, see those hands and feet which were pierced with our own sins, gaze upon that sacred brow once lacerated by the cruel crown of thorns, and behold the riven side into which the soldier's spear was thrust on our account, from whence came forth blood and water, speaking the fulfilment of the prophecy, "Reproach hath broken My heart" (Psa. lxix. 20).

"*That they may behold My glory.*" He has an uncreated, underived, incommunicable glory, the knowledge of which is too high for finite minds to grasp or comprehend. But the glory which the Father gave Him as the Mediator of the covenant is the same which He displayed now and again during His humiliation and suffering here below. I do not believe for a moment that which some assert: *He laid aside His glory*. He did no such thing! He veiled His glory with His humanity. He brought it into the world with Him: "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. i. 9). See! "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (*and we beheld His glory*, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John i. 14;. Read John ii. 11: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, *and manifested forth His glory.*" Read again Luke v. 8; when Peter obtained a view of His glory he was overwhelmed; and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Go to John xviii. 4 — b1: "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I AM. As soon then as He had said unto them, I AM, *they went backward, and fell to the ground.*" Why this? Because of the overwhelming manifestation of His glory. In His resurrection, and again in His ascension, His glory was displayed. We cannot forget how the favoured three upon Tabor fell asleep under its effulgence and power (Luke ix. 32). It was a blessed privilege to me the other day to experience something of this in writing to one whom I love in Him; Ah, it is blessed to experience a little of the communion of saints through the pen and through the post. At that moment the eyes of my understanding saw *Deity wrapt in humanity!* Divine sympathy flowing from a real human heart, and melting mine with love. "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, oven as by the (Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). It is thus we behold His glory and are partakers of it (1 Pet. v. 1). Even in the throes and throbs of dissolution, when poor nature is shaken and shattered, it is experienced; and that is painfully and pleasantly true,

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"A mortal paleness on the cheek.  
But glory in the soul."

The glory of the eternal Three revealed through the one Mediator, and experienced in the heart of God's children. "*That they may be with Me.*" "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them" (ver. 10). Christ's property by donation and redemption. How blessed to feelingly understand these precious truths! Jesus will look after His own. I see a faint illustration of this

in the care taken of their dogs by many of the colliers in the North. It is with them, "*Touch my dog touch me!*" Zechariah sweetly expresses our Lord's care and concern over His people, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (chap. ii. 8); or, as one has well expressed, "When the *foot* is trodden upon on earth the HEAD cries out in heaven." He enters into every circumstance of His downtrodden ones in the vale of sorrow, and demands that they be with Him on the mount of eternal joy.

IV. — The ground upon which His demand is based — "*For Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*" Job cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat. I would order my cause before Him, and *fill my mouth with arguments*" (Job xxiii. 3, 4). Jesus has a Divine and irresistible argument here, "*Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*" Thou didst love Me as Thine own Son — as the Head of My body, as the Husband of My bride, and as the Keeper of My flock; therefore, "*I will that they be with Me and behold my glory.*" David's love to Jonathan was wonderful, passing the love of women. A mother's love is marvellous, but it may fail, and she may forget (Isa. xlix. 15).

"Twas with an everlasting love,  
That God His own elect embraced,  
Before He built the worlds above,  
Or earth on her huge columns placed."

And cannot we join with Kelly in that verse? —

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters.  
Though all others *may, and do*;  
His is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true.  
Happy Zion!  
Crowned with mercies ever new."

Blessed be God! His love in Christ Jesus to His own is uninterrupted, unshaken, immutable! Precious Jesus, give us the sweet experience of Thy love and glory, and to know something of Thy gracious commanding prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Amen.

Hymn Sung At The Commencement Of The Service.

LORD Jesus, are we One with Thee?  
    O height, O depth of love!  
With Thee we died upon the tree,  
    In Thee we live above.

Such was Thy grace, that for our sake  
    Thou didst from heaven come down,  
Our human flesh and blood partake,  
    In all our misery One.

Ascended now in glory bright,  
    Still One with us Thou art;  
Nor death, nor life, nor depth, nor height,  
    Thy saints and Thee can part.

O teach us, Lord, to know and own  
    This wondrous mystery,  
That Thou with us art truly One,  
    And we are One with Thee!

Soon, soon shall come that glorious day,  
    When, seated on Thy throne,  
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display  
    That Thou with us art One.  
    Deck.

## XIII. JABEZ

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY

"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying. Because I bare him with sorrow.

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying. Oh 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! And God granted him that which he requested."

— 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

THE most telling and lasting of all teaching is that of history or illustration. Precepts and commands may be given, but we all know the truthfulness of the old adage, "Example is before precept." We see this true in the household, in the senate, and in the field. The commander who leads on his men with a cheerful, COME, inspires them with more boldness and confidence by his example, than could be possible by all the authoritative commands he might have in his power to issue. Those of us who are acquainted with God's written Word know well that there is not a precept therein but what is illustrated by some bright examples. God commands, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." He sends the trouble and draws the heart of His child to Himself in prayer and supplication for the deliverance.

It is thus that the exercised hearts of the children of God are led by the Holy Ghost into a right understanding of His dealings with His people. Men of like passions with ourselves were all the worthies whose histories are recorded in the Book, and the knowledge of this gives us a little confidence and liberty in breathing our complaints to Him with whom we have to do, when adverse circumstances try our faith, when accursed influences distress our spirit, and indwelling sin and corruption appear to almost swamp the life of God in our heart. It is no small mercy to stand before Him knowing that we have just *that* experience which characterised those persons upon whom He has thrust signal honour in giving their names and histories a place in His most Holy Word. It is a blessed privilege for us to know that Abraham was not one whit better than ourselves, and that the most highly favoured one mentioned in the Bible is on the same level in JEHOVAH'S eyes and esteem, as the weakest lamb within these walls, or the most timid child of His who, through a godly jealousy, dares not utter that personal pronoun "My" in its lispings before the mercy-seat.

May it be our lot this morning, in humble dependence upon the best of all teachers, God the ever-blessed Spirit, to look at the precious portion which I have read by way of text. To look at it" say you, why each of us can do that! Yes, we can as we are blessed with the answer to Paul's prayer in our heart: "*The eyes of our 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. i. 8). I love to experience this as I am brought to meditate upon any portion of the Scriptures of truth, and to find that Christ is All and in all therein to His tried, exercised, and sorrowing children. Just look at the position of the text. Notice its surroundings. You may, or you may not read such portions as these very often. They may appear dry, sapless, unnecessary. But every word of God is pure, and all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine for reproof and for correction. By such genealogies, though they may not yield so much comfort to our hearts or peace to our minds, yet they are of marvellous importance in tracing out the true

line of descent of our blessed Lord from Adam to His appearing in the flesh. I well remember the first time, long years ago, my eyes fell upon this precious portion; I was astonished! It appeared like an oasis in the wilderness, a garden in the desert, a spring of clear water in a dry and barren land, or like a beautiful gem shining in the midst of a dark setting. Well, there is something for us to notice in the surroundings of this portion as we view them in the light of the first sentence.

*"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren."* Who was Jabez? Who were his brethren? Some have identified him with Othniel the first of the judges. If we turn to Judges i. 13 and iii. 9 — 11, we see that he was the son of Kenaz, and as Caleb's younger brother, and son-in-law to Joshua, he would be one of those whose business it was to enter the Promised Land, and see by the power of God's right hand the Canaanite driven out little by little. But who were the brethren of Jabez? The persons whose names appear in the various parts of 1 Chron. iv. We notice the posterity of Judah, Ashur, and others who acquired to themselves renown, position, place, and power, in the world in building cities, founding nations, leading victorious armies and doing exploits; yet the testimony of God in the face of all these is, *"Jabez was more honourable than his brethren."* Why more honourable? What is stated of Jabez to distinguish him from the rest of his brethren? The wisdom of the head is seen in one, the strength of the arm is seen in another, the skill of the hand is seen in the third, while the wisdom of the understanding is seen in a fourth; but the grace of God and communion with Him is seen by JEHOVAH'S eye in the heart and experience of Jabez. Hence he *"was more honourable than his brethren."* Ah, my dear friends, it is more honourable to be identified with a despised, rejected, but precious Jesus, and associated with His tempted, tried, scattered, and peeled ones, than to hold place, position, and power, in connection with the great, the mighty, and the renowned of this world. See!" Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee" (Isa. xliii. 4). This is the declaration of God concerning the

whole election of grace. Do we know as brethren, beloved of God, our election? Are our names written in life's fair book, and that since before the worlds were framed? Have we the good hope that when the roll-call of God's worthies takes place, when the world is on fire, our names shall be owned therein? Does the all-seeing eye of God look upon us in the midst of the seed-royal of heaven in unchanging, uninterrupted oneness with Christ, who is All in all to *me*? Then He is at this very moment with us in the midst of all the temptations, tribulations, and trials, which perplex us, and which are unknown to all the world beside. What glorious distinction! "*More honourable than his brethren!*" O how precious to have a knowledge and realization of our grace-union to Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, the Leader and Commander of the redeemed host, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

*"And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow."* Jabez! A name corresponding with the circumstances of his birth and with her own spiritual experience. This reminds me of what we read concerning Hannah in 1 Sam. i., who, in bitterness of soul and sorrow of heart, breathed out her desires into the ears of Him, who, when He hears His own Spirit-indited prayers, is sure to answer them. When the prayers are Spirit-indited and God-breathed there must be an accomplishment and performance of the same. This is sweet encouragement to those who pray not by the clock, but who, as it were, pray without ceasing, in the public ministration of the sanctuary, in the quietness of their chamber, in the solitude of their souls though surrounded by the busy throng or the gay assembly. But mark! She called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bare him with sorrow." Sorrow! Part of the entail which God put upon woman as the effect of sin and transgression. Remember ye not the words pronounced in the ears of our first parent Eve? Gen. iii. 16: "And to the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." But we see something more than nature here! With spiritual understandings we behold the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife,

bringing forth a spiritual progeny, a seed which the Lord has blessed. Now all these are *born again* in sorrow — sorrow on account of sins of omission and commission, sins against His holy law, sins against the glorious light of His Gospel, sins against the grace He has richly bestowed upon us, sins against the precious privileges He has brought me to enjoy, sins when I pray, therefore my prayers must be perfumed with the sweet incense of my Savior's intercession, sins when I sing His praises, sins when I preach His Word; but, O how blessed for me to know that the sweet Singer of Israel sings for me, that the Conductor of the liturgies of His people intercedes for me, and that the great Prophet of the Church appears for me in my necessity and speaks home His own precious truth to the heart of His poor and needy brethren! Sorrows sometimes swell as the sea through felt, accursed indifference, a wandering mind, a wayward disposition, and "*vain thoughts!*" A precious portion comes to mind. Jeremiah tells us that vain thoughts are only lodgers. Do vain thoughts lodge in thee? See! He who holds uninterrupted possession of the house, in His own time will turn these wretched lodgers out, as He reveals the beauty of His person, sheds abroad His love in thy heart, makes known to thee the joys of His salvation, shows thee His hands, His feet, His side, and His once thorn-crowned brow, saying, *I suffered all for thee*. Blessed with such gracious communications the sorrowing soul rejoices with trembling, and with the sweet realization of His mercy cries,

"Dwell on the sight, my stony heart  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
And hate the thought of sin."

Sorrow will be the lot of God's children as long as they remain in this wilderness world. Notice that precious and profitable declaration of Jesus to His sorrowing disciples (John xvi. 20 — 22), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow,

because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your joy no man taketh from you." Notice that word, "*again*." I do like it, for it *has* been a precious word to me for many days and weeks past now. See Jer. xxxi. 4: "*Again* I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel." There must have been a breaking down! "Thou shalt *again* be adorned with thy tabrets I" Stripping and stripping *again* must be experienced. Look at Psa. lxxii. 20: "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me *attain*, and shalt bring me up *again* from the depths of the earth!" "*Deaths oft!*" See Mark x. 1: "And, as He was wont, He taught them *again*." A patient Teacher! Poor ignorant, forgetful scholars. Mark well Jonah ii. 4: "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet *I will look again* toward Thy holy temple." Then God's holy temple must have been hid from the sight of His longing, anxious, waiting servant. "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Is not that blessed? No one can rob you of your joy! What is your joy? "The joy of the LORD is your strength; and JEHOVAH Himself is the joy of His people."

"*And Jabez called on the God of Israel.*" Not on one of the gods of the heathen, or on a god of His own manufacturing. Not on a god of his vain imagination, or choice, but he called on the God of Israel, the covenant God of an elect and distinguished people. "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Psa. lxxii. 18). Look at the wondrous things He did in Egypt in the preservation of His people there, and delivering them therefrom, in sending their enemies down into the depths of the Red Sea, like lead in the mighty waters, in marching and counter-marching them through the wilderness, and bringing them by the strength of His own right hand into possession of the land which He had promised to their fathers for them. All these are so many types of His dealings with His spiritual Israel throughout all time. Now turn to Luke i. 68: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." "*His people.*" Israelites indeed, in whom is

no guile. No guile? Why I find that my nature is nothing else but guile! Wait a moment, I am not speaking of thy nature, but of that which God has implanted within thee, of that which is born of God, for in that there is no guile, no deceit, no hypocrisy, or, as the word may be correctly rendered, *no reserve*. No holding back part of their confession to Him, but as the Spirit dictates so they speak, and make a clean breast in the presence of God of all their sins, follies, and infirmities. And so the preacher in the pulpit, as he is guided by God the Holy Ghost into a clear, warm, and blessed apprehension of a portion, he cannot for his own fancied convenience hold it back for a future time. It is with him as with Micaiah who said, apparently to his disadvantage, "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kings xxii. 14). I will give you an instance: A precious portion was brought home to my heart while in the North. Something suggested, that will do well for Sunday morning, and so I purposed: but Friday morning came, there was not another text for me in the whole of God's Book, and from the depths of my heart I thanked Him for it. There can be no holding back, no reserve, no dallying with God when He works in us by the love and power of His blessed Spirit.

*"The God of Israel."* The covenant God of all those with whom the covenant Angel wrestles and who wrestle with a covenant God. Israelites who feel and mourn their weakness with the thigh out of joint. Israelites who glory in their infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon them, causing them feelingly and gratefully to acknowledge, "When I am weak then am I strong." Israelites who plead and prevail with God as Jacob and Jabez did, for we read from the last words of the text, "And God granted him that which he requested." Jabez was a praying man. What do we mean by a praying man? Not the man who is brimful of words, and ever ready to *exercise his gift*. No such thing! I believe if a true child of God is called upon to pray in public he must tremble in spirit, and that with godly fear, to address the Majesty of heaven, lest he may be betrayed into presenting the false fire of his own production, and not the true fire wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. How blessed is

the testimony of God in Rom. viii. 26, a precious chapter, revealing glorious doctrines and a gracious experience coming down to the weakest child in the family of the living God;! "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.*" What are these infirmities? Our prayers. What! Call our prayers infirmities? Yes, "*for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.*" God seals the lips of His child in His sacred and solemn presence that he may learn to wait His will and time for the performance of His gracious promises, and know that the ways and works of the Lord are right. "*We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" So it was with Jabez, as he breathed this short but comprehensive prayer into the ears of his covenant God, "*the God of Israel.*" Let us notice the four short but significant requests: —

I. — "*Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed.*"

II. — "*And enlarge my coast:*'

III. — "*And that Thine hand might be with me.*"

IV. — "*And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.*"

I. — "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed." These four requests embrace all the wants and necessities which God's poor children pour into His ever-open ears and sympathizing heart. To be *blessed* is to be in Christ. To be *blessed indeed* is to be assured of our acceptance with the Father in all the glorious perfections of the Son of His love. Just a word or two here. Sometimes we pray, but we little think for what we are praying. We pray for warmer zeal, for a clearer and brighter apprehension of God's love, to be made more useful in the Church of God, I pray that my testimony may be blest to the hearts of God's elect, eternally loved and loving children; but I little know what I am asking for in that. See! As sure as God is in heaven I am praying for temptations, for trials, for tribulations, and without the full measure of these there will be no fruitful ministry of the Word, no sweet savour of life and power to the hearts of God's exercised and troubled ones. Do we pray for our faith to be

strengthened? We pray for storms, tempests, and trying winds to shake the tree whose roots shall strike deeper and firmer into the clift of the Rock of Ages. O blessed be His Name who hath blessed us; the winds may roar as they rush from His fists (Prov. xxx. 4), and blasts from hell may rage horribly around us, but the faith He has given can never be destroyed, the hope He has implanted can never be impaired. Does Jesus pray for me? My faith can never fail, my hope cannot decay, and the little spark of love I experience shall be fanned into a flame of eternal duration, as He leads me safely to His own sweet home of uninterrupted peace. But, to the text. Jabez prayed to be blest indeed. He prayed for his daily food; but to feed upon Christ was to be *blessed indeed*. He prayed and thanked God for bodily covering; but to be clothed in Christ's glorious righteousness was to him *a blessing indeed*. To hear the Gospel of love is *a blessing*; but to "comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," is *a blessing indeed*. To sit under a faithful preacher and teacher is *a blessing*; but to be taught of God is *a blessing indeed*.

But did I not tell you that as assuredly as we are blessed in Christ what we may expect? Turn with me to Matt. v.: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*" Do you want that? You say, I want to be *rich in faith*, and enriched with all knowledge, and the riches of the full assurance of understanding. Yes, my friend, I know your wants in these matters; but your Master has decided and declared that with the experimental possession of His kingdom and riches, poverty of spirit must be felt and known. "*Blessed are they that mourn.*" You say I want to rejoice and be glad in the Lord. So do I; but He who predestinated thy path of painful but profitable experience, saw it was necessary for thee to be brought to the spots where thou shouldest mourn over thy sins and for His gracious presence. "*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst.*" O, say you, I am so hungry this morning, God makes me to feel the pinching of my spiritual appetite, I long for the provisions of His house, for the bounties of His covenant. Well, friend, He who provided all things

for thee, He who is thy Shepherd, Protector, and Provider will cause thee to know what that means, and confess, "*I shall not want.*" Thou shalt not want the blessedness of hungering, thirsting, desiring, and longing for Himself, and the *want* experienced by thy poor heart this morning is but the forerunner of that gracious supply and rich blessing which He will communicate in His own set time of favour. "*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you.*" I don't like that, and I will tell you why. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and God having given to us good manners in the Son of His love, Satan is sure to try them by the revilings of his brood. At such times I am tempted to take the law into my own hand, and were it not for the restraining power of my God, instead of being found at the footstool of sovereign mercy, bending lowly with His weak and weary children, I should display my folly in reviling too.

O God, give me a soft and humble heart before Thee! Lord, bless me with true repentance and fervent love! Lord, bless me with Thine own faith, and a rich apprehension of my standing in Thy family as an elect vessel of mercy. What! At that election again? Yes, and I hope I shall be with my dying breath; and should Arminians, freewillers, and pietists be looking on, may they hear and know that God's election is to me a precious reality.

See! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. i. 3, 4). Is not that blessed? Yes, but listen to this:

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"Though God's election is a truth,  
Small comfort there I see;  
Till I am'told by God's own mouth  
That He has chosen me."

That is to be *blessed indeed*. In Jehovah's purpose of love concerning me, His "Yea" was written upon every blessing, and inscribed upon every promise which He treasured up in His covenant for me ; but the purpose alone will not satisfy me; I want the performance of the purpose in my heart's experience which is His own "Amen," begetting gratitude and praise to Him for His electing love. That is what I call being *blessed indeed*. See! We listen to the preacher and hear him show forth the riches of sovereign, electing, redeeming grace; our outward ears drink in the message of the Word, and, so far, we are thankful. But some are not, they hang their heads, walk out of the place, saying, "*There was nothing for me this morning.*" They look as though they had been living on vinegar for a month. God's tried and truly sent servants need to be encouraged, but they will get sorry encouragement from such murmurers and complainers. We listen to the preacher and are *blessed*; but as we hear the voice of the Beloved, experience the sweet anointing of the Spirit of love, are favoured with a melting of soul from a sight of the suffering Lamb of God in His agony and bloody sweat, His sorrows, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us, we are *blessed indeed*. Here we have a Bible full of precious promises! Why not appropriate the promises? Cannot! But we look for the presence of the promise Fulfiller. A Bible full of promises is a *blessing*; but the promises performed in me by the power of the Holy Ghost is a *blessing indeed*. The revelation of Christ Jesus in the Book of books is a *blessing*; but the revelation of Christ Jesus in my heart, and the enjoyment of the Promiser in the promise, is a *blessing indeed*. What are all the promises to me without Him in whom all elect ones are blessed? Just so many tokens of blessing to encourage me in waiting to be *blessed indeed*.

"*Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed.*" Bless me with an abiding sense of Thy love, a sweet enjoyment of Thy mercy. Bless me with the assurance that I am a stranger with Thee down here, and that Thou hast a place for me with Thee in Thy Father's house when my heart has ceased its throbbing, and sin, sorrow, and suffering are for

ever past. These are grand, glorious, and eternal realities, not vain notions or speculative philosophy: —

"No big words of ready talkers,  
No dry doctrine will suffice,  
Broken hearts and humble walkers,  
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

And a Spirit-imparted knowledge of that is a *blessing indeed*.

II. — "*And enlarge my coast.*" This expression, no doubt, had reference to the location of the tribes in the Promised Land. The Canaanites were not all driven out, but some permitted to remain, lest the land should be desolate and the beasts of the field multiply against Israel. By little and little God would drive them out, enlarge the coasts of the children of Israel, and increase them (Exod. xxiii. 29, 30). We thus see Jabez acknowledging the sovereignty of God in temporal prosperity. He remembered that it was not his own wisdom or might that brought him his possessions. But we cannot think that this referred to temporal things alone. Oh, no! We who by grace have been brought into possession of the spiritual kingdom of God know full well that foes abound, and that wild beasts are ever ready to tear and devour the living family. There is a short petition in the Litany of the Church of England, and it would be a mercy if we felt it written in our hearts day by day: "*From envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver us.*" I have prayed that a thousand times, and yet I had my old nature to be as full of envy, malice, and hatred as ever it was — not a particle better. A pretty fellow to be a preacher! Quite right, old friend, I have thought so myself, and were it not for God's sovereign grace and constraining love, you would not catch me preaching ere this morning. Wild beasts and enemies without of every description, all dead set against God's truth. Then look at the enemies within! Unbelief, indifference, envy, pride, deceit, conceit, distrust, jealousy, and such like! Well might Jabez cry, "Enlarge my coast;" and well may we. "Enlarge the coast" of my knowledge of Thee and Thine, that I may enter into a

fuller enjoyment of Thee my Portion and mine Inheritance, and into sweeter and more loving communion with Thy saints! Well, the Lord is witness that oftentimes I am searching within the backs of His Book, when your eyes are closed in sleep, longing for brighter views of Himself and a richer apprehension of what He is to me as my covenant Father, Saviour, and Comforter. "*Enlarge my coast.*" In prayer I am straitened; I cannot pray as I would! Do Thou enlarge my coast of spiritual promise that I may plead with Thee, talk with Thee of Thy judgments, order my cause before Thee, fill my mouth with arguments, and enter into sweet possession of those spiritual blessings which Thou didst make over to me in Thine everlasting covenant of grace. "*Enlarge the coast*" of my faith that I may not doubt or distrust Thee. When the way is rough, to lean upon Thee; when the clouds are dark, to wait Thy coming; when the furnace is fiercest, to feel Thee near; when all earthly things are shaking, to rest more firmly in Thee.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith  
To trust His firm decrees;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hands.  
And know no will but His."

III. — "*And that Thine hand might be with me.*" This is a precious petition! What does the hand of God indicate? It is a highly figurative mode of speech oftentimes found in God's written Word. By it the Holy Ghost shows forth the unchanging *purpose* of JEHOVAH. Turn to Acts iv. 28, where you see the truth as flowing from the hearts of the worshipping disciples of Jesus, "*For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined to be done.*" The hand of God means His never-failing purposes. Lord, let me see Thy hand in every pain and pleasure I feel; let me sing in sweet submission to Thy will: —

"His *purposes* will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;

The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower ;"

so that I may say in faith, whether my heart is cheered with His smile, or sad with the feeling of His absence; whether I am rejoicing in the enjoyment of covenant privileges, or mourning my lack of them; whether I am surrounded by smiling friends, or suffering the pangs of bitter bereavement — "*Oh that Thine hand may be with me.*" It also sets forth the *power of God*. See Psalm xcv.: "*In His hand are the deep places of the earth .... and His hands formed the dry land.*" There we have His power in creation and preservation. The *providence of God* is seen in this expression in Psa. cxlv. 16: "*Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*" It is used to shew forth God's unwearied care for, and Jesus' *preservation* of, His people. See! John x. 28, 29: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, *neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.* My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all: *and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.*" He holds the wind in His fists, and the waters in the hollow of His hand, the very spot where He keeps His redeemed people. Sometimes they may be chin deep in water, and with the wind boisterous, ready to perish; hut perish they cannot, their cry will be, Lord, do assure me that I am in *Thy hand*. His gracious *presence* is denoted by *His hand*. See how Nehemiah acknowledges this: "*Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me*" (chap. ii. 8 and 18). Thus we see that this form of speech, "*Thy hand,*" shows forth His *purpose, power, providence, protection, and presence.*

Still further. When Joseph brought his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to his father Jacob, the old man crossed his hands, laying them upon his grandchildren's heads, saying, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. xlvi. 16). Depend upon it, God's blessings will come down cross-handed to you and to me. Look at our blessed Lord as He blesses the little children! Are there any such here this morning? I do not mean young in years, but

little in their own esteem, weaklings in faith, and according to their own apprehension feeble in their desires and determinations. See! He lays His gentle hand upon the heads of all such and sweetly blesses them. These blessings are the gifts of His bounteous hand, they flow from His *purpose*, are applied by His *power*; they are unfolded by His *providence*, held in His *protection*, and enjoyed in His sacred *presence*. They are richly apprehended through His redemption work: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: *and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones* (Zech. xiii. 7). Precious hand of blessing and bounty! He puts forth His hand, we are saved! He opens His hand, we are fed! He stretches forth His hand, we are healed! He lays His hand upon us, we are blessed! Are there any fluttering hearts here this morning? May you know that this gracious hand is with you indeed.

IV. — "*And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.*" From the evil one, the devil, and his assaults and temptations! From the *evil world* with its sins and follies! From the power of *an evil Mart of unbelief!* From *evil influences* which continually surround me! From evil associates who vex and wound Thy life and Spirit within me! Jabez here alluded to the name given to him by his godly mother, and to the nature implanted within him by the God of Israel. Sorrow was in his name, and grief over sin, failure and infirmity was his daily experience, while the fear of God in his heart caused him to pray for *distance* rather than *deliverance* from evil. Such is the lot of every true child of God — suffering is a grief to him naturally, and sin is a grief to him spiritually, so he prays: "*Keep me from evil that it may not grieve me.*"

Now look at the prayer of our blessed Lord for His own whom He was leaving in the midst of an evil world (John xvii. 15): "I pray not Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but *that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*" Notice the confession of Jacob when nearing the close of his earthly pilgrimage: "*Few and evil* have the

days of the years of my life been" (Gen. xlvii. 9); and then mark the grateful acknowledgment of his adoring heart when blessing his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. xlviii. 16). Now, just a glance at that precious testimony in Isa. lvii. 1: "The righteous is taken away *from the evil.*" Not from the evil "*to come*" but from the evil which surrounded, dwelt in, and grieved them. Taken away by the kind and loving hand of JEHOVAH from all that is hateful to Him and grievous to them.

*"And God granted him that which he requested."* He was and is faithful to His promise and mindful of His covenant. Every desire, hope, expectation, and plea arising from His own life within must be answered in the case of every sorrowing Jabez, of every tried and tempted, sorrowing and sighing child of the living God.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

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GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.  
SERMONS BY THOMAS BRADBURY.

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- 7 "The Lord God is a Sun."
- 8 The Lord God is a Shield.
- 9 Thy God in the Midst of Thee.
- 10 "A Tried Stone."
- 11 Jehoshaphat.
- 12 "The Lord's Prayer."

13 Jabez.

## XIV. "THE HEART OF THE WISE."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,  
April 8th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning."  
— Eccles. vii. 4.

WE have given to us by the inspiration of God the everblessed Spirit three books bearing the name of Solomon, and these show forth the three degrees or stages of spiritual experience and of Divine worship. Without a knowledge of these stages there can be no intelligent standing in the family of God, and no true worship in His temple. These three books have been likened to the three divisions in the tabernacle in the wilderness, as follows: —

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, *the outer court.*

ECCLESIASTES, *the holy place.*

SONG OF SOLOMON, *the Holy of holies.*

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS is looked upon by the religious world as a string or compilation of moral maxims to guide the outward walk and conversation; but those who are made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and blest with an intelligent apprehension of the Divine mind, shrink from the very idea of moral maxims, knowing that God's commands are spiritual, while they themselves are carnal, sold under sin. In the outer court there were

indications of approach unto God, and to those who had no part or lot in Israel, insurmountable obstacles stood in the way; but those who realized their true position before God and the possession of a life that can never die, were buoyed up with the hope of seeing His face and enjoying the sweets of Divine communion. The brazen altar spake of sacrifice demanded, while the laver indicated the necessity for the removal of pollution; so the book of Proverbs points to the way opened to the holy place, which can only be entered through the righteousness of Jesus and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. These blessings once realized, the soul sees nothing under the sun but vanity and vexation of Spirit; so the book of Ecclesiastes reveals sin, folly, shame, and vanity everywhere out of Christ the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed with the true light of the candlestick, the nourishment of the shew bread, and the confidence inspired by the intercession of Jesus, typified by the golden altar of incense, we enter into the Holy of holies, to "rest in light and sunshine in the presence of the King." Such is the experience of the Song of Solomon. The bride leans upon the arm of her Beloved and is lost in His love.

"*Under the sun*" is the peculiar truth of Ecclesiastes; sin, folly, shame, vanity, and vexation of spirit reign here; but now and then, through the teaching and guidance of the "Masters of assemblies," bright glimpses of salvation, grace, and glory are obtained. Did you notice that expression, "*Masters of assemblies*"? It is not as I have oftentimes heard in extemporaneous effusions in devotional meetings, "the Master of assemblies." It is not so. If you will consult chap. xii. 11, you will read, "The words of the Wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the Masters of assemblies, which are given from one Shepherd." The word is in the plural number. Who are these Masters or Teachers? Turn to Mal. i. 6, where God the Father asks of the idolatrous priests, "If I be a Master, where is My fear?" Turn to Matt. xxiii. 8: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Look at the promises given by Christ in John xiv., xv., and xvi., and you will see that the Holy Ghost is the Master, Teacher, and Guide of the chosen of God in this dispensation of

grace. See! the nails of Divine truth are not only driven home, but they are clenched by these Masters of assemblies. Blessed be God, He clenches His own nails, so that neither men nor devils can ever draw that which He has once driven home. See how you have this stated in John v. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." There you have a nail driven home! "And shall not come into condemnation." That is the same nail clenched. Many such portions as this might be quoted, but time forbids.

We will now look at a few salient points appearing in the chapter which I have read for our instruction and edification (Eccles. vii). In the preface we read: "*Remedies against vanity are, a good name,*" &c. There is no remedy against vanity but in the name of Jesus.

"The mention of Thy Name shall bow  
Our hearts to worship Thee,  
The Chief among ten thousand, Thou,  
The chief of sinners, we."

JESUS is a good name, better than precious ointment. The same which we read in Solomon's Song i. 3: "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments *Thy Name is as ointment poured forth*, therefore do the virgins love Thee." There can be no experience of the preciousness of His Name without the anointing of which John writes in the second chapter of his first epistle: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." No enjoyment of the sweets of the saving name of Jesus without this.

Look at the thirteenth verse of the chapter: "*Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which He hath made crooked?*" Can you? You may try your hand at that business, but failure will attend you in every attempt. "*In the day of prosperity be joyful, but*

*in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."* Now mark! When the day of prosperity dawns upon us we set that down to God's account; but when the day of adversity lowers upon us, we generally set that down to circumstances, our own want of knowledge, or something wrong in our situation. We forget altogether that JEHOVAH'S hand is in the bitters as well as in the sweets, in the sorrow as well as in the joy, in adversity as well as in prosperity.

Another portion I wish you to notice is this: "*And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her*" (ver. 26). Who is this woman? Have we such a one within these walls to-night? I think not. We often take portions home to ourselves which really and truly have nothing to do with us. I believe this woman is the same that we have set before us in the book of Proverbs as an adulterous woman, representing a fallen and adulterous Church. Such is the so-called Church of Rome, which really is no Church at all, but a stupendous organization against the political and religious liberties of mankind. "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Such is every fallen Church, no matter where you may find it, what name it may go by, or what creeds it may be based upon. We have nothing to do with creeds, or with persons whose pride is in their creeds; but with those to whom God has made Himself their Confidence, their Salvation, and their All in all. Look at the flaming profession of the present day! Free-willism abounds, and the sovereign might and majesty of JEHOVAH are ignored on every hand. Read Matt, xxiii. throughout, and tell me, Does not the Lord Jesus Christ describe this adulterous woman? "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (ver. 15). This is very strong language! A very solemn declaration.

Notice another portion ! "*Behold, this have I found, with the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account,*" or, as it reads in the margin, "*weighing one thing after another, to find out the reason.*" God counsels His people in His Word not to make haste in catching at anything in reference to their salvation or spiritual education. "*Which yet my soul seeketh.*" I am on the look out for knowledge and instruction, because the greater the knowledge in Divine things and the greater the seeking will be. "*Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one Man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all these have I not found*" (ver. 27, 28). Ofttimes have I heard this portion quoted to the disparagement of the weaker sex. My dear friends, this has as much to do with the stronger sex as it has with the weaker. Both are on the same level here. When he says, "One Man among a thousand," who does he mean? Not any man inside these walls, but "THE MAN CHRIST JESUS."

"The Man who lived, and died, and rose  
To perfume heaven with blood;  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
And claims Him for her God."

Yes, He is up yonder appearing in the presence of God for His people, and He is down here, "Christ in you the Hope of glory," y the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. This is the "*one Man among a thousand.*" "*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*" That is a remarkable expression; It means that when left to ourselves, if we have not a way ready made to our hands by the devil of sinning against God, we will invent ways and means of our own. Oh, the deceitfulness of this heart of mine! The enmity of this carnal mind!

Let us now for a short time, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, seek for a little instruction and consolation in the portion I have read for you by way

of text: "*The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning.*" We will notice, —

I. — "*The Wise.*"

II. — "*The heart of the Wise.*"

III. — "*The house.*"

IV. — "*The mourning.*"

I. — "*The wise.*" "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" are questions asked by Paul in 1 Cor. i. 20. Where is the wise? Can we find one who can lay claim to that title who has descended from Adam in the order of natural generation? Not one! Look at the experience of God's children in this matter. We will notice first the confession of a mourning and sorrowing one. See Psalm lxi. v: "*O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from Thee.*" This is the language of true experience at the mercy-seat of JEHOVAH. It is the confession of a saved sinner who knows no wisdom but that which is in Christ Jesus; it is the Spirit-taught one who, in the light of that wisdom which is from above, and in striking contrast thereto, beholds and bewails his own ignorance, perversity, and foolishness. Turn with me now to that wonderful portion — it is such to me — Titus iii. 3 — 5 : "*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one other. But after that!*" *After what? After the foolishness, after the display of disobedience, after being deceived, after serving divers lusts and pleasures, after living in malice and envy, after being hateful and hating one another. After all that* "the kindness and love of God toward man appeared." This is marvellous and wondrous grace! "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" (Job xxviii. 12) is the question asked by Job. The Holy Ghost by Solomon leads us to the answer to this grand, vast, and blessed question. Proverbs viii. 1: "*Doth not Wisdom cry?*" Who is this? It is Jesus. "*And Understanding put forth her voice.*" This is Jesus revealing the everlasting covenant of grace.

"I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence." Look at the 22nd and following verses: "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old; I was set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was." This is God's Christ in covenant and God's covenant with Christ. It is the declaration of Christ in covenant-union with His Father and with His people. I lay stress upon this because much controversy has existed in reference to what the appellation "*Wisdom*" refers. Some say it is Christ, others say it is the covenant. Now what necessity is there for controversy upon this point? Can you separate between Christ and the covenant? If you can, I cannot. I know that God gave Him for a covenant to His people (Isaiah xlii. 6). That He is God's mouth to speak home the promises and blessings of the covenant, and that He is as the Father's covenant, "all our salvation and all our desire" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). But read over at your leisure the whole of Proverbs viii., and when you come to the end mark well the following: "*For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.*" Whoso findeth Christ findeth life, and has obtained, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. Or, as we read in the margin, "*shall bring forth the favour of the LORD.*" You see that not only shall the water of life flow into, and spring up in me (John iv. 14), but, according to John vii. 38, "as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "*He shall bring forth favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all that hate Me love death.*" Those who hate God's Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, love death and destruction; therefore we are shut up to the conclusion that this chapter reveals the covenant declarations of God's Christ.

The mind is sweetly set at rest upon this point as we turn to that blessed declaration of Paul in 1 Cor. i. 20 — 24: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign." God's sign to us is not a cross, but a risen, glorified Christ, the Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the

throne with the marks of His cross and passion. "And the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and THE WISDOM OF GOD." We need not seek further to find out who has the undoubted right to the appellation "*The Wise.*" Just turn to Col. ii. 3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All wisdom, spiritual wisdom is revealed through Christ, in Christ, by Christ, and Christ alone, and all else, however good or excellent it may appear, is foolishness indeed.

II. — "*The heart of the Wise.*" It is our unspeakable privilege to know that the Wisdom of God is a real Man. His arms once ached with daily toil, His eyes were dimmed with sorrow's tears, His ears were shocked with vulgar profanity, His head was bruised with cursed thorns, His heart was broken with bitter reproach.

"Past suffering, now the tender heart  
Of Jesus on His Father's throne,  
In all our sorrows bears a part,  
And feels them as He felt His own."

A Man who with a real human arm reveals the strength of Omnipotence for His weaklings, and with a real human heart opens up the everlasting and unchanging affections of Godhead to His sorrowing and tempted ones here below. See Isa. lxiii. 9: "*In all their afflictions He was afflicted*, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." The Messenger of the covenant, the sent One of the Father bending to His own in all their weaknesses, wants, and woes. He speaks in tenderest sympathy: "*He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye*" (Zech. ii. 8). From the height of His glory He cries to the cruel persecutor of His people, "*Why persecuteth thou Me?*" that is to say, in the persons of My members upon earth. Our Jesus has a heart

bounding with purest, tenderest sympathy for His own at this very moment.

What are we to understand by the word "*heart*" as it appears in the various parts of God's written Word? Some times it means the organ of the blood's motion, also the seat of the understanding and affections. It is well for us to have a right judgment in these things that we may grasp intelligently the mind of the Holy Ghost in the pages of Divine revelation. See! "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. x. 10). English philosophy says the seat of the understanding is in the *head*. Jewish philosophy says it is in the *heart*, while the philosophy of the Chinese declares it to be in the *stomach*. We need not wonder at this, for if the spirits are sad and low the stomach loathes food. In the translation of the Scriptures into the Chinese tongue, the words of Rom. x. 10 are rendered: "With the stomach man believeth unto righteousness," because the people of China would not have otherwise understood the passage. The word then simply means the seat of the understanding and affections. Now, "*the heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning.*" Notice the portions of the Psalms where the heart of the Psalmist is mentioned. The heart of the sweet Psalmist, the sweet Singer of Israel, a precious Christ, is here. As the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He cries: "*My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat My bread*" (Psa. cii. 4). Again: "*My heart is wounded within Me*" (Psa. cix. 22). And, "*My heart within Me is desolate*" (Psa. cxliii. 4). But mark especially that wonderful expression in Psa. lxxix. 20, which reveals the immediate cause of the death of our Lord. It was not caused by the nails in His blessed hands and sacred feet, nor by the accumulated sufferings He experienced from men and devils. He died not from the hands of men! He died not from the hands of devils! though the guilt thereof lies at the doors of both. See Acts ii. 23 and 36. Men and devils "were gathered together for to do whatsoever God's hand determined before to be done" (Acts iv. 27, 28). It is a blessed privilege to mark the first cause and rejoice in the knowledge of JEHOVAH'S sovereignty; for the moment we descend to second causes we are

sure to be assailed with doubt, fear, and condemnation. Yes, it is precious to know —

"The Great First Cause of all events,  
Who gives decrees, and ne'er repents,  
And Holy is His Name."

It is only as we realize this glorious truth that we can sing in appreciative knowledge and firm confidence —

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is shifting sand."

By what did Christ die? They might have nailed Him until now, they might have scourged Him until now, they might have poured all the malignity of hell and devils upon Him until now, but such never would have destroyed Him or brought about His death. Oh, no! We have the grand and glorious secret opened up to us in the Gospel narratives; the indignities He endured, the sufferings He experienced from the hands of men, but none of these brought a murmur from His sacred lips. Does Judas betray Him? Does Peter deny Him? Do His disciples forsake Him? Do the soldiers scourge Him? Do the people deride Him?" As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). But, mark! He experiences the hidings of His Father's face — no solace, no comfort, no consolation from communion with the Father and the blessed Spirit; but the mournful confession: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and the vain desire: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Calvary's mournful heights reverberated with the cry of desertion and desolation: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "*He bowed His head.*" Death could not reach Him. "*He gave up the ghost.*" He voluntary laid down His life when men and devils combined could not take it. The heart of the Man of sorrows was broken! Not by men! Not by devils! Not by both combined!" The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me. *Reproach hath broken My heart;* and I am full of

heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none \* (Psa. lxix. 9 — 20). Look at Lam. i. 16: "The Comforter that should relieve My soul is far from Me." Dear, tried West, of Winchelsea, had a very precious saying which I prize more than all the effusions of those who try to disparage the memory of that dear saint of God: "*A brokenhearted Saviour suits well a broken-hearted sinner*" You may depend upon it that is truth. "*The heart of the Wise*" *the heart* of the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, *the heart* of the Weeping One of Bethany, *the heart* of Him who was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted, that He might be able to succour all His tempted ones, "*is in the house of mourning.*"

"In every pang that rends the heart,  
The 'Man of sorrows' bears a part;  
He sympathizes with our grief,  
And brings the suffering saint relief."

III. — "THE HOUSE." What house is this? Turn with me to Heb. iii. 6: "*But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we*" Some of you may be ready to say, Quote the whole passage! Here you have it: "For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing firm unto the end." Ah, say some of you, I cannot get there! Where would you get to? You say, I do not feel that I have the confidence, or that I rejoice and hope as I would. Wait a moment or two, my dear, anxious friend. What is thy Hope of Jesus. What is thy Confidence? Jesus. What is thy Rejoicing! Jesus. Blessed be God, Christ is all.

"Rejoicing Jesus wears the crown."

He is the Faithful One over His own house, not merely in it, but *over* it.

Look at 1 Peter ii. 4, 5: "To whom coming as unto a living Stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up *a spiritual house*, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Let us notice the nature of the sacrifices offered up and accepted in this temple, for, mark you, it is spoken of as "*the house of mourning.*" Turn to that blessed Psalm li., which describes the mourning of the child of God over sin and after Christ. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions; I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." The word "*this,*" is in italics, and really ought not to be there; without it, the verse expresses the true experience of every child of God in the house of JEHOVAH JESUS. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." Does God declare me guilty and deserving His eternal wrath and indignation? My heart responds, Perfectly just and true, Lord. Let a child of God be brought unto the very depths of condemnation, and even there, the child will justify its Parent, Wisdom. But we now come to notice the nature and character of the offerings presented in the house of God. See, "For Thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (ver. 16, 17). "*The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning.*" Think not that His loving and compassionate heart is contracted to your stately ministers, your gorgeous cathedrals, your splendid temples, your beautiful tabernacles, or your pretty chapels. Here is God's own declaration, read it for yourselves, at the close of Stephen's glorious defense — not apology. Why use the word apology? I remember reading, long years ago, Bishop Watson's "Apology for the Bible." Could you imagine such a thing? Blessed Bible! Poor bishop! God's

Word needs no apology, and those who know its power, will never attempt such a thing. I see at the head of this page (Acts vii.; Stephen's apology, but remember, it is Stephen's defense and vindication of the spirituality of Divine worship and service. Look at the conclusion which cut to the very quick of the hearts of the wretched Ritualists before him. "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?" Now turn to the portion from which Stephen quotes, Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2: "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all these things hath Mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this" — "*man*" is in italics; "but to this man," this woman, this child, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." This is the house of God, the house of mourning, the spiritual house of David upon which JEHOVAH pours the Spirit of grace and of supplication, causing them to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. xii. 10).

But let us look a little closer home. Where are we the better part of our lives? I tell you where I would be; hail fellow, well met, with the cozy and comfortable, with the jovial and joyful, but God won't let me have my own way. What a mercy! Ofttimes, I can tell you, a smile mantles this face when the heart is as heavy as lead. Look at poor David on his dying bed (2 Sam. xxiii. 5): "Although my house," &c. Look at this word "*house*" in reference to his father's house from whence he sprang, or consider it in respect to his palaces, or in regard to his household, or in connection with the earthly house of his tabernacle, his body, each was a house of mourning to him. The book of Psalms gives ample evidence that lamentation, mourning and sorrow, attended him throughout his earthly pilgrimage. These bodies of ours cause great mourning to the

spiritual tenant. A body of death, this vile body, this body of humiliation (Rom. vii. 24; Phil. iii. 21). Turn to 2 Peter i. 13, 14: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in *this tabernacle*, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put *off my tabernacle*, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." But there is another portion which speaks still more plainly, 2 Cor. v. 1 — 4: "For ye know that if *our earthly house of this tabernacle* were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For *in this we groan*, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For *we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened*." O what a glorious hope! What sweet confidence! An earthly fleeting *house of mourning*, but a heavenly, eternal home of rejoicing. What a blessed and precious truth, Solomon, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, has bequeathed to the Church and people of the living God! "*The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning.*"

IV. — THE MOURNING. The Church of God in this time state is a house of mourning. It is so to me. This body of sin and death is a house of mourning. Why do I mourn? A variety of causes appear in the experience of every true Zionite. We mourn because of the realization of the multitude and magnitude of our sins — sins brought up to view in a way and manner unheard and unthought of before. Sins against His righteous law, sins against His heavenly love, sins against His matchless grace, sins against His Holy Word. I mourn over the sins of my prayers — prayers which can alone find acceptance as perfumed with the sweet incense of my great High Priest's intercession. I mourn over my pulpit sins, conceit, pride, coldness — sins enough to damn, not only the preacher, but with him the whole congregation. Sin in everything I do, nay, further, everything I do is SIN. Tell me, ye who know these things and who experience the seethings of indwelling corruption, Do ye not know what mourning is? Yes, we mourn in our prayers as we confess our sin, and shame, and folly. We mourn in our believing: as we see our iniquities laid upon our sinless Substitute. We mourn in our hope as

we sigh for deliverance from these bodies of sin and death. "God's doves who escape the snare of the fowler, mourn every one for his own iniquity" (Ezek. vii. 16).

Mourning, lamentation, and woe are oftentimes the lot of the living family through afflictions in mind, body, and estate, while the way of the wicked prospers, and the treacherous dealers are peaceable and happy. Pecuniary support failing, prospects gloomy, foes hot, friends cold, and disappointments magnified by the devil into something more than God intended, cause the ways of Zion to mourn. Satan's operations upon our old nature which he fathers upon us produce many a sigh, and tear, and groan, and the mourner in Zion cries to the only Helper and Comforter, "Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy" (Psalm. xlii. 9)? We mourn over our infirmities, weaknesses, and accursed indifference, which seem to swamp every thought of Him we do love, and every feeling and longing after the best Friend we possess. Where are we, and what are we? Walking masses of sin and corruption! Can we do ought else but mourn? Well, sometimes we mourn because we cannot mourn! Isn't that a paradox? The abounding of infidelity, insincerity, and idolatry, with the profusion of cold, cheerless, fleshly profession, without the life, light, love, and liberty of God, cause the marked ones to mourn indeed (Ezek. ix. 4). The inconsistencies and want of life in the living wring many a sigh and groan from those who are blest with His love.

The absence of a sympathizing Saviour will call forth the plaintive enquiry, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" We mourn for a sweet word of love from His gracious lips, and for a precious promise of His covenant to be spoken home to our hearts. "Let me hear Thy voice," is the language of every mourning soul within the sound of mine; for it is not to hear the voice of "a poor vile sinner," who mourns his inability and ignorance in the things of God, that you come here time after time; Oh no, your want, and his desire is, that the voice of the Beloved may be heard speaking pardon and

peace to your waiting hearts. There are hundreds of mourning ones in this land of churches, chapels, and Bibles, who are experiencing "*a famine of hearing the words of the LORD*" (Amos viii. 11 — 13). They are longing for a living ministry flowing, not from a fluent tongue, flippant lips, a ready understanding, or a good memory. Such would do broken hearts no good; but the ministry which flows from a heart which finds no satisfaction away from communion with Jesus, and the enjoyment of the sympathy of his ever-loving heart. Well, blessed be God, that heart and its sympathy are in the house of mourning. O, child of God, Art thou mourning over thy sins and after Him? See! His Spirit dwells in thee, and He Himself is in thee the Hope of glory. Dost thou find thyself a fool? He is thy wisdom. Dost thou mourn for His presence? He will see thee again, and thy heart shall rejoice. Art thou broken down in thy spirits? He will build thee up again. Art thou mourning over thy deadness? He will quicken thee again. Art thou afraid lest thou mayest be left out of His secret, far from His presence and His love? Listen! His promise must hold good, for He hath said, "I will never, no never, no never forsake thee." "*The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning.*" Amen and Amen.

HYMN SUNG AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SERVICE.

Jesus, the glorious Head of grace,  
Knows every saint's peculiar case;  
What sorrows by their souls are borne,  
And how for sin they daily mourn.

He knows how deep their groanings are,  
And what their secret sighs declare;  
And for their comfort has express'd  
That all such mourning souls are bless'd.

They're bless'd on earth; for 'tis by grace.  
They see and know their mournful case;

Bless'd mourners! they shall shortly rise  
To endless comfort in the skies.

Dear Lord, may I a mourner be  
Over my sins and after Thee;  
And when my mourning days are o'er,  
Enjoy Thy comforts evermore. S. Medley.

## XV. HOLD THY PEACE."

% Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,  
April 15th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests."

— Zeph. i. 7.

THIS book of the prophecies of Zephaniah is full of counsel and consolation to the tried, the tempted, and the scattered children of the living God. To those who, by the power and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, have learned the lesson set before them in the first part of the portion I have read for our meditation this morning: "*Hold thy peace in the presence of the Lord God;*" to those who have been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, and who have experienced a little of the sweetness of the love of the covenant Three — the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Holy Ghost — all created things — however great, grand, and glorious these may be to natural eyes, or to the carnal minds of God's children — have been tarnished, have been marred and spoiled before the refulgence of that glory which shines in the person and in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Obtain a gracious view of Him; I say *obtain* in a Scriptural sense. The obtaining of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, the obtaining of like precious

faith, which is to us by lot, or by God's allotment, and that allotment wrought out in the heart and in the understanding of the child of the living God — I say, obtain this, a sight of the pity, the compassion and the bounty of the Lord Jesus Christ, and tell me, where are you? Dwelling on things below? No; but in spirit and in experience, risen with Him, your affections set, not on perishing things below, but on the imperishable, and unshaken things above. Obtain this view, and you are like the bride in the book of Solomon's Songs, "sick of love." But what is this lovesickness? See! you are sick of self, you are sick of sin, you are sick of the world with all its vanities, with all its empty baubles and shallow profession. Yea, come a little closer home, you are positively sick of the saints themselves. As one, who is now in glory, so very well expressed it, "*Spoilt by Thy smile, the saints but weary me.*" You long for His company more and more, to hear His words of grace, and to drink in His looks of love. For the more you are brought into a realisation of such blessings, the more you experience the bitterness and the gall which ever attends the sweets, the comforts, and consolations which God's poor children enjoy in this world of sin and sorrow. Having an intelligent apprehension of the mind and will of God, we see this set before us throughout the whole of this prophecy of Zephaniah. Here we have a threatening, there we have a promise. Here we have a manifestation of His mercy, there we have a declaration of His judgment. But it matters not to a child of God under His gracious teachings, whether it be a promise of love, life, light, and liberty, to be richly experienced in the heart in experimental oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ, or whether it be the threatenings of JEHOVAH against the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three-fold enemies of the Church of the living God; threatenings against any idol which I may have set up in my own house, or in my own heart; under the teachings of the Holy Ghost, I am brought to experience what it means in the performance thereof, not by myself, but by God Himself.

"*Hold thy peace.*" The hardest work in all creation to a child of the living God, is to "both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD," to sit passive at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ,

acquiescing to the will of the Father, in perfect submission to the decrees and the declarations of His providence, the opening up and the expounding of His purpose, in bitters and sweets, in light and darkness, in sorrow and in joy. Look at these three — -shall I call them commands? well, commands they are to those who are brought into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You find one in Exodus xiv. 13: "*Stand still.*" Hard work for the Israelites this — the sea rolling in front, their infuriated enemies behind, the heights on the right hand and on the left; no way of escape. "*Stand still.*" Come to Psalm xlv. 10: "*Be still.*" When? When, according to the context, the earth is quaking under you, when all creature comforts have departed, when continuance on everything out of God Himself has taken wing and flown away; when the very mountains which you have made strong for yourself are being hurled into the sea of doubt, disorder, confusion, and of perplexity. "*Be still.*" What, when your character is assailed, when your honour is tarnished, and when your position is at stake? Yes. "*Be still*" remain in the place which JEHOVAH in His predestinating providence has provided for you. There is a precious portion in the prophecies of Isaiah, "*Sit still.*," Not only "*Stand still,*" "*Be still,*" but "*Sit still.*" Where can we sit at ease and with child-like confidence? It is at the feet of Jesus, with the devil cast out, self dethroned, and a precious Christ in the beauty of His person, in the glory of His work, and the perfection of His salvation, All and in all to me. Now, let me ask you, is it hard work thus to "*sit still*" at the feet of Jesus? No. Is it hard work to "*be still*" in the presence of Jesus? No. Is it hard work to "stand still" in the face of adverse circumstances and accursed influences? No. With the voice of the blessed Spirit in His commands, carrying them with His own power home to the heart, there is no work for me to do. But it is mine to glory in the experience expressed in that precious verse of Toplady's: —

"Sweet in the confidence of faith,  
To trust His firm decrees;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His."

To those who know nothing of such an experience as this, I shall speak like a babbling fool, but it matters not, I came not here for such. My message before this congregation and before the Lord this morning, is for His tried, tempted, exercised, and harassed children, who love to trace out His way to them in the midst of dark and murky clouds; in the midst of the mysteries of that providence through which His gracious hand is guiding them; for those who have been taught to thank Him for the bitters as well for the sweets, and to trust alone to the beck of His hand, and to the guidance of His eye.

You may be ready to ask the question, What were the circumstances under which the prophet uttered the words which we have read? Well, the preface speaks of "*God's severe judgments against Judah for divers sins.*" Judah — "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel." It is a marvellous fact, that in the place where God is known, sins appear of greater magnitude than in any other place. And it is only as God is known in my heart through the teachings of the Holy Ghost, only as Christ is revealed there, only as I am brought into the experimental realization of His salvation, that I am truly acquainted with the real nature of sin and of transgression against God. It is only as I see myself in the light of His perfections that I obtain a right view of myself. That, you will see, is the experience of every child of God, who was blessed with a sight of Him. Look, for instance, at Job; turn over to chap. xlii. 5: "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." Turn over to Isaiah vi. Isaiah beheld the glory of Christ. But how know you that this is Christ? Turn to John xii. 41: "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him." Come back to Isaiah vi. 5: "Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone," or, cut off, "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." Turn over to Daniel x. — Daniel beholds the glory of the Ancient of days; he says, "I Daniel alone saw the vision, and there

remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." That is the estimate which the most moral man of his day had of himself in the light of the glory that shone round him. Some may object, and say, These are Old Testament illustrations! Well, let us come to New Testament illustrations: look at Peter in the fishing-boat on the Sea of Tiberias, so overcome by the manifestation of the glory of Christ in the miraculous draught of fishes, that he falls down at His feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Turn over to Revelation i., where you have a magnificent description of the appearance of JEHOVAH-JESUS as our King-Priest. What saith John? "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Yes!

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes,  
The humbler I shall lie."

The more the perfection of Jesus beams on my poor understanding, the more I mourn over my imperfections; the greater the revelation of His salvation in me, the deeper shall I experience contrition and godly sorrow on account of my sins. The more I enjoy His love, the more I marvel at my ingratitude, and the enmity of my carnal mind against Him. Why thus dwell on these things? Because the chapter contains a declaration of JEHOVAH'S severe judgments against Judah for divers sins, and a display of His determination that the idols He will utterly abolish. Upon those things out of and away from Himself which the hearts of His own children are set upon, sooner or later, God will bring His cankerworm, His waster to destroy them, while He graciously reveals Himself as their covenant God in the Son of His love, and that by the indwelling of the Spirit of life. As He reveals to me His covenant mercy through the wounds, blood, and righteousness of my Substitute and Surety, so assuredly will He visit my wretched nature and my proud flesh with His judgments, and in the court of conscience [e will cause me to justify Him, and say Amen to all His judgments. Like those of His saints whose histories are recorded throughout His blessed Word, He will close my mouth, keep my tongue still, and cause me to hold

my peace in the presence of my Lord and my God. You will find, if you read through this chapter, that God was about to visit Jerusalem and Judah with desolation from the hands of the Chaldeans, who were to vent their blood-thirsty propensities upon the inhabitants of the holy city. But in the midst of all this, according to chap. iii., which is about the most wonderful chapter in all Gods

Book, there is safety, security, salvation, and solace for His poor and afflicted ones, for His sorrowing and sighing ones, for His elect and redeemed ones. Here is something for our encouragement when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth. Oh, how blessed to know Him in His gracious command : "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut the doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah xxvi. 20,21).

Now, then, in humble dependence on Him who alone can make our meditation both life and comfort to our souls, let us notice the precious portion in the light of many others which appear in His most Holy Word. "*Hold thy 'peace.*" This is the voice of Jehovah in the midst of His afflicting dispensation, in the midst of the manifestation of His judgments, speaking to the tried, the exercised, the sorrowing, the doubting, the fearing hearts of His own children; speaking submission, resignation, and acquiescence to all that He does, and causing them in the spirit of their Master, with child-like confidence, to cry, —

"It is the Lord, enthroned in light,  
Whose claims are all divine,  
He has an undisputed right  
To govern me and mine."

As He will, and not as I will; in His own way, and not in mine; according to His predestinated appointment, according to His

determinate counsel and foreknowledge; opening up and revealing the same by the grace and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the midst of the most perplexing 'and harrowing circumstances. Can this be true? say you who would live at ease in Zion. Can this be true? say you who have these many months and years been feathering your nests; but you find from one cause or another that thorns have arisen to disturb your peace. You who would quietly lie down on the precious promises of Jehovah and rest your weary head on the bosom of everlasting love; but you find the corruption of your nature seems still more corrupt, the rebelliousness of your will still more rebellious, the discontent of your heart still greater than before. With all the manifestation of His grace and His goodness in the unfolding of His sovereign purpose and unalterable decrees, you discover the same restless, busy, bustling activity peculiar to the flesh, ay, an increase of this you find. Is it possible that there can be in the midst of such circumstances and such surroundings a command that comes with power to your poor hearts, that gives a placidity of disposition and peace of mind, at which the world wonders, and those near and dear will look on with dire astonishment? Yes, not only possible, but it is the glorious declaration of Jehovah's Word, it is the working of Jehovah's will in the hearts of His own children.

When does this commence? It commences when God, by the teaching of His Spirit, and the application of His holy law, causes us to see what we are in His sacred and solemn presence. Sinners, rebels, enemies against His authority and against His dominion and sovereignty. Our due desert! What! Not simply a few aches and pains, losses and crosses, disappointments and dissatisfactions in this world, which are so many calls for mercy in His never-failing providence. Oh, not that! What is it? It is to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power; "it is to be the companions of fiends most foul, of devils most determined against God's mind and will. But, say you, I find it is my longing desire to bow to His will, to acquiesce in all the declarations of His Word, therefore such a spot would be eternally irksome and distressing to me. Then when we come to

consider what is our due desert, when we come into a right apprehension of what we should merit at JEHOVAH'S hand — eternal damnation and everlasting exclusion from His joy — then our mouths are stopped. It is the experience of this which the apostle sets before us in Rom. iii. 19. Look at it for yourselves, and especially in the light of the contents of his first and second chapter. "Now we know." It does not say, we feel, for a child of God does not feel every hour of the day. "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; *that every mouth may be stopped*, and all the world may become guilty before God." Now consult the marginal reading: "*Subject to the judgment of God.*" Have we become subject to His judgment? What is His judgment? His judgment concerning me is that my name is Sinner, that my nature is sin, that my best doings are splendid sins. Ask me my name? Sinner, Rebel, Enemy. Ah, but say you, you are not permitted to call God's children rebels. I am sitting in the seat of judgment on myself. I speak of myself as no other has a right to speak, for none can know me as I know myself; God judges me in the court of conscience, therefore when He asks my name, I answer, SINNER. What is your nature? SIN. What are your doings? SINS. What, in every action of your life? Yes. In every thought of your heart? Yes. In every look of your eye? Yes. In every listening of your ears? Yes. In every action of your body? Yes. This is God's judgment, which gives me a right apprehension of what I am in myself before Him. Ask you what I am? "A worm, and no man," one who would hide his diminished head in the dust of the earth, nor raise it in the presence of his fellow-men. Oh, my dear friends, we talk about religion, about God's Word, and about His glorious sovereignty and His salvation, but I am afraid that nine hundred and ninety-nine words out of a thousand are only talk. But we will look at one who was taught to hold his peace at the presence of the Lord. You will find it in Job xl. 3 — 5: "Behold, I am vile." Mark you, he did not say this when his foolish wife was tormenting him, he did not say this when his three free-will and Arminian friends were perplexing him; but when he comes into the presence of a just and holy God, when he has to deal personally with Him out of the

whirlwind, he says, "*Behold, I am tile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.*" This language may be properly rendered. "I have spoken once, twice, and for ever; my mouth is stopped, I will hold my peace." There Job was realizing what he was in himself and of himself.

But there are those who are destitute of such a gracious experience as this, and yet they are silent. Under the judgments of JEHOVAH there are many who hold their peace, but it is not a gracious holding of the peace. There are many who manifest a quietness which springs from the devil and their own wretched flesh. Let us look at one or two instances in God's blessed Word. Turn over to Job xxxvi. 13, where you read concerning the hypocrite, "*But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath, they cry not when He bindeth them.*" No, they are quiet, they are placid, they are lamb-like. How often have I seen this, and my very heart has groaned over the ignorance and woeful hypocrisy which I have witnessed, and scarcely had strength given to rebuke or to expose the same. I have been called in to see persons in the hour and article of death. Before this they cared not a rush for "*the parson!*" His presence was irksome, and his communications distasteful. Yet these poor wretches glorify God in the day of visitation. How do they glorify Him? Not in their intentions, but in JEHOVAH'S purpose; the very man whom they despised, hated, and discarded, in the time of nature's extremity, nature's weakness, when the soul faces a dread and dark eternity, that one is sent for. See, some how or other, a calmness, a quietness, and a peace possesses the mind. Oh, say they, she died like a lamb, he died so quiet and so peaceful. From whence did this quietness, from whence did this peace spring? Was it "the peace of God which passeth all knowledge?" It was not. In such is fulfilled that which is written in the thirty-sixth chapter of Job, thirteenth verse; there is gentleness and quietness, "*they cry not when He bindeth them;*" they have no hands in their spiritual death, no bands in the hour of dissolution. The hypocrites shall be still and quiet, until fearfulness surprises them in realms of darkness and despair. You see quietness (1 Sam.

x.) where Saul, having been anointed king, held his peace from fear of the sons of Belial which surrounded him. Now, here is peace arising from fleshly and worldly prudence, not a peace experienced from the guiding hand of his God, or from the teachings of the Holy Ghost. Now turn with me to Prov. xvii. 28: "Even a fool when he *holdeth his peace* is counted wise, and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." See, here we have silence, quietness, and peace of the fool. Then if you turn over to 1 Kings xxi. 4, you see there a fool who was a fool indeed; he was a sulky, a sullen, and a silent fool. It was Ahab; when his purposes were apparently frustrated in taking possession of the vineyard of Naboth, he was sullen, sulky, and silent. If there is one devil in all creation worse than another in a house, whether personal or relative, it is a sullen, sulky, and silent one. Such a devil as you read of in Mark ix. 17, a dumb devil which none but the Lord Jesus Christ can cast out. Now turn to 1 Sam. ii. 9. In Hannah's song of rejoicing is, "He will keep the feet of His saints, but *the wicked shall be silent in darkness.*" Silent in the darkness of eternal despair; but, blessed be God, these are not the silences which the Holy Ghost has set before us in our text.

I have read for you Paul confessing the mercy of his mouth stopped. I have read for you Job's experience in the presence of JEHOVAH, and in the realization of His power; he had not one word to say before Him. God's judgment in the court of conscience concerning him, however aggravating to human nature, however mortifying to human pride, or however humbling to the natural mind, causes the child of God to bow his head before Him, and hold his peace. If his lips are opened — *Amen, so let it be.*" Now turn over to 1 Sam. iii.: God revealed Himself to a child — not to the anointed priest, but to a child, Samuel. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli (Eli, a child of God) all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end." He will not half do what He determines to do, He will carry out to the full the whole of His

intentions. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not," or "*frowned not upon them.*" "And Samuel told him every whit." Told who? Told Eli, "and hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*" Have you been brought there? I have. Not in the regions of cold stoicism and fatalism. Not in those cold and cheerless regions, but in the warm South regions of predestinating favour. Yes! I have been brought to that spot to say, Lord, it is Thine to bestow, it is Thine to withdraw; it is Thine to bless my poor spirit with rich realizations of Thy love, and Thine to put to the test the faith of Thine own giving. The love of Thy own shedding abroad is questioned by Satan's wiles, by Satan's craft. Through the enmity of his brood my sorrows are stirred, and even through my own mother's children, who are angry with me. Well, "*It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*" When His afflicting hand comes down upon us and destroys the comforts of the household, when prosperity has taken flight and adversity's dark shade lowers and lingers over our resting-place, when we have looked for growth in the Divine life, but God has sent the waster to destroy, which always comes, according to poor human nature, in the wrong time and place — even then He stops our murmurings with, "*It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*"

Another profitable portion which we will now turn to, is 2 Sam. xvi. 5 — 12. We find David under most aggravating circumstances — "And when King David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came forth and cursed still as he came; and he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of King David, and at all the people, and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left." Where is David? Asserting his authority which he had as king? No, he experienced his position as a saint and as a sinner. "Thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial." What a dreadful declaration! it means a man delivered over to God's reprobation and damnation. Belial — it is a

man afore-ordained, afore-appointed, a man predestinated to everlasting destruction. Yet thus Shimei taunts and tries David with such things as these: "The Lord hath returned unto thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned," &c. "Then said Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." There is a little bit of human nature for you! "And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?" David was experiencing oneness with a rejected Jesus at that moment; he knew it, he felt and experienced it. "*So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.* Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" According to the judgment of many, David must have been an awful Antinomian for him to say, "*the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.* And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life; how much more now may this Benjamite do it? *Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden Aim.*" Now mark, "*It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.*" Is not that a good spot to be in? It was to David. "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord,*" during Shimei's cursing. Thus in the judgment which came upon his sons, Eli saw and acknowledged JEHOVAH'S presence. In Shimei's cursing and insolence, David beheld JEHOVAH'S presence. Let us look at Psa. xxxix. 2: "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred." "Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it" (ver. 8, 9).

Now turn with me to Job i. In Job we see a perfect, upright, God-fearing and praying man. On a certain day Satan presented himself among the sons of God who appeared before the LORD. Notice the devil's lying insinuation: "*Doth Job fear God for naught?*" Notice that wonder: Truth from the devil's lips, "*Hast not Thou made a hedge about him?*" Does not the devil taunt some of you with the accusation that you come to chapel for what you can get? Well, let

him taunt, for you do come for what you can get. You come to get a precious view of Jesus and precious provision from His bountiful hands. You come to hear His voice and see more of the preciousness of His blood, beauty, and bounty; and if you do not get these you will not be seen often at either church or chapel. Now notice from the 13th to the 19th verse: The Sabeans and Chaldeans murdered Job's servants and robbed him of his possessions. The lightning out of God's treasures fell upon his servants and sheep, consuming them. The wind from God's fists destroys the house of his eldest son, and his children perish in the calamity. What says Job?" Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; *the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the LORD.*" Look in the second chapter: Satan assaults him, his wife worries him; but his Only answer in the presence of his God is: "*What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*" But see! Our poor, short-sighted natures are ever on the lookout for peace and joy, losing sight of that part of the legacy left by the Redeemer to His pilgrim people: "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" (John xvi. 33). But, "belonging to Christ," we shall be taught with Job what that means: "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD.*"

Look at the conduct of Hezekiah in the case of Rabshakeh's blasphemous message: "*But they held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, saying, Answer him not.*" He was mute, he held his peace, beholding in the hosts of Sennacherib the hand of His God, and seeing God's sovereignty in the trial and proof of his faith. Mark well that masterly rebuke of the apostle Paul given to all opposers of God's sovereignty, and enemies to His decrees, designs, determinations: "*Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus*" (Rom. ix. 20)? "*Repliest against God,*" or, as we read in the margin, - "*Answerest again, or, disputest with God*" not only in respect to the doctrines of His Word, but when, in the mysteries of His all-wise providence, losses and crosses, temptations and tribulations abound. Jesus alone

was perfect and innocent in this business, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 22, 23). Well then may God command His redeemed ones: "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD u at hand.*" The day, even before we depart this life, when He manifests His hand against everything which stands against His authority, His word, His will, His grace, and His people.

*"For the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests.* See Ezek. xxxix. 17 — 22: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them failings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. And I will set My glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward." "Where the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. xxiv. 28). These eagles are the guests of the Lord's own providing; and wheresoever God designs destruction, He commands the waster to destroy. It is an awful truth, to which His people are taught to bow in sweet acquiescence, that vindictive devils and blood-thirsty mortals can only go forth to distress and destroy at His behest, whom we worship and adore. Satan cannot appear amongst the sons of God to try and perplex them, but in subservience to His purpose and pleasure who makes "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"

(Rom. viii. 28). O how glorious it will be when divested of the burden of the flesh, we shall see Him as He is, we shall know even as we are known! Cankering cares and worrying anxieties past and gone for ever, headaches and heartaches trouble no more; we shall see that infinite wisdom and unceasing love were in every part of the pathway, painful or pleasant, perplexing or plain.

But how blessed it is for us to know that the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice for His own eternally loved ones in the person, love, blood, and obedience of Jesus! On Calvary He shed His precious blood, yielded up His life, and gave Himself "for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2). And now He cries in His preached Gospel and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Justice is satisfied! The la is honoured! Holiness is untarnished! Truth is maintained! God is glorified! and sinners are saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation. May the LORD grant unto us to know more and more of His will in all the strange vicissitudes of His providence! and when days are dark, when friends are few, when our hearts are trembling within us, may we hear His gracious command: "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD,*" and know that He is a God ready to save and nigh at hand to bless. Amen.

HYMN SUNG AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SERVICE.

It is the Lord, enthroned in light,  
Whose claims are all Divine;  
He has an undisputed right  
To govern me and mine.

It is the Lord; should I distrust  
Or contradict His will;  
Who cannot do but what is just,  
And must be righteous still?

It is the Lord, who can sustain  
    Beneath the heaviest load;  
From whom assistance I obtain  
    To tread the thorny road.

It is the Lord, whose matchless skill  
    Can from afflictions raise,  
A theme eternity to fill  
    With ever-growing praise.

It is the Lord, my covenant God  
    (Thrice blessed be His name !),  
Whose gracious promise, seal'd with blood,  
    Must ever be the same.  
    Greene.

# XVI. WILLING! WATCHING! WAITING!

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,  
April 22nd, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd."

— Habakkuk ii. 1.

A DAY of darkness, blasphemy, and rebuke was that in which the prophet Habakkuk lived. God's fan was in His hand with which He was purging His floor and proving His own work in the heart and experience of those whom He had brought into covenant and experimental union with Himself. Such days are perplexing to the children of the living God. Oftentimes in looking round upon the prevalence of sin, the abounding of profanity, and the profusion of hypocrisy, they come to wrong conclusions and form rash judgments in their own mind. They think such times never existed before, and that they live in a period of the world's history unmatched for iniquity, insincerity, and infidelity. But we must remember "there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccles. i. 9). This is the complaint of the Church and people of God in every period of time. I have been much struck of late in reading the experiences of those gracious men who shone as lights in the spiritual firmament a century ago, ay, two centuries ago, at the time of the Covenantors

and Puritans, and three centuries ago when our free-grace forefathers suffered martyrdom at the hands of the free-will Papists — even then complaints arose to the Majesty on high of the darkness, dreariness, and deadness of the times. When we look at the effusions from the pen and lips of God's children now, what is the confession? That such a day of barren lifeless profession never existed before in the history of this country. But, my dear friends, *we* live in *these* days, we did not live in the days that are past. We are acquainted with the circumstances surrounding us, and as we are left to look at second causes and surface appearances with the natural eye, we come to carnal conclusions which are vastly contrary to God's judgment. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." The child of God is personally, ay, solitarily acquainted with the sorrows which swell around him, and as he attempts to grapple with the difficulties which crush and harass him, he is tempted to judge after the flesh and not after the Spirit.

How blessed it is for us to know, by the teaching of God's Word and Spirit, that all His children make the same confession, travel on the same beaten track of tribulation, and as they discover the distance lying between them and their Father's home, they weep, they pray, they cry, "*I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*" This is the right, the just, the Scriptural, and spiritual conclusion arrived at by the witnessing of the Holy Ghost within. As we read the prophecies of Habakkuk we cannot but be struck with the varied complaints flowing from his pen. He commences with "*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.*" I wish you to notice that expression, "*The burden.*" It occurs many times in the writings of both the major and minor prophets. Turn with me to Isaiah xiii. 1: "*The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amos did see.*" Now consult the whole of the former part of his prophecies where you will read nothing of a burden. See chap. i.- 1: "*The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*" While Judah and Jerusalem occupy his mind he is blest with spiritual vision and Divine revelation. In the midst of all his tribulations and trials he is cheered and comforted with the

consciousness that a peaceable habitation, sure dwellings, and quiet resting-places are the lot of God's people. But when Babylon becomes the theme of his message he is oppressed, his heart sinks, his spirits are burdened with the sight of confusion, discord, and disorder. So if we are brought to consider anything apart from Him we love in living and loving union with His elect and redeemed ones, we are burdened. When we look at the Church in connection with its earthly, sensual, and devilish surroundings, when we are exercised about the pounds, shillings, and pence, when the temporal affairs connected with God's worship and service influence the mind of a man in Christ Jesus who cries and sighs to be free from the world's worry, what is the effect upon his mind? Burdened! Oppressed! Weighted! Bowed down! Babylonish confusion and disorder meet the gaze, while Zion languishes in the dust. Such will make the message of the Lord a burden indeed to Zion's messengers. So it was with Habakkuk. *"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see."* He saw the iniquity of the land and the fearful doings of the Chaldeans which caused him to cry, *"O LORD, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!"* He was a man who cried unto God day and night, who sighed and cried at the mercy-seat, yet was kept waiting for an answer. This reminds us of the conduct of Jesus as recorded in that precious chapter, John xi. Lazarus was sick. The anxious sisters sent the plaintive message to the Master, *"Lord, behold, lie whom Thou lovest is sick. When He heard therefore that he was tick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was."* Two days of painful anxiety! Two days of worrying uncertainty! But all for the glory of God and the spiritual good of Martha and Mary. When the heart feels the crashing burden of disappointment, it is all according to God's appointment — not a headache by chance, not a heart-ache by haphazard, but all coining, lasting and ending as pleases Him who does all things well. Yes, JEHOVAH is glorified in all things, and His people are blessed oftentimes when Satan would persuade them that they are accursed. This is the precious testimony from the hearts of God's children from Genesis to Revelation, it is the

experience of the Church in all ages, and will be until the last elect vessel of mercy is received up into glory.

Mark! God has a design of love to His people which He reveals, first, in His Book; second, in His Providence; and third, by His Spirit in their hearts. He will teach them to wait His will, watch His beck, and look for the guidance of His eye. We pray, and we are careful according to our natural feelings to ask for ease, enjoyment, peace, and prosperity. We pray, but oftentimes our prayers ascend from our fleshly wills and do not come down from above. True prayer is God's own gift, but not a gift according to the casual notions of religious professors. My heart sickens, and my spirit sighs, when I hear of persons having a great gift in prayer. A gift in prayer! Did you ever know a child of God who had not a gift in prayer? I never knew one. But what is meant by a gift in prayer? It is not the flowing of pretty petitions from profane lips, nor the parade of a perilous fluency, nor a profusion of well-stringed promises, nor an effusion of nicely-rounded periods ascending no higher than the ceiling above the head of the speaker. These may and do exist where there is no prayer, and no gift, or grace, from above. What is prayer? I thank my God from the depths of an exercised and adoring heart for those words which once flowed from a broken and contrite spirit into my very soul: "*Bradbury, God has taught me to ask Him just for what I need. As I walk along the street, a sense of want steals over me, when He, breaks into my heart with a sweet sense of His love, just as I am rounding o corner; but it is only the length of the corner. I cannot mock God with meaningless words.*" Well, my dear friends, we thank God for "*the length of the corner.*" None but an Irishman could make use of such an expression, but there is a force and a power in it which God's praying, sighing, and crying ones well understand. Those whose sighs are from the dungeon of spiritual captivity — whose groans are from between the upper and nether millstones of spiritual oppression — whose desires denote an experience within which none but a once-broken-hearted Christ is truly acquainted with, these are the persons who are taught by the Holy Ghost to wait and to watch. Those who are brought into these

exercises know well what that means, "Wait, I say, upon the Lord." Watch for the manifestation of His mercy. Look out for His appearing, for He will come riding triumphantly over the hills of doubts and disappointment, over the mountains of sin, guilt, and condemnation, vanquishing every foe, banishing every fear, scattering every doubt, subduing every iniquity, and casting every sin behind His back into the sea of eternal oblivion, never more to appear in the presence of God against thee.

Waiting! Watching! This was the lot of Habakkuk. He was a truly exercised man, as we see from chap. ii. ver. 3: "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time.*" We sometimes have the vain notion, that we can hurry God Almighty with our importunities and our prayers; but we cannot. He has His own time for the revelation of His grace, and for the manifestation of His goodness. "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*" Look through his third chapter, in which he gives a wonderful description of the sovereignty and power of JEHOVAH. Notice ver. 16: "*When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when He cometh up unto the people, He will invade them with His troops.*" Habakkuk trembled and quivered in the presence of his God — he was distressed with a sense of his corruption and depravity — he groans under the burden of the Word of the LORD, and yet he is blessed in the midst of all with sweet assurance. See! "*Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*" ^Notice this language of firm assurance, and mark well how that "*I will*" crops up again and again in a variety of ways. This is not assurance and rejoicing in the possession of earthly comforts and enjoyments; but when all these were cut off.

"*I will bless the LORD at all times,*" said the Psalmist (Psalm xxxiv. 1). Oh, says the mere professor, I cannot do that! Oh, says the superficial religionist, I cannot understand that! Oh, cries the poor bewildered child of God, with eyes partly opened, I cannot say that. But it is blessedly true, first in the experience of the great Head of the Church, and then in each member as taught by the Spirit, and blessed with faith communicated from the living Head. "*I will bless the LORD at all times.* Times of famine and times of plenty, times of sickness and times of health, times of adversity and times of prosperity. What? When He strips you of your possessions, and when you see your dear ones cold in death before you? Yes! "*The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the LORD*" What? When He threatens you with His chastening hand? Yes! "*It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth Him good*" What? When He puts to your lips a cup filled with wormwood and gall? Yes!" *Not my will, but Thine be done.*" Blessing the Lord at all times of spiritual communication, when the Father leads, educates, and chastens His child in His own way, which is always mysterious to flesh and blood, but profitable, and pleasant too, to the inner man when rightly understood. A man with such a gracious experience as this has a right to speak in the Church of God; but be careful and look not upon him as one higher in the favour of God than the dullest dunce that He ever took in hand to teach. Oh, no! All God's own are on a level in His love. Not one afore or after another. One may be kept waiting at mercy's door, while another rests his weary head upon the bosom of everlasting love, yet both are loved with the same love, saved with the same salvation, and looked upon with the same lasting and unchanging affection. God help us to look at this portion for His glory and our good.

I. — Habakkuk's will and position — "*I will stand upon my watch.*"

II. — His determination and security — "*And set me upon the tower.*"

III. — His expectation — "*And will watch to see what He will say unto me.*"

IV. — His defense — "*And what T shall answer when I am reproved.*"

I. — Habakkuk's will and position — "*I will stand upon my watch.*" God's children often make mistakes in using these two words, "*I will.*" I have referred more than once before to our Lord Jesus Christ giving a very salutary and solemn lesson in reference to this expression. Matt. xxi. 28 — 30: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered, and said, *I will not*: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered, and said, *I go, sir*; and went not." You see in each case the act was the reverse of the declaration of the will — God's taught children know this to their heart's discontent, for oftentimes, when surrounded by influences and circumstances over which they have no control, their spirits tossed with tempest and not comforted, and harassed by the temptations of the devil, they say and write that which, for the moment, they fully mean ; but God in the order of His providence so works as to prove to them that the very contrary is the opening up of His mind in their experience. Does a child of God say, "*I will?*" he is almost sure to prove himself a relative of Jacob. His "*I mil*" proves to be God's "*Thou shalt not,*" while his "*I will not*" turns out to be God's "*Thou shalt.*" Recent events in the unfolding of His all-wise providence and the display of His invincible grace have proved to a demonstration that my "*I will not*" must be answered with His gracious "*Thou shalt.*" Here I am as God's own servant, and here I intend to remain; but *Be knows how long*, having appointed and fixed the bounds of my habitation. Yet it is mine to declare solemnly that whatever my weaknesses and failings are, the one aim, object, and end I have in view, is His glory in the instruction, edification, and comfort of His tried and tempted children. It may tend to the comfort and consolation of some exercised hearts now present for me to say, that it is the hope and desire of my heart to close my eyes, end my days, and "finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the

Gospel of the grace of God," in connection with the cause of God in this place.

"*I will*" Just look at Peter! Peter zealous! Peter ardent! Peter, whose heart was fired with love and moved with sterling honesty toward his Lord and Master, but Peter did not know himself, nor where his great strength lay. He said, "*I will* lay down my life for Thy sake." Did he? He said, "*I will not* deny Thee in any wise. Didn't he? His subsequent conduct teaches us that he reckoned without his host, and that his "*I will*," and his "*I will not*," through the instigation of the devil and the weakness of his wretched nature, were practically expounded to him by the rule of contraries. But a sovereign God, not the devil, was the Master of the situation, and was then bringing Peter, by a way that he knew not, to a deeper knowledge and more humbling view of himself. Oh, it is a marvellous mercy for us to know that every volition of the mind, every action of body, every movement of the hair on our head hangs on the sovereign will and good pleasure of our covenant God! That is a blessed verse by dear old Berridge: —

"No cross nor bliss, no loss nor gain,  
No health nor sickness, ease nor pain,  
    Can give themselves a birth;  
The Lord so rules by His command,  
No good nor ill can stir a hand,  
    Unless He send them forth."

There is another portion to which I would direct your attention. Look at John xvi. 30 — 32: "His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. *Now are we sure* that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: *by this we believe* that Thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, *Do ye now believe?*" They said, "*Now are we sure.*" He did not ask them were they sure, but, "*Do ye now believe?*" Listen!" Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come," and you who are now so sure, and who now so firmly believe, "shall be scattered

every man to his own home and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone for the Father is with Me." How often God's children go to Him with their wills, promises, intentions, and vows; but, Oh, how blessed it is for us to know that our Godfather took all our vows, intentions, promises, and wills upon Himself to perform! Our Godfather? Yes! Jesus Christ our Godfather who gave us our names before all worlds, when they were written down in the Old Family Register. Jesus Christ our Sponsor who made Himself responsible for the salvation, support, security, and education, of every child given unto Him. How blessed it is for us to know that all vows concerning us have been performed by Him, and that every intention of love in JEHOVAH toward His people, can never meet with the slightest frustration or hindrance. All performed *for us* by Jesus, and all performed *in us* by the Holy Ghost.

*"I will stand."* Stand! What does this mean? Enemies abound on the right hand and on the left. The devil aiming for our overthrow, his brood bent on our disgrace, and our flesh either presuming or fearing. Circumstances dark and apparently dead against us, while our poor hearts tremble lest we shall one day perish by the hand of this Saul or that, and we know not what to do. But the testimony of God goes forth in covenant command, and is applied by covenant power, and is responded to in the hearts of God's own children. Turn with me to Ephesians vi. 13: *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all,"* or, as it reads in the margin, *"having overcome all"* — that is, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the witnessing of the Holy Ghost — *"to stand."* Notice this command — a command which shall be obeyed by the power and indwelling of the blessed Spirit: *"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching*

*thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me.*" You see the apostle's heart in this business. Do not forget me. Why?" *That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel.*" Paul knew what it was to stand up in weakness, fear, and much trembling, and to feel himself shut up, therefore he hung, as it were, upon the Spirit-breathed prayers of God's predestinated and quickened ones. And I should like to know which minister of Jesus Christ does not? That is a highly-favoured minister who is borne up in the testimony and temptations on the prayers, the cries, the sighs, and the supplications of God's dear children.

*"I will stand.* Look now at Romans v. 1, 2: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace." What grace? This gracious standing before God, justified from all things through the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus, experienced by the faith of the operation of God. Look at it: "GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND." When forces are brought to bear upon a child of God to work his downfall, he glories in this gracious declaration of the Holy Ghost which flowed from the exercised heart of the apostle, "*wherein we stand.*" For, mark you, when God's children fall in the judgment of the world, ay, and of the Church too, they fall not from His love, His kindness, and His care. They fall, but His everlasting arms are underneath them. We have read of one who wrestled, and every time he was thrown to the earth he rose with renewed and increased strength. So it is with spiritual wrestlers who wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits, and are sometimes thrown; they have no might, but He increases strength (Isa. xl. 29). "*Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering with joy fulness*" (Col. i. 11). Blessed be God for that precious testimony which He has given for the encouragement of His wrestling people: "*The Lord upholdeth all that fall*" (Psalm xlv. 14). Do you fall? Ay, to my sorrow. Then you are upheld by Jehovah's Omnipotent hand. There are those who profess to know nothing of trips and falls; such are in an awful state,

and can know nothing of the upholding power of God. "*The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*"

"Bowed down beneath a load of sin;  
By Satan sorely pressed;  
By wars without and fears within,  
I come to Thee for rest."

"*I will stand upon my watch.*" Danger is nigh! "*I will watch*" Distress is approaching! "*I will watch.*" It is not simply, I will pray, sigh, and cry in the days of adversity and in the nights of sorrow, but "*I will stand upon my watch.*" Wolves howl! The shepherd watches. Thieves and murderers lurk! The watchman watches. Foes approach! The sentinel watches. Miseries prevail! I pray and wait for an answer. Are we on the watch to warn against the spoilers in Zion, the robbers of Churches, and the troublers in Israel? Well may we watch, for influences are working on every hand to test our standing, privileges and immunities in Christ Jesus. Many are the devices of Satan, many his deep and well-laid schemes, many his assaults against Zion, and when he cannot prevail by battering, he will secretly and silently sap and mine. When he succeeds not by persecution, he will deceive by flattery. When frowns fail, he can *sweetly smile*. But the child of God, knowing something of Satan's wiles and the weakness of his own wretched nature, is taught to watch and pray, and pray and watch. Yet, with all his watching he will be brought to experience desolation, destitution and trembling, that he may rest in the day of trouble (Hab. iii. 16), knowing that "except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm cxxvii. 1). We will now glance at —

II. — Habakkuk's determination and security — "*And set me upon the tower.*" This is the language of firm determination. It is not "*I will sit,*" but "*I will set me upon the tower.*" What is *the tower*? Blessed be God, we have the tower revealed to us in that precious Psalm xviii. 1, 2. David, experiencing the goodness and mercy of his

God, thus bursts forth: *"I will love Thee, O LORD, my Strength: the LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation, ami my HIGH TOWER."* What is a tower? A place for observation, shelter, and security. All this we have in God. See!" *For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a Strong Tower from the enemy"* (Psalm lxi. 3). *"The name of the LORD is a Strong Tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe"* (Prov. xviii. 10). JEHOVAH-JESUS is the High Tower of His people. Mark you! It is not the privileges that God has blest you with; it is not the precious promises that He has filled His Bible with; it is not the means of grace which He has favoured you with; Oh, no! it is Himself, the Promiser, enjoyed in the promises; the Blessing revealing Himself in the blessings; the Covenanter made known in His covenant, according to Psalm xxv. 14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it." We may talk of the covenant, but what is all our talking without the enjoyment of the Covenantee in our hearts, the Hope of glory! Empty vapour. We may talk of Divine sovereignty, but it is all vanity and presumption without the knowledge of God our Sovereign *for us, with us, and in us*, governing and guiding us in all places whithersoever we may be brought or driven in this weary wilderness-world.

THE TOWER. The place of defence is the munitions of rocks (Isaiah xxxiii. 16). As the child of God experiences a gracious lift out of himself into Christ, and is brought to contemplate and understand, not the kingdom of heaven with its earthly surroundings, but the kingdom of God within him, he rejoices and exclaims, *"That's the spot for me!"* The place fenced about with every attribute of JEHOVAH, guarded by every covenant promise, and defended by every covenant engagement of the Father with the Son, and the Son with the Father, and the witnessing of the blessed Spirit with each in the hearts of His elect, redeemed, and regenerated people. Isn't that a glorious High Tower? What see you in it? *Sovereign election* which can never be altered. *Eternal redemption* which can never be

marred. *Spiritual regeneration* which can never be destroyed! *Everlasting preservation* which can never be touched. Are we in Christ Jesus? That is *the* question. If God has settled that question for us, we stand in Christ Jesus free from condemnation, and beyond the possibility of separation from Him. "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" Shall Satan and all hell at his back, with the innumerable sins and transgressions we have been guilty of? Shall they? No. The triumphant declaration of Paul by the Holy Ghost is: "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. viii. 1, and 35 — 39). Ob, what a glorious, blessed place to be lifted to! *Lifted* by His long, strong, powerful arm of love into Himself, our Lord and our God, our Refuge and our High Tower. In seasons of danger and distress, doubt and dreariness, we may well sing, or sigh in the sweet language of Toplady,

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee."

III. — Habakkuk's expectation — "*And will watch to see what He will say unto me.*" We are oftentimes on the look out to hear what a poor spluttering preacher may say for our encouragement. We are sometimes anxious for glowing, burning words from those we love, to make us feel a heavenly heartburn (Luke xxiv. 32). I am often on the watch for this, and am blest with it in the most unlikely spots. Ah! it is a precious privilege even to hear the lispings of a babe in grace which find a sweet response in the hearts of those who are deeply taught in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The other day as I was walking with one through a country lane, he said to me: "*Ah! I do long to know that I am right with Him.*" The words were uttered from that man's heart with an honesty of purpose and sweet simplicity which gladdened and cheered my soul. Yes, we sometimes get sweet and precious words from God's weaklings. A

poor old woman in Lancashire once said to me, *"I do so like to see Jesus coming and peeping through the windows at me."* On being asked to explain, she said: *"I do like to see, when the heart melts with the shedding abroad of God's love, the bursting out of a tear. I always think a tear in the eye of one of God's children is the eye of Jesus looking at me."* Oh, there was eloquence in that which speaks home to the heart of those who mourn with those who mourn, and who weep with those who weep, knowing something of the truth of this, *"The heart of the WISE" — the affection, sympathy, and succour of Christ — "is in the house of mourning."* To mourning souls there is no voice like that of Jesus. The longing bride cries, *"Let me hear Thy voice, cause me to hear it"* (Song ii. 14, viii. 13). Peter's anxious enquiry is oftentimes repeated, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John vi. 68). Habakkuk watched to see what HE. Mark that personal pronoun HE.

*"What He will say."* If there has been a word of eternal life, love, and power to your hearts, a little of spiritual worship and heavenly longing within these walls to-night, set not anything down to the preacher's account. If the Word has been with power, it has come from Him who alone can speak home to the troubled and tried heart of His child words of comfort and consolation. Yes, when they are not expecting, and when they are not asking, He gives them a gracious word and a sweet realisation of His love. See! *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"* (Isaiah lxxv. 24). Did you ever notice that circumstance recorded in Acts xii.? Many were gathered together praying for Peter's deliverance from prison. Peter knocked at the door; Rhoda, delighted, tells them how he stood before the gate. They believed her not, and said: "Thou art mad." They were praying, but not watching unto prayer. They prayed, but did not expect God would fulfil their petitions. Just turn over to Psalm lxxxv. 8: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly." Notice the marginal reading of the text: *"and will watch to see what He will say in me."* Inside work is that of the Spirit of Christ. *"In the*

*hidden part Thou shalt make me to know Wisdom*" (Psalm liii. 6). "To reveal His Son *in me*," is the confession of Paul; and his commendation of the spiritual state of the saints at Colosse is, "Christ *in you* the Hope of glory." We now notice, briefly,

IV. — Habakkuk's defence — "*And what I shall answer when I am reproved;*" or, "*when I am argued with.*" He was on the watch to see what He should answer. He was not full of words equal to every occasion, or always ready with an answer. But mark well this bit of advice to those who stand on new covenant ground: "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter iii. 15). The living children are sure to meet with questionings, murmurings, and complainings. Reproofs, rebukes, and accusations will be rife. Who are these that are ever ready to argue us out of our standing and hope? Satan will accuse! The world will rebuke! The Church will reprove! False brethren will condemn! Our own evil hearts will question the very life of God in us! Yes, this is true: "*A mans enemies are the men of his own house*" (Micah vii. 6). If you fail or fall you may expect *your friends* to be more profuse with their reproofs and rebukes than they will be with their words of comfort and consolation. Blessed be God, He reveals Himself as our High Tower and Fenced Place. He teaches us how to answer and overcome every foe. Does the law condemn? We cry, "*Christ died!*" Does Satan accuse? We shout, *Christ lives!* Does the world hate? We sing, *Christ reigns!* Every answer to the raging and the railing of every foe is in the spotlessness of Jesus the Responsible One, who, by His precious blood, perfect obedience and all-prevalent intercession, has settled all questions of sin, guilt, and condemnation between us and our God. Precious blood! Precious obedience! Precious intercession! Precious Christ! Thy blood sprinkled upon our conscience by Thy good Spirit gives us to know our standing before the face of Thy Father — a standing which can never be questioned in the court of heaven, though it may and will in the court of conscience, and shall never be shaken as

long as the sun and moon endure, though we may feel the very earth is shifting beneath our feet.

May the LORD add His blessing for His own name's sake! Amen.

HYMN SUNG BEFORE THE SERMON.

When sins and fears prevailing rise,  
    And fainting hope almost expires,  
Jesus, to Thee I lift mine eyes —  
    To Thee I breathe my soul's desires.

Art Thou not mine, my living Lord?  
    And can my hope, my comfort die,  
Fixed on Thy everlasting word —  
    That word which built the earth and sky?

If my immortal Saviour lives,  
    Then my immortal life is sure;  
His word a firm foundation gives;  
    Here let me build and rest secure.

Here let my faith unshaken dwell,  
    Immoveable the promise stands;  
Not all the powers of earth or hell  
    Can e'er dissolve the sacred bands.

Here, O my soul, thy trust repose I  
    If Jesus is for ever mine,  
Not death itself, that last of foes,  
    Shall break a union so divine. Steele.

# XVII. DAVID'S TROUBLE, TREASURE, TRIUMPH, AND TRUST.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
October 11th, 1874, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."

— 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

WE are told in the context that "these be the last words of David." With what intense anxiety we wait for and catch the last, the parting words of those upon whom JEHOVAH has laid His gracious and loving hand! Deeply touching and consolatory are these last words of the man whom "God's own heart" loved with an everlasting, unchanging, invariable love. Toils, trials, and temptations had told their terrible tales upon the broken and contrite spirit of the shepherd-king. Follies, failures, and falls, attended by rich displays of infinite wisdom, preserving power, and restoring grace, had given a soberness and mellowed pathos to the experience of the waiting and weary, yet sweet, Psalmist of Israel. Fond, youthful, but vain, imaginings, had given place to the stern realities of his pilgrim path, and things *as they were*, not as he thought they *ought to be*, occupied his time and attention as the fleeting and visionary scenes of this world receded, and glory began to unfold itself to his longing and

adoring heart. The words of our text form part of the last inspired hopes and desires of David. When Jacob received the summons to depart to the better land, he called his sons around his dying couch and blessed them, leaving this sweet legacy to waiting souls, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

From the heights of Pisgah Moses ascended to the heights of glory, breathing out the transcendent excellencies and incomparable perfections of God's Israel and of Israel's God. Paul, in anticipation of a martyr's death, and of a martyr's immortal and unfading laurels, thus expresses his unshaken confidence in his faithful Friend: "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." Ah! we may well praise and adore Him whom our souls love for such marvellous displays of sovereign and sustaining grace in nature's dire extremity. But no words are to be compared with those which flowed from the oppressed and broken heart, from the parched, yet grace-filled lips of our most glorious Christ. "It is finished!" filled hell with dismay, heaven with jubilation, and elect and redeemed ones with confidence and joy. Lowly we would linger amid the dark shades of Calvary as the doleful words are borne upon the wings of the heavenly wind to our hopeful and wondering hearts: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" None can unfold the bitter sorrows of our adorable Emmanuel in that dread hour, in which the hell that we, the elect of God, deserved was borne by Him our glorious Substitute and Surety. But let us hasten to the precious words which form the subject of our meditation this morning. May we be blest therein by the guidance and grace of God the Holy Ghost, our Instructor and Remembrancer.

We notice, —

I. — David's TROUBLE — "Although my house be not so with God."

II. — David's TREASURE — "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

III. — David's TRIUMPH — "For this is all my salvation and all my desire."

IV. — David's TRUST — "Although He make it not to grow."

I. — David's TROUBLE. In looking at things *around* him, he finds all to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit," and of man at his best estate his judgment was — "Altogether lighter than vanity." In looking *downward*, he sees darkness and despair. He looks *within*, when sins, corruptions, doubts, fears, and follies meet his astonished gaze. By heavenly attractions and gracious allurements he looks *upward* and feasts upon covenant settlements, unbending decrees, unalterable purposes of grace, while his exercised heart bursts forth in strains of humble confidence, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." As he looks abroad over this sin-cursed creation, beautiful though it be in ruins, he finds everything tending to deterioration, decay, destruction, and death. His heart flutters within him, and were it not for the indwelling power and gracious encouragement of the Comforter, the questions must be: "Is there a God in Israel? Are these things working together for good? Is my God, my Father, at the helm of affairs? Does He reign over all the confusion without, and over all the distraction within me?" As the child of God surveys the dark chaos effected on creation by sin and Satan, men given up to the vilest passions, duplicity and deceit rampant on every side, and the Church seeking its own ease more than the glory of JEHOVAH, the fretful inquiry will arise, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Such an experience is hateful to the child of God who has once felt the pardoning mercy, the delivering grace, and the reviving power of Israel's Three-One God; yet it must be known and felt, that the marvellous compassion of the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost, may abound thereby. You may depend upon this, my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, my companions in tribulation, that it is a blessed thing to have more respect to the honour and glory of our God than to our own comfort and happiness.

"*Although my house be not so with God.*" This was a trouble indeed in whatsoever light we view it. If we look at David's kingdom, which God had promised and made over to him, though a faint type of the kingdom and house of the spiritual David, was "not so with God." Look at those glorious-and right-royal promises sounded in the wondering ears of Mary : — "JESUS! He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 31 — 33). This glorious kingdom and royal house is one which throws that of the sweet Psalmist into the shade. Of this he had bitter and painful experience, and well he might say, "Although my house or kingdom be not so great, grand, or glorious as that of the mighty and illustrious Ruler over men, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

No sooner was David set upon the throne than Abner set up Ishbosheth over the ten tribes in antagonism to him. Toil, trial, and trouble made up David's lot down here. Absalom's rebellion drove him as a fugitive from his home, his house, his throne, and bitter was the sorrow he experienced therefrom. Now his kingdom is assailed by the insurrection of Sheba, who, in rallying the people against him, cried, "We have no part with David; neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse." So successful was Sheba that all Israel followed after him, only Judah clave to David. The old king lies in weakness and infirmity, earthly enjoyments to him are past and gone for ever, the grasshopper is a burden, yet troubles increase, the sanctity of his dying chamber is invaded, and distressing tidings fill the weary monarch's heart with anxious cares, and his pillow with many thorns. Adonijah claimed his father's crown, and usurped his father's throne, securing his proclamation as king instead of Solomon, God's choice. Ah! well may we acknowledge that, out *of* and apart *from* union and communion with a precious Christ, true peace and contentment cannot exist. Had David possession and prosperity in his royalties and dignities? It lasted only for a short season. Yet, though this was the case, he was enabled by precious

faith and God-wrought confidence to say, "*Although my kingdom be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.*"

"*Although my house be not so with God.*" This may have respect to his family either in his progenitors or Mb progeny. Looking at the former, he could see nothing whereby he could lay claim to any favour or notice on God's part; and as to the latter, nothing but evil and disorder met his gaze. His children were guilty of follies the most filthy and crimes the most cruel. He saw his son Amnon wallowing in obscenity. He mourned over his proud, rebellious, self-willed Absalom. He groans under the burden of Adonijah's fast, forward, and presumptuous conduct; and even in Solomon the wise, we see the very perfection of foolishness. These are proofs positive that grace does not run in the blood, and that gracious parents cannot communicate spiritual life to their offspring. Often do we see the most highly-favoured saints troubled with the most refractory children. I might mention many cases, but I forbear. Yet I must tell you one thing I have observed, which has grieved and sickened me: — I have heard unreasonable persons comment in a very unjust, ungenerous, and ungracious manner on the training of the ungodly children of godly parents. These *wisecres* profess how well they would manage *if* — ay — if indeed! I have often found that those who talk the most about managing children are those who have no children to manage. Such persons little imagine how their ungoverned tongues lash and lacerate many of those who are near and dear to the heart of our covenant God. Well, blessed be His great and glorious name, He will see to it that David's distresses and David's defamers can never make Him His purpose forego, nor drag His tried one from His loving embrace. Trials sent in accordance with covenant arrangements can never alter or affect our covenant interest, though they sorely try our faith and distress our souls.

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
Though all others may and do:

He is love that never falters,  
Always to its object true.  
Happy Zion,  
Crowned with mercies ever new."

*"Although my house be not so with God."* From the kingdom and family, David turns in upon himself — "my house," the "earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Cor. v. 1). "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle" (2 Pet. i. 14). If we investigate this in the light of God's blessed Word we shall find much to humble us before Him. We have a heart overflowing with evil, foolish, and corrupt thoughts, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, the body vile, or rather, "this body of humiliation." Listen to David's own confession: — "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psa. xxxviii. 3, 4). In the midst of such surroundings does he doubt JEHOVAH'S goodness? No! But he questions his own participation in that goodness. He mourns over his deadness, his declension, his wanderings in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire, which work the destruction of his peace, his happiness, his comfort, and his enjoyment of JEHOVAH'S covenant love. The devil's insinuations and injections harass and annoy; and the tempted, tried, and tempest-tossed pilgrim is almost driven to the conclusion that he has neither part nor lot in the matter. Yet greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world; and though I may not realize my interest in the covenant, my interest remains unaltered; for the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, and He knoweth them that are His. The work is all His own, and if He send darkness, *it is dark*, and my poor frail bark is tossed to and fro on the waves of doubt and dread; but from the mountain-top He beholds my distress, and, blessings on His sacred name, He will appear and give me to know, by blessed experience, that, *"Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."*

Paul knew, by painful experience, that "his house was not so with God." His body must be kept under (1 Cor. ix. 27), and his confession is, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Rom. vii. 18 — 24)? Here we have a pretty set out, not a good thing in the house, and every manner of evil springing from it. Regeneration works no change in it, but grace — rich, free, sovereign grace — reigns over it. Rebelliousness, wanderings, coldness, and accursed indifference (ay, an indifference felt and hated) worry and disturb our spirits; but out of all these the Lord will and must deliver us, to show forth His covenant faithfulness and His unalterable and inalienable love. Temptations, divers and manifold, beset us on every hand, ay, and at every step; at least, I find it so. David's wretched flesh lusted after Bathsheba, and murderously plotted against Uriah: it sought to be something in the numbering of the people, and in all these things David sinned and fell foully, causing him to cry out, "*Although my house be not so with God.*" But now, high in the heights of glory, he stands pure and spotless in the presence of his covenant God, and of him we may well sing, with dear old John Kent, —

"There David shines without a stain,  
Uriah's blood can ne'er be known;  
For, like a millstone in the main,  
Are all his black transgressions thrown."

David knew, as all the regenerated people of God must know, what fellowship with Christ in His sufferings truly is. Desertion, darkness,

and dread must be theirs, and the cry will be: — "Where are Thy former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?" In their soul's feelings—they will be removed from Him, but the covenant of His peace can never be removed from them.

*"Although my house be not so with God?"* Here we see David's trouble: trouble in his kingdom, trouble in his family, trouble in himself, trouble in his surroundings, trouble meeting his eye at every step! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm xxxiv. 19). This is a glorious truth! Hell, death, sin, trouble, with all the waywardness and wanderings of an elect vessel of mercy, can never affect or alter his interest in God's everlasting, sure, and well-ordered covenant of grace.

II. — David's TREASURE — *"Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."* I was very much interested in reading that glorious new covenant Psalm lxxxix. In it we have a very blessed description of JEHOVAH'S covenant, and of Israel's covenant JEHOVAH. A covenant! What is it? A mutual agreement. JEHOVAH'S covenant is one of pure grace, everlasting, well-ordered, never to be broken. It is His wholly, not man's; no, not in any part. A covenant of works was entered into with Adam, but in it there was no provision for life, righteousness, or salvation. Exaction characterised it, failure attended it, death was the result of it. This could not be the everlasting, well-ordered, and sure covenant. The covenant of works at Sinai, so far as man was concerned, ended in utter failure. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus xix. 8), was spoken unadvisedly; for "all that the Lord had spoken" they did not. This old, weak, and unprofitable covenant, was only for a time, to demonstrate the painful, and creature-humbling fact, that man at his best estate is "altogether lighter than vanity." Demands, exactions, requirements, and conditions, are arrayed in marvellous profusion which settle the everlasting ruin and confusion of all who die seeking salvation thereby.

But God's everlasting and well-ordered covenant demands nothing, bestows everything. Whatever JEHOVAH commands, He, *for them* by the Son, and in *them* by the Holy Ghost, performs, and all in full accordance with His covenant engagements. David says: "*He hath made with me* an everlasting covenant:" not, "I have made with Him." Oh, no! How can poor, puny, empty, worthless, helpless man make a covenant with the great and glorious JEHOVAH? What can he agree to? What can he propose? What can he give? What can he do? I will tell you what he can do! He can sin, and lie, and go to hell. That is about the measure of what poor proud man can do. But God's covenant for, with, and to His people, was before the worlds were made, in the Son of His love, who agreed to carry out, and perfect all that concerned them, to the glory of God the Father. And when He says, "*I have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have sworn unto David My Servant*" (Psalm lxxxix. 3), and when David by the Holy Ghost responds, "*He hath made with me an everlasting covenant*" we have JEHOVAH'S mind simply revealed thus: — "That which I ordered and settled before all worlds in My covenant arrangements with Christ Jesus, the Son of My love, the same do I reveal, by the power, grace, and indwelling, of My Spirit, to My elect and redeemed people in time, bestowing upon them all that I am and all that I have."

Glorious covenant! Gracious Covenanter! Precious Covenantee!  
Blessed Covenant Comforter!

This is a covenant of love, life, and peace. A covenant of love, or grace, because it is founded on pure, unmerited, unpurchased, uninfluenced favour. Christ the gracious Covenantee is a "never-failing Treasury filled with boundless stores of grace."

Of it we may well sing, —

"'Tis like a living spring

Of waters, sweet and clear;  
There's not an ' *if* ' to foul the stream,  
Or *peradventure* here."

In virtue of this covenant, we, who are brought into the enjoyment of the love, life, light, and liberty thereof, can say: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 9, 10). Look at that glorious chapter, John xvii., where the very heart of a covenant Father in Christ is opened up to the full view of His loved ones. In it we behold immutable love, unchanging grace, manifested in all its splendour and reality. The precious Covenantee lays before the gracious Covenanter His own mind concerning His elect, His given ones. "Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 23,24).

"So dear, so very dear to God;  
More dear I cannot be;  
The love wherewith He loves His Son,  
Such is His love for me."

Our Covenantee, in strict accordance with the covenant, came forth in the fulness of time, and accomplished, by His blood and obedience, the everlasting salvation of His people; met and answered every exaction of the law for them; brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which every elect and blood-bought son and daughter should be gloriously arrayed, justified, and accepted before the face of the Father. Now He ever lives to plead their cause, and maintain their right, and sends His blessed Spirit, by whom He is formed in their hearts, "the Hope of glory," and exalted in their affections, ay, and everlasting and unceasing honours crown His brow, by Him we waiting and weary ones are lifted up right

above our wretched selves and fleshly surroundings, to enjoy sweet fellowship with the eternal and undivided Three-in-One JEHOVAH. This is not the struggle of poor nature to be something, or to do something, whereby we may be brought to God *if we will*. Oh, no! It is something vastly greater, grander, and more glorious. It is to be brought in all the glories of Emmanuel's Person, in the glorious perfection of His obedience, by the gracious power and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, up to the throne, to the home, to the heart of our covenant God and Father. Look at this! "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God*" (1 Peter iii. 18). That *bringing grace* is glorious! He promised to do it. He covenanted to do it. He will do it, until every covenant arrangement concerning His elect Church is fulfilled, and the mystical body complete before the face of the Father.

This covenant is *a covenant of life*, because life and love are two grand characteristics thereof. In it eternal life is secured to all the seed royal of heaven, spiritually enjoyed in regeneration, restoration, and confirmation. "In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus i. 2). "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, eternal life; and this life is in His Son" (1 John ii. 25, v. 11).

It is styled *a covenant of peace*. Peace with God is experienced alone through the person, love, blood, and obedience of Jesus the glorious Covenantee. Throughout the greater part of Psalm lxxxix., JEHOVAH is speaking of His covenant: — "*7 have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have sworn unto David My Servant.*" He shows that in it, all blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are secured to His covenant people. He shows when and why they are secured, because of His great and marvellous grace laid up for them in Christ Jesus, the Son of His love. Now, mark! After such glorious declarations as these, God ceases speaking, and the cry of doubt, dread, and desertion, is heard, "*But thou hast cast off and abhorred, Thou hast been wroth with Thine Anointed*" (ver. 38). This was so with the great and glorious Head of the Church, and it must be so in

measure to the members in their fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Look at that precious chapter, Ezekiel xvi., up to ver. 15: JEHOVAH describes His covenant love to, and care over His own Israel. In love He finds, cleanses, clothes, crowns, and beautifies His people. Then from ver. 15 to 60, He describes their declensions, wanderings, spiritual adulteries, and abominable transgressions. How will He act? Just like a God! "*He will be ever mindful of His covenant,*" and though Israel may and will forget, yet He will triumph by His gloriously gracious "Nevertheless." Mark this well, "*Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.*" Look at the end of ver. 61: "*but not by thy covenant.*" Oh, no! Man must be nothing on free-grace ground, and God everything. Gracious encouragement we have here: — "*And I will establish My covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*" Yes, blessed be God, His is an everlasting covenant. It is a covenant well ordered in all things. According to its arrangements, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.-' Not one thing, whether painful or pleasant, happens at the wrong time. Nothing out of place; and though we may have many crooks in our lot, many thorns in our nest, many rough and rugged paths in our pilgrim journey, yet, when through sovereign, abounding grace, we get home, we shall thank, praise, and adore Him for every pain, pang, and perplexity, knowing that each was a call upon His kindness and His care, and seeing also that one lacking would mar the fair beauty of the whole.

It is a "*covenant ordered in all things, and sure.*" In it all the Father's promises are sure to the Son. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of JEHOVAH shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul" (Isa. liii. 10, 11). In it all, His commandments concerning life, grace, and glory to His people are sure (Psa. cxi. 7, cxxxiii. 3). Zion stands on a sure foundation which can never be moved by the combined forces of earth and hell.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He, whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed thee for His own abode.

On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes."

In this glorious covenant all the promises of life, pardon, peace, reservation and glory are "*sure to all the seed*" (Rom. iv. 16). In Him they have a sure and safe abode, where sure waters, sure mercies, and a sure hope are ever found. My salvation is blessedly secure by the Father's electing love, the Son's redeeming grace, and the Spirit's confirming power. Precious, God-given, Christ-endearing, Spirit-wrought faith rejoices in its interest in the covenant, and beholds the Father's agreement to give the Son a seed, the Son's determination to ransom the seed from sin, death, and hell, and the Spirit's eagerness to bring the seed to the knowledge and experience of the bounties, blessings, and benefits which are treasured up with undisturbed security for it therein. This causes the rejoicing pilgrim to exclaim:

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"A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing.  
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,  
My person and offering to bring.

The terrors of law and of God  
With me can have nothing to do:  
My Saviour's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view."

On this glorious covenant the souls of God's poor people rest when tossed to and fro on the waves of this troublesome world. By the

blood of the everlasting covenant they are brought out of the pit of corruption and raised to share the resurrection life and glory of their gracious Covenantee.

III. — David's TRIUMPH — "*For this is all my salvation and all my desire.*" Although David's house was not so with God, yet in this everlasting, well-ordered and sure covenant was all. his salvation and all his desire. Out of the covenant he knew nothing of salvation, and spiritually had not a desire. In this he was enabled to glory, to triumph, to rejoice over every enemy, obstacle, and cross. In the whole of this precious portion David has respect to God's Christ, of whom we may well say, "*He is all my salvation and all my desire.*" Look at JEHOVAH'S declaration to Him in Isaiah xlii. t5: "I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, *and give Thee for a Covenant of the people*, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." God's Christ is God's Covenant and God's Salvation. In Him we find all temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation. It all flows from Him, belongs to Him, and shall be ascribed to Him from the depths of our adoring and grateful hearts. Through the long dark day of unregeneracy, we were saved from dangers, until the set time of favour when Jesus was revealed as our covenant Saviour. In Him, our covenant Head it was eternally and irrevocably settled who should be saved, and also every spiritual and temporal blessing was secured to them; and, praises to His name, He, as the Messenger of the covenant, has brought to our anxious and sin-distressed souls the gracious news that He is our Sin-Bearer, our Burden Bearer, and our Glory-Bearer.

"*All my salvation!*" Sin pardoned, my person justified and accepted, blessed with all spiritual blessings, washed from all impurity, put among the children, with an "I will" and "thou shalt," "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time!" Glorious salvation! Precious Saviour!" Thou art all my salvation," ay, "and all my desire." "The secret of the Lord is with

them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it" (Psa. xxv. 14, margin). When this is *known* and *felt*, the desire of the soul is after Him, and Him alone. Ah! when He is seen in His beauty, grace, and suitability, my heart runs after Him in hope, longing, expectation, and desire. Nothing but Himself will satisfy, and though the world, the flesh, and the devil are dead against me, and troubles rage around me, yet the cry of my heart is that of Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart, and my Portion for ever" (Psa. lxxiii. 25, 26). Some say, "there is none upon earth I desire in *comparison* of Thee." No! It is "none *beside* Thee." Blessed Jesus, Thou art my All in all.

"In JESUS-JEHOVAH obedient to death  
I see my salvation secure;  
For He finish'd the work God gave Him to do  
In a covenant order'd and sure."

IV. — David's TRUST — "*Although He make it not to grow:*" It is all very fine for amateur soldiers to boast of their courage in war, but it is thoroughly hateful to hear dead professors and superficial Christians boast of their faith and confidence. Untried faith will boast, brag, and bluster; but faith tried in God's furnace is sober, solid, and staid. To the elect of God, the trial of their faith is "much more precious than of gold that perish eth, though it be tried with fire," and *must* "be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7). Do notice the untried faith of the disciples, as recorded at the end of John xvi. They said unto Jesus: "Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." That sounds very well; but He who knew all things put a right estimate upon it, and answered them: "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh; yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. *In*

*the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.*" Ah, my brethren and sisters in Him, we know this is true — *tremble*, trial, and tribulation are ours, but He has bestowed upon us an abundant *treasure* of love, life, and liberty, and given us to *triumph* in Him alone, our Covenant-Salvation, our Covenant Saviour, in whom alone is all our *trust* and confidence. In the world we shall meet with testing scenes, seasons, and circumstances. Like David, we shall discover again and again that "vanity and vexation of spirit" is the make-up of all things under the sun ; that is, out of Christ. Times of dearth, desertion, and dejection will come, and the desire of the heart will be after the sweet enjoyment of Christ and His covenant care, but the sigh of the heart will be, "*although He make it not to grow*" and the plaintive cry of the anxious bride will be, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" Our surroundings may be gloomy, our circumstances hard and trying, our family like David's, filthy, fast, and forward; our hearts, lives, and all around, everything but what we wish for; our faith weak, our hope wavering, our sins innumerable, our doubts dreadful, our foes furious! yet our covenant interest remains intact, and He will see to it that we shall, like Habakkuk, although every creature resource has failed, "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation." Waves, winds, and storms, and blasts from hell, may rage most horribly, and Satan distract and perplex the child of God with his subtle temptations, yet a secret something whispers in the ear of hope and confiding trust that the anchor holds fast within the veil, the covenant cannot be shaken, and the heart bursts forth in adoring gratitude: "*Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.*"

Bless God for this glorious contrast. Ourselves, wanting; God's everlasting covenant, gloriously complete. As we survey it, with wonder we behold its unsullied light, choicest blessings, and richest clusters of spiritual fruits; and, turning in upon ourselves, we mourn over what *we are* while we glory *in Him* who meets and supplies

every felt and unfelt "need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." With such a rich and abiding portion, in rich experimental possession, we sing, with the redeemed Atheist, the now glorified William Mushett, —

"Lost in Godhead, love, and blood,  
I stray, a pilgrim in a wood,  
    With Jesus crucified;  
Forgetting seasons, times, and years,  
The sun, the moon, the rolling stars,  
    And everything beside."

May JEHOVAH, our covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, command His covenant blessing upon His covenant people at the Grove. Amen and Amen.

## XVIII. A FORGETFUL SERVANT.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,  
April, 29th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast  
caused me to hope.”  
— Psalm cxix. 4i).

GREAT and unspeakable is the privilege to be guided by God the ever-blessed Spirit into a true understanding and appreciation of that experience which He has set before us in the book of Psalms. It is a God-begotten, Spirit-breathed, and genuine experience, which stands the test of toil, trial, temptation, and tribulation, from whatever source or combined sources these may spring. It is an experience vastly different to those set before us in what is termed "*the various schools of religious thought*" — a term which my soul hates. I speak advisedly on this matter, and say again, a term which my soul hates, because the schools of thought and experience are generally under the patronage, supervision, and dictation of *one* poor, weak, erring, and presumptuous mortal, who declares his approbation or veto of persons and their experiences with as much authority as though a sovereign God had deigned to make him His deputy. Numbers of God's poor and afflicted ones groan under this petty spiritual tyranny, and sigh for the enjoyment of that liberty which is experienced when the blessed Spirit reveals a precious

Christ as the lost sinner's only Saviour, the ignorant sinner's patient Teacher, and the needy sinner's All in all. I believe what I have stated from my own heart's experience and personal observation, and here I would leave on record that the experience of the true-born children of God is not to be gauged or regulated by any man's order of things, but by God the Holy Ghost, the Witness of the covenant, according to the will, purpose, and pleasure of the Father arranged and settled before all worlds, and flowing into the hearts of elect pilgrims just at the right time. The experience of the different members of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ is as varied as the features of their faces, or the circumstances in the midst of which they are placed.

In thus speaking let me direct your attention to that painful, pleasant, and profitable experience described at the commencement of Psalm v. Here we meet with a soul on pleading terms with God, yet deeply humbled and exercised before Him: "*Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.* Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto Thee will I pray." It is our mercy to know that our God catches every sigh, every groan, every longing and desire of His children. They groan being burdened. They sigh being troubled. They pray being poor. They cry being helpless. Notice the three "*mys,*" "*My cry, my King, my God.*" This to some is a paradox! A helpless, weak, and wanting sinner with the language of assurance upon his lips, yet for the time being not in the rich experience of God's lovingkindness and tender mercy. There are those in these degenerate days who will tell you that the sinner who is brought into the possession of the grace and strength which is in Christ Jesus, and is entitled to say, "*My King, and my God,*" can at all times live in full assurance, and *exercise faith* in the promise and declarations of God's most Holy Word. But this is contrary to the experience of the household of faith. Hark you!" *My King, and my God, unto Thee will I pray.*" Thou hast revealed Thyself to me as my God in covenant relationship, and my King in Thy inward and spiritual kingdom, yet this morning, in my judgment, feelings, and experience, I am as dependent upon Thee as ever I was. The more I

seek Thee, and the more I experience Satan's assaults and temptations, the enmity of my carnal mind, the incorrigibility of my will, the deceitfulness of my heart, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Lord, I have not a stock of grace in hand to live upon. My spiritual and eternal all is treasured up in my great and glorious Head. I have no hope, no trust, no confidence but in thy faithfulness to Thy covenant promise, to open up and reveal in me Thy fulness of grace, supplying my necessity and filling my emptiness. "*My King, and my God, unto Thee will I pray.*" A very blessed and precious experience which reminds of that covenant promise in Deut. xxxiii. 25; "*Under thy shoes shall be iron and brass.*" Mark well what I said; not, "*thy shoes shall be iron and brass*" for we in these Northern climes would not like to wear shoes of such material. Consult the marginal reading of this precious portion, and you will see it is as I have repeated it to you, "*Under thy shoes shall be iron and brass;*" but, "*your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*" (Eph. vi. 15). Why is it "*Under thy feet shall be iron and brass*" To secure a firm footing for feeble faith. Iron and brass illustrating the omnipotence and faithfulness of JEHOVAH as displayed in the salvation and security of His people. Is my journey to the land where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest, along the beaten track of trial and tribulation? He will prove to me that it is paved with exceeding great and precious promises, and that in every promise His power and faithfulness are pledged for my everlasting welfare. O what a mercy it is for me, a poor, broken-hearted sinner before Him, to know, and that by the teaching of His own Spirit, and by His providential dealings with me, that every step I take is upon His unalterable and unbending promise, "*Under thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" Nine times out of ten these words are misquoted thus: "*As thy day thy strength shall be,*" which means as is thy day's need and trial, so will be thy strength. That is true, but it is not *the truth* of the promise. This is the truth, "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be,*" or, as it is in an old version, "*Thy strength shall continue as long as thou livest.*" Blessed be God, the last of thy days, which may be to poor nature labor and sorrow, will have His

strength accompanying it as much as to-day. Religious high-flyers here presume and say: With such a promise you have no occasion to doubt, fear, or experience anything like perplexity. But, my dear friends, there are days of affliction, darkness, desertion, temptation, trial, and persecution, all designed for the testing of the faith of God's elect, and for the proving of the promises which the Holy Ghost has made both life and power in our hearts. When all is dark around thee, He will verify His promise: "*The LORD shall be thine everlasting light.*" When weakness is thy lot He will be true to His Word, "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness*" (Isa. xli. 10). To-day may be one of joy; but tomorrow is in His hands and will bring its bitters or sweets, doubts or confidence, fears or trust. "*The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever*" (Psa. xxxviii. 18). Well, then, with these preliminaries, let us look at the portion which I have read for our meditation, and may it prove for our instruction and comfort. We will notice —

I. — The person speaking — "*Thy servant.*"

II. — His character — A forgetful servant, implied in the word, "*Remember.*"

III. — His want — "*The Word.*"

IV. — His plea — "*The Word, upon which Thou has caused me to hope.*"

I. — THE PERSON SPEAKING — "*Thy servant.*" We find this expression repeated many times in this Psalm: "*Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy Word*" (ver. 17). He does not say, Raise me up to a little hope, or, Let me have a little faith to cling to Thee, or, Give me a little evidence of Thy life, or faint glimmer of Thy light! These are precious things, and blessed to experience in the hearts of God's children, but none of them can fully satisfy a living soul. Such cannot be satisfied

with small things. The yearnings of the Divine nature within are for Divine, eternal, infinite realities — in fact, for nothing short of God Himself. The experience of the Psalmist in felt want and necessity caused him to cry, "*Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live.*" It may be there are some of God's servants within these walls this morning who are feeling that which makes such a portion as this, through the anointing of the Holy Ghost, very acceptable. What is your experience? You answer, Barrenness, leanness, deadness. But your sigh and cry is, "*that I may live, and keep Thy Word.*" "Keep,' through the indwelling of the great Remembrancer, in experimental possession, "Thy Word" — whatever that Word may have reference to, or in whatsoever state or condition the child of God may be.

But what is a servant? One employed to wait upon another, one in subjection to another, one in a position of dependence, whose time, labor, and will is at the bidding of a superior. Mark that! Whose *will is at the bidding of a superior*. Such is the truth taught in God's blessed Word. We, with our ideas of service, fall far short of God's mind, will, purpose, and pleasure, in respect to the same. Service in these days differs vastly from that rendered to superiors in Biblical times. Then, a servant was the property of another in person, will, and work. Now, where are we this morning, in reference to our standing before a just and holy God, who sits as sovereign Ruler over all things in heaven, on earth, and in hell? This is a terrible truth to a newly awakened child of God who realises not his true position in the Father's household: "*All are Thy servants.*" All? Yes, *all*. Elect and reprobate, angels fallen and unfallen — all in infinite space serve Him. But the question with us is this: What is the relationship to God of the servant mentioned in the text, and what is the nature of his service? There are different grades of service revealed in God's Word in connection with the work of grace which He carries on in the hearts of His elect children. When the first beam of light dawns on the mind of a vessel of mercy, the first ejaculation is in connection with service. Look through your Bibles and you will find this to be the case almost invariably. See! Mark x. 17 — 22.

The young ruler comes to Jesus *running, kneeling, asking*. There is *zeal seen* in his running, *humility* in his kneeling, *want* in his asking. "He asked Him, Good Master, *what shall I do* that I may inherit eternal life?" The Master answered according to the nature of his question. If he would escape death, and experience life on the ground of doing, there was ample scope for him. "*Thou knowest the commandments.*" He directs his mind to the second table of the Decalogue, omitting intentionally the last and tenth command. The young man answered, "*Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*" Morality and amiability may say the same in respect, not to the first table of the law, but to the second which enjoins duty to our neighbour. But even here failure awaits all *doing* for life. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." This was the thrusting home of the command. "*Thou shalt not covet,*" without which he had not known lust. This slew him, for "*he was sad at that sailing, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*" Now, very many (note this as a case of neglected opportunity and salvation rejected, that the young ruler had the opportunity to embrace salvation, but he would not and went his way. Now, what did the Lord Jesus in His teaching set before the man? Let us look at this honestly and fairly in the face, and we shall see that not one word of Gospel fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. The young man was for *doing!* Jesus laid the law before him, which served its own purpose, working conviction in the young man's mind. Was he vexed? No. Was he opposed to Christ? No! "*He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved.*" Sad! Grieved! Would to God that we could see scores going away sad and grieved under a sense of their inability to obey God's holy, just, good, and spiritual law. Jesus loved that young man, He loves him now in the heights of glory, leaning upon His bosom free from all sadness and grief, and rejoicing in the glorious fact that Jesus did all for him. "*Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end*" (John xiii. 1).

Now, if you will turn with me to Acts ii., you will see that as Peter preached God's Gospel, which was profuse with quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures, the three thousand heard, "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*" Turn to chap. xvi. 30: the Philippian jailor awakened, fearing, trembling, asks Paul and Silas, "*Sirs, what must I do he saved?*" You see the question in the mind of these awakened ones is that of *doing and serving*. We have another illustration of this in that beautiful part of the three-fold parable in Luke xv., which describes the return and restoration of the lost son. A son. Mark that! Not a hired servant in the father's house, but a real son. In a far off land, wanting and weary, he remembers his father's home, and thus soliloquizes, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He would rather be a hired servant well fed, than a starving son. "He fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat;" but that could never be, for the living children can never be satisfied with free-will trash, or Arminian husks. "*And he arose and came to Ms father. But when he was yet a great way off.*" This is a beautiful description of the son's feelings and experience, for the God and Father of His people can never be a great way off from them. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Why does he not continue to express the whole of his former determination? Ah, my dear friends, we oftentimes determine to do and say things that God never intended, and in His gracious providence He stops our mouths and teaches us that He has better things in store for us. The son cannot say, "*make me as one of thy hired servants.*" How is this? Because he had received the kiss of reconciling love, the kiss of unchanging affection, the kiss of approbation. He felt himself a son by gracious communication and communion, and was taken into the

house, not to wait, but to be waited upon. The hired servants must bring forth the robe, the ring, and the fatted calf, but the son must sit at the father's table.

Look at that precious portion, Gal. iv. 6, 7: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father: wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." How blessed it is for us to know that we stand before God in covenant relationship with Him, not on the ground of personal service, but on the ground of imputed service! This is the service of God's righteous servant, the obedience of Him in whom all elect sinners are eternally justified and accepted. *Do, do, do! Work, work, work!* is the cry of the religious world. What are you doing for the Lord? is the demand of the self-righteous and self-sufficient; but the language of the tempted, tried, and truly-taught children of God is, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalm lxxvi. 16). Does not this latter suit you better? Yes! is the response of every weary, way-worn pilgrim who has been taught to praise the Lord in the language of the Psalmist: "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power. To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of Thy kingdom" (Psalm cxlv. 10 — 12). May I ask you individually, to be answered in the secret of your own heart before Him: What is the Lord doing for you this morning by the power of the Holy Ghost in the person of His Son? Have you the witness of the Spirit that you are born of God, and that His doings *for* you, *in* you, and *by* you, are based upon His covenant purposes, and flow through His covenant promises, in which no flaw, failure, or imperfection can be found? And here I would have you notice this very important distinction: The order of this day of profession is, "*Do and live;*" but the order of the Gospel day is, "LIVE AND DO!" and all by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. But what are we to do? That which a loving Father commands in respect to His glory in doing good to all, especially those of the household

of faith. Do not let us lose sight of that, "*do good to all.*" We receive not the glorious doctrine of election according to the erroneous judgment of the carnal mind, as a cold, crude notion, which binds and cramps us in our operations, sympathies, and feelings. It is not that; but when God communicates the precious fact to our hearts that He has elected, saved, and accepted us, in the Son of His love, our bosoms glow with gratitude, and if we could, we would bring all with whom we come in contact into the enjoyment thereof. If I could, and it is a mercy I cannot. I would convince all that come within the sound of my voice. I remember the days of my youthful spiritual vigor, when I had more zeal than judgment, being so simple as to think I could convince those who would allow me to converse with them of the truth of these eternal verities. I was sadly and sorely mistaken. But how blessed it is for us to feel and know that there is service unknown to all outside God's family! it is the service of sons, children whose existence, honour, and glory are identical with His; the child, by the Spirit of life, love, and liberty in Christ Jesus, delighting to toil and labor in those predestined paths which He alone reveals.

"*Thy servant.*" Let us look at this still more minutely. Go to the history of Abraham, and you will find he had his servants, some bought with his money and others born in his house (Gen. xvii. 12, 13). Consider this in a spiritual sense! Have we been bought with His money? (1 Peter i. 19). "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with *the precious blood of Christ.*" That is the money! Have you been bought with blood? Have you the blood-red mark of redemption upon you? I do not ask you what are your views upon redemption — particular or general! I do not ask you that; but have you the witness of the Spirit that you are redeemed by blood from Satan, sin, and self? Can you remember the spot where His Word came home with sweetness and power, telling you that He suffered, bled, and died for you? See! Men may chatter and contend for the doctrine of particular redemption right down to the very depths of hell; but you cannot be

blessed with the experience of your own *personal redemption* from *sin* which you hate, *guilt* which you fear, *condemnation* which you shun, and *self* which you loathe, and fall short of the possession of that glory which He has laid up with undisturbed security for His eternally loved, elect, and redeemed people. *Personal* redemption must be *particular*, never general, or universal; while general and particular may be contended for where there is no personal interest in the Redeemer or experience of His love. A very remarkable circumstance is set before us in the account of the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priestly office — a very lively type of Christ and His Church, the Redeemer and the redeemed. "And thou shalt kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him; and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him" (Exodus xxix. 19, 20). -What does all this typify? "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20,21). "NOT YOUR OWN!" Galling declaration to the natural man. Precious truth to the spiritual man, to the killed and risen again believer! Ay, precious indeed to be *bought* by blood, *sought* by love, and *brought* by power into the knowledge of the fact, that I am sanctified or separated to His service, that I am the servant of my Lord and my Redeemer, who has bought me and marked me with His blood. The blood was put upon the ear. What are you doing with your ear? What are you listening to? In ninety-nine cases out of every hundred the ear is listening to gossip, scandal, backbiting, or defamation. Does a child of God slip in his walk? Is there a hole in the coat of a saint? Miss Precise cries aloud, Could you have thought it? While Mrs. Prudence exclaims, I knew very well what it would come to! Hid I not tell you, dear? O, my dear friends, may your finger be kept from pointing to the hole in

the coat of any child of God, and especially from poking your finger in to make the rent worse! may He keep your ears open to the necessities of His tried and tempted ones, and cause your heart to burn in listening to the gracious outpouring of those spirits which are broken through a sense of sin, and daily and hourly infirmity. May he keep your feet in the good and right way, and fix your eyes upon Himself alone. Too often we are looking at the workings of the flesh in others and see not the fruits of the Spirit.

*"Born in His house."* "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13). This is the regenerating grace of God which His children long to be more acquainted with. Am I a true-born child in the house of my Father-God? Am I born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever? Have I such an experience as this? "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. ii. 20). Then my chief desire will be to be devoted to His service who loved me, bought me, quickened me, and brought me to know and feel that —

"Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

His servant in life! His servant in death! Yes, when my eyelids are closing in death, when this poor frail tabernacle is dissolving and my ransomed spirit is gasping for its native air and home, even then may He own me as His servant and messenger of grace, comfort, and encouragement to those who may surround my bed, His servant of love, life, and liberty to those who may be anxiously looking on, and who in after years may cry from the depths of their exercised hearts: — Lord, remember the word which came with living power from the faltering lips of Thy dying servant. *"Thy servant."* O how blessed it is for us to know that His service which is perfect freedom, is not confined to the narrow limits of this mortal life!

II. — The Character Of This Servant — *Forgetful*, as implied in the word, "*Remember*." Is not this proof positive that God's servants are very forgetful? Yes, it is. Let us look at the description He gives of them in that wonderful Psalm lxxviii. Read the 34th verse: "*When He slew them then they sought Him*" That is as true to-day in the experience of God's servants as it was when the Psalmist penned it; for it is only when we are killed, feelingly and experimentally in the flesh, that we live in Him. This is a paradox, but God's poor children understand it. "*When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer.*" God slays His children when He smashes their hopes and expectations of earthly good. Now He has used the means to bring them to remember Him, surely they will be more mindful for the future? No, they wont, they are made of the wrong sort of stuff, *and so am I*. See! "*Nevertheless they did flatter them with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues.*" What an awful lot! Wait. We can discern our own characters and dispositions in theirs. I find that my mouth has flattered and my tongue has lied as much as any w the world. Have trouble, anxiety, distress, and anguish come upon us? O how ready we have been with our vows and promises! We have told the Lord, and told His saints, that if He only would deliver and comfort us, and give us a sweet assurance of pardon from His lips, how very careful and prayerful we would be for the future But we have lived to prove our ignorance and weakness in these matters. Don't be in a hurry, my friend, in promising God anything. Your prayers not your promises He looks for. Mark this!" *For their heart was not right with Him.*" Is yours? That is the question! But a greater question than that I want settling in my heart every day: — Is His heart right with me?" *Neither were they stedfast in His covenant.*" Neither are we; yet "He will ever be mindful of His covenant" (Psa. cxi. 5). "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath." Will not that do for some of us this morning? He sees and knows what poor weak

creatures we are in ourselves. *"For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert!"* When I consider how a gracious and long-suffering God has put up with me, and borne with my manners in the wilderness these many years, I am constrained to be careful in what I may have to say concerning the failures and falls, imperfections and infirmities of any of His children. *"Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand."* Tell me, is not this the experience of your hearts? Are your memories as retentive as you would have them in respect to the delivering and providing hand of your God? You know how, like Ephraim, you are: *"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness (mercy or kindness — margin) is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away"* (Hos. vi. 4). *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"* (Heb. ii. 1). For we are at the best but as leaking vessels. This reminds me of the saying of an old woman: *"My mind is like a riddle for holding water; but it's a mercy to get the wires wet."*

*"Remember!"* Turn with me to Psa. xxv. 6, 7, where you will find something that a child of God does not want God to remember: *"Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions."* But see! there is something He must remember: *"According to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness sake, O LORD."* Sins and follies which we could tread under our feet like worms in the days of our youth, when, as "Satan's blind slaves, we sported with death," when we would have gone post-haste to hell but for His restraining grace, now trouble and distress in the conscience as so many biting fiery serpents. We may well cry, *"Remember not the sins of my youth."* The children of God, having treacherous memories, and oftentimes forgetful of their Father's manifold mercies, are apt to think that He is of the same disposition toward them. See! Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee" (Deut. xxxii. 18). "I will say unto God my

Rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me?" (Psa. xlii. 9). "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" (Psa. lxxii. 9). No! "Remember these, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art My servant, I have formed thee; thou art My servant, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me" (Isa. xlv. 21). "But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 14, 15). JEHOVAH has pledged His Word, given His promise, and sworn by an oath that He will remember His holy covenant by the presence and power of the gracious Remembrancer in the hearts of His people. Is Noah surrounded on every hand with the waters of judgment and death? "*And God remembered Noah*" (Gen. viii. 1). Is Lot in the midst of danger? God remembered the intercession of Abraham (Gen. xix. 29). Mark that precious portion in Isa. lxii. 6: "Ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence" — margin, "Ye that are the LORD'S remembrancers." "Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isa. xlv. 11). It is a marvellous mercy to be taught that Jesus our Great High Priest is our Remembrancer in His sweet intercession to the Father; the blessed Spirit is the Father's Remembrancer in our hearts, and His wrestlers and prevailers remember each other before the throne of His heavenly grace. We now glance at —

III. — The Servant's Want — "*The Word*" What is this Word? Not simply the written Word, but the covenanting (Hag. ii. 5), creating (Psa. xxxiii. 6), quickening (Psa. cxiv. 50), incarnate (John i. 14), and living Word (Heb. iv. 12 — 14). Look at the Word in Jer. xxxi. 31 — 34, quoted by Paul in Heb. viii. 8 — 12, and x. 16, 17. "*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*" A forgetting God in reference to the sins of His people. A remembering God whenever they are in necessity or distress. Does Abraham experience danger and necessity? "*The Word of the LORD came unto Abram* in a vision, saying, I am thy Shield and exceeding great Reward." Is God's Israel sick and afflicted?" They cry unto the Lord

in their trouble, and He saveth them from their distresses. *He sent His Word and healed them*, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psa. cvii. 19, 20). Does the Psalmist's soul cleave to the dust of death? He cries, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word" (Psa. cxix. 25). God's Word quickening sinners from a death in trespasses and sins, and which still quickens those who have been quickened and who need quickening again. This quickening Word is God's Christ. Listen to the plaintive language of Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68). "*He cast out the spirits with His Word*, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. viii. 16). What a precious word of comfort and consolation is that which comes with power from the lips and from the once broken but now sympathizing heart of a precious Saviour by the power of the covenant Remembrancer, God the Holy Ghost.

"*Remember the Word*" I sometimes remember the days that are past and gone for ever when the words of life, light, and love fell with sweetness from the anointed lips of God's own ministering servants into my anxious heart. Never can the words of suffering oneness with the Man of sorrows which flowed from the exercised heart of Patrick Joseph O'Leary be lost to me. Oh! how I love to have remembered to me the words of faithfulness, fearlessness, and feeling which graced the ministry of the valiant William of Openshaw. And I would if I could remember the words of grace and truth which He Himself has spoken to my heart in this very spot; but I am taught to leave Him to do His own work while I mourn over my forgetfulness: "*Remember the Word unto Thy servant.*" Now and again I remember how Psa. lxxxix. was made very precious to me as I listened to the faithful testimony of a servant of God in Blackpool parish church, and I have not lost the savour of it to this day. "*Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them.*" JEHOVAH holding all things in His hand, and causing them to work together for the good, the comfort, and consolation of His tried, tempted, and tempest tossed people. Such words as these have come home to our hearts, cheering, reviving, and encouraging, giving us the possession of a hope which cannot

be shaken, and the knowledge of a place in His affections from whence we can never be dragged by men, devils, and all hell combined. Oh, how blessed to know that we have a remembering God! We forget, we lose sight of His covenant truths; but He has provided and secured to us a covenant Remembrancer, and here we find a little encouragement. If we were not forgetful and unmindful there would be nothing for the Holy Ghost to do in His office of covenant Remembrancer. Blessings be upon His sacred Name and Person, He does "*Remember the Word unto His servant, upon which He has caused him to hope.*"

IV. — THE SERVANT'S PLEA — "*The Word upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.*" Just a hint here — no more. God's Word of promise is a prevailing plea. It begets, excites, and encourages "a good hope through grace." It teaches the heirs of promise to wait for the accomplishment thereof. "*Thou hast caused me to hope*" for life, salvation, grace, and glory; "*And now, O LORD God, the Word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning His house, establish it for ever, and DO AS THOU HAST SAID*" (2 Sam. vii. 25). It is a blessed thing to be lifted up to a little hope in His covenant, His truth — HIMSELF.

May He add His blessing for His Word's sake. Amen and Amen.

# XIX. GOD'S DELIGHT, DETERMINATION AND DONATION

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,  
May 6th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring Uh into this land, and give it as; a land which floweth with milk and honey."

— Numbers xiv. 8.

INTERESTING and instructive are the circumstances recorded in connection with the portion which I have read for our meditation; but instructive only to those whom the best of all teachers has graciously taken in hand. On such His lessons of grace are never thrown away, though oftentimes little success appears to attend them. Those whom He has brought from death to life, from sin to righteousness, from self to Himself, rejoice in the guidance of so faithful a Teacher, and with grateful hearts adore Him for the instruction He imparts, which, *a* not always pleasant, is always profitable.

Turn with me to 1 Cor. x. 11, where, after recounting various waverings and wanderings, failures, falls, and follies of Israel of old, the apostle says, "Now all these happened unto them for ensamples" (or, as you read in the margin, <sup>^</sup>" *types*"); "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This falling is not a falling away from grace or into hell; but is a part of His predestined purpose, to teach us the instability of our "own stedfastness," and to break all our schemes of fleshly folly, and stain all the pride of our glory. It is amazing to think that after we are brought into the experimental possession of spiritual understanding and Scriptural knowledge, how very clever we fancy we are going to be! We eat of His bread and drink of His wine, little thinking of the hunger and the thirst awaiting us. We enjoy His peace, but we forget the world's tribulation. Our mountain stands strong, and we are determined to stand strong in our mountain; but the LORD says, "You think you stand, take heed lest you fall." He hides His face, we are troubled. Those who thus fall, blessed be His Holy Name, fall on Himself the Rock, and are broken in heart, spirit, purpose, and determination, and from the very Rock on which they fall and are broken, there springs forth strength and sweet encouragement. They fall, but though great and deep may be the fall, "underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii.).

In my younger days I was oftentimes tempted to find fault with the Israelites because of their rebelliousness, murmurings, and discontent; but the longer I live the more I am convinced that God oftentimes works thus with redeemed and regenerate men; yes, and the more I know that He is working over again in me those very experiences of failure, sin, and shame, which characterised the forty years' wanderings of old. In fact, experimental history is repeating itself in the exercises of my heart before God. Let us look at things as JEHOVAH has recorded them; I don't mean by the power of our own free-will, but by the guidance of His grace and the light which He throws upon the truths of His own blessed Word. We will just notice a few "loops of blue." "*Loops of blue!*" say you, whatever is meant by that? You read in the account of the construction of the tabernacle of "*loops of blue*" which connected the curtains together. "*The loops held one curtain to another*" (Exod. xxxvi. 11,12). *Blue!* The heavenly, celestial colour, and when we see this word in God's blessed Book it refers to heaven, God, and glory. When He speaks

of "*loops of blue*," I look to find things looped in heavenly harmony and joined in spiritual unity. There are many such in the Word of truth. Let me point out two or three to you. Phil. ii. 13, 14: "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!*" That sounds like free-will, duty-faith, and creature-ability. Look at the loop! Look at the loop!" *For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.*" You find another in 2 Timothy ii. 19 : "Nevertheless the foundation of the Lord standeth sure having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are His.*" Where is the loop? It is here; "And, *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" The first part is quoted by the cold Calvinist, and the latter by the flaunting Arminian; but the child of the living God who has been brought into fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings, and the enjoyment of the power of His resurrection, will thank God for His kindness and care, and hate the sins which caused his precious Redeemer to suffer so much. We behold another "*loop of blue*" in the legacy left to the disciples of Jesus. See ! John xvi. 33: "These things I have spoken unto you, *that in Me ye might have peace.*" Our selfish natures and fleshly religious feelings would ever dwell upon that precious part of the legacy; but there is a loop, and attached thereto we have, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*" Our fleshly natures are ever on the look out for that which makes for our comfort, happiness, and ease, losing sight of the many declarations of the Word that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. We do not want to know this, and will put it from us as long as ever we can, until He surprises us with the working of the same in our heart's experience. Our God is not only an infallible Teacher, but He is also a faithful Guide. He keeps back nothing that is profitable for us to know, though the communication of such may be painful indeed. Through the grace-filled lips of the Son of His love He speaks to our hearts: "If it were not so, I would have told you.' The Holy Ghost teaches all essential truth, darkness as well as brightness, adversity as well as prosperity, pain as well as pleasure, sorrow as well as joy.

We see something of this in the chapter which I have read for our instruction and in the one preceding it. God had promised to Abraham that his seed should possess the land wherein he was a stranger.. His own right hand should be their defense, and His eyes their safe conduct. He promised to go before them and with them. Before them as their Guide, with them as their Guard. My eyes shall watch over you for your good. My arm shall ward off all dangers and triumph over all your enemies. Through the wilderness the children of Israel were marched until they approached the borders of the Promised Land. Here they began to confer with flesh and blood, and question as to the right mode of entering in and taking possession. They lost sight of JEHOVAH'S gracious promise that He would be as eyes before them and protection around them, and began to question Moses. See Deut. i. 22, 23. The Lord met His people on their own ground. He came down to their wants, necessities, ignorance, and forgetfulness. He gave them their heart's desire and sent leanness into their soul. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them" (Num. xiii. 1, 2). This was equal to saying, If My eyes are not sufficient for you, I will give you twenty-four eyes which shall search well and diligently the land which I promised to your forefathers. The twelve men were appointed and sent, and were to bring back a faithful report of the land and of the people thereof, whether strong or weak, few or many, good or bad, tents or strongholds, fat or lean. They returned hearing a cluster of grapes between two — a glorious evidence of the truth of the promise that the land was good. But what was the report? See Num. xiii. 27, 28: "And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. . . And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be

not able to go up against the people, *for they are stronger than we.*" Where was God's arm, God's power, God's omnipotence? They forgot His eyes, and His arm left them. "And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight." The Lord knows He has a great number of His own children in these days who are but grasshoppers — little in their own sight and insignificant in the estimation of those with whom they come in contact, and all through their losing sight of God's covenant declarations, and those precious promises in which He had sworn to be wisdom and power, eyes and hand for them in all places and circumstances whither they should be brought.

Ten of these twelve men took not into their account the fruitfulness and goodness of the land, nor the glory of God. Evil hearts of unbelief misled them. Carnal reason deceived them. What meets their gaze and fills their minds with disappointment and dissatisfaction?

*Dangers* — THE GIANTS!

*Difficulties* — WALLED CITIES!

The "*loops of blue*" were wanting. Oh, how blind we are to the hand and the eye of our God! He promised a land flowing with milk and honey for them, and of giants to be subdued by His own right hand, and walled cities to be overcome by the look of His eye, but they, like us, were too apt to see and dread dangers and difficulties, while they were blind to the bounties and blessings. And are we not sometimes presumptuously blind to the dangers and difficulties, being wholly bent on the possession of the bounties and blessings? In the evil report of the land the people saw not God's hand, neither discerned they His eye. See! "And all the congregation lifted up

their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." Why did they weep? Because the *giants*, not JEHOVAH, the *walled cities*, not *the good land*, haunted their minds. God's covenant with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and the confirmation of the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant were perfectly forgotten. Look at the marvellous contrast existing between Exodus xv., and Numbers xiv. *There* faith was fruitful in praise, *here* unbelief murmurs and weeps. *There* God is All in all and the people rejoice, *here* God is forgotten and the people mourn. *There* the children of Israel, delivered by the mighty power of JEHOVAH from Egyptian oppression, are joyful in Him. Mark well the 11th and following verses: "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed: the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in *the* place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O LORD, which Thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." That is the experience on the shores of the Red Sea, but what is it at the borders of the Promised Land? "*The people wept that night.*"

See! Twelve men were appointed to spy out and to report their survey; ten of the twelve, with all the congregation of the children of Israel, excepting Moses and Aaron, have respect to secondary things, are exercised about mighty giants and walled cities, are troubled concerning dangers and difficulties, not seeing the Invisible One who, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, sweeps all dangers and difficulties out of the pathway of His own people. "And

all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt; or would God we had died in this wilderness. And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" I wish you to notice that expression, and then look at verse 31: "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." In their unbelief and fear they said, "*Our wives and children shall be a prey.*" No! said God, they shall not be a prey, but you shall. They cried, "*Would God we had died in this wilderness*" God takes them at their word, and says, "But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness." Ofttimes God's children say things for which they repent. In this way God shows them His love and pity as a Father, teaches them their naughtiness and nothingness, and causes His rich and abounding grace to shine in every action of their lives. We thus behold the glory of God revealed through all the sins, transgressions, infirmities, and weaknesses of His people. But we must hasten. "And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." True humility here! "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through, to search it, is an exceeding good land." No mention made of the sons of Anak; no allusion to the walled cities; dangers had disappeared, difficulties had vanished. JEHOVAH'S covenant, purpose, and grace occupied the minds of these two worthies. What were giants before Him in comparison to whom "all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing?" What were walled cities to Him who could throw them down before the blast of such feeble and foolish instruments as rams' horns. "*If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.*"

In these words we see the action of God-wrought faith. Two courageous! Ten cowardly! But let me ask you, have we an upbraiding word to throw in the face of these doubting, disappointed, and dissatisfied ones? Oh, no! for we are painfully conscious of our failures and falls, and of the dangers and difficulties which beset our path; but while we humbly acknowledge these, through the glorious "*loops of blue*," which JEHOVAH has brought to our understanding and comprehension, we discern His eye to guide, we behold His arm to defend. Let us look for a short time at the portion before us. "*If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey.*"

I. — JEHOVAH'S DELIGHT — "If the Lord delight in us."

II. — "JEHOVAH'S DETERMINATION — "Then He will bring us into this land."

III. — JEHOVAH'S DONATION — "And give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey."

I. — JEHOVAH'S DELIGHT — "If the LORD delight in us." "*If*." The term is legal and conditional, but the spirit thereof is free from all clogs and contingencies. We who are led by the Spirit of God into the enjoyment of His covenant verities and into the sweets of Divine communion, knowing that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and of death," know nothing of "*ifs, buts, or peradventures*," but can join heartily, intelligently, and spiritually with those lines,

"There's not an '*if*' to foul this stream.  
No peradventure here."

The "*if*" of the text was a glorious, evidential, demonstrative "*if*" in the minds of Caleb and Joshua. They realized the presence of their God, they discerned the guidance of His eye, and the defence of His arm. They acknowledged

"The Great First Cause of all events,  
Who gives decrees, ami ne'er repents.  
And Holy is His name."

Therefore having Him. and not the giants and the walled cities, not the dangers and the difficulties, in their eyes and in their hearts, Caleb and Joshua had a glorious view of the everlasting and unchanging delight which JEHOVAH ever had, has, or ever will have in the people of His choice.

"DELIGHT!" It is a precious word when seen in oneness with Jesus. "DELIGHT!" It fills the heart with "wonder, love, and praise." There is a glorious Gospel hymn in this book which I have tried lots of times to learn, but I cannot. I suppose there is too much glory in it. I will read the verse now playing round my heart, —

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator *delight*?  
Twas 'Even so, Father!' you ever must sing,  
'Because it seemed good in Thy sight.'"

That is the only reason given; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." What is there in me, a poor dead dog in myself, to call forth the notice, the regard, the esteem, the concern, and delight of a sovereign God? Why should He *delight* in me, a poor rebellious creature against every East wind of His providence which comes nipping my nice little buds of earthly delight and carnal confidence, and finding out the weak spots, the aches and pains of this poor frail tabernacle. What is there in me? Everything to cause Him to denounce and discard me; but "He brought me forth into a large place: He delivered me, *because He delighted in me*" (2 Sam. xxii. 20; Psa. xviii. 19).

Where has JEHOVAH this delight? See! It is on new covenant ground that He delights in the people of His choice. We obtain a glimpse of this in Pro v. viii. 30, 31: "Then I was by Him, as one

brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth: *and My delights were with the sons of men.*" JEHOVAH-JESUS' delights were with the elect sons of men when He was set up in covenant "from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."

"Oh, what love the Father bore us!  
Oh, how precious in His sight!  
When He gave the Church to Jesus,  
Jesus, His whole soul's delight."

"*If the LORD delight in us.*" Blessed be His Name, on resurrection ground He has demonstrated the fact that He does, without any *if, let, or hindrance*, delight in us. Look at that resurrection Psalm xvi., from which Peter quoted in His sermon on the day of Pentecost: "O My soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art My Lord: My goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, *in whom is all My delight.*" Has this ever been brought home with power to your hearts? Has it dropped with sweetness into your sad and sorrowful spirits? Then you can delight yourself in Him whose delight it is to show mercy to the miserable. "*My delight.*" That means all the delight of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. to the objects of eternal and unchanging love. But what is the nature of this delight? See! It is the delight of a loving Husband to the bride of His heart. Turn over with me to that marvellous declaration — almost too good to be true to the child of God — Isaiah lxii. 4, 5: "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; *for the LORD delighteth in thee*, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." It is as the delight of an affectionate mother over the offspring of her body, a part of herself. This delight none but a mother can know. Mark you! None but a godly mother can enter fully into the love and delight of a covenant God in Christ Jesus thus set forth (Isaiah liii. 11, lxvi. 13).

*"If the LORD delight in us."* It is to be remarked that those persons to whom God has a delight, and in whom He has wrought His delight by the Holy Ghost given unto them shedding abroad His love in their hearts, are sometimes discouraged in the presence of danger and doubting amid difficulties. Look at David humbled under the mighty hand of God and stripped of his stateliness. Under discipline because of an open evil; he enjoys not the delight of his God, yet he holds, like a ship to its anchor, to this his only hope of restoration. See 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26: "And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation. *But, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth Him good.*" In David we see true humility! Faith and fear bowing in acquiescence to the Divine will. Love in lowliness clinging to a Father's chastening hand. How many of us are there who can this morning, in the face of dangers and difficulties, discouragements, and doubts, say, "But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth Him good?" But, how precious it is in the enjoyment of the sweets of Divine restoration to know what that means in that precious couplet of Joseph Irons, —

"My *ifs* and *buts* I laid aside.  
And now in *shalls* and *wills* abide."

It is blessed to know that the Father, in the glass of His decrees, before the worlds were framed, looked with fond delight upon His dear Son who stood as the Surety of the covenant and the Substitute of His people, and at that very moment He saw them perfect as He was perfect, complete as He was complete, and comely as He was comely, according to that precious verse of dear old John Kent, —

"Then, in the glass of His decrees,

Christ and His bride appeared *an* One;  
Her sin, by imputation, His,  
Whilst she in spotless splendour shone."

The splendour of the God-Man's mediatorial glory which could never be tarnished. Though the Church fell in Adam, and though the elect children may sin and sin again, yet this is true concerning every one of them, —

"Unbelief, sloth, self-seeking, oft cause me to groan;  
Oh, how strong is the evil within.'  
But justified freely by grace through His blood,  
Though still sinning I'm free from all sin."

That sounds like Antinomianism! say you, How awful! Yes, the first part of that last line is truly awful and distressing to the living child of God: "*Though still sinning!*" while the latter part is exceeding precious as communicated by the power and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit: "*I'm free from all sin.*"

"*If the LORD delight in us.*" He delights in us: first, because He has *respect* to His covenant; second, because He has *redeemed* us by the blood of His covenant; and thirdly, because we are *regenerated* by the Witness to the covenant, His blessed Spirit. The Father's delight is in the people of His choice. The Son's delight is in the fruit of the travail of His soul The Spirit's delight is in those whose bodies of humiliation He has made His dwelling-place. It was the Father's delight to preserve His children all through the dark days of their unregeneracy, enmity, and rebellion. It was the Savior's delight to do the will of the Father in suffering obedience, and thus save His elect brethren. It is the Comforter's delight to quicken, encourage, and refresh the elect of the Father, and the redeemed of the Son, who are hated by Satan, despised by the world, and burdened by the flesh. The Father cannot cease to delight in the objects of His eternal election. The Redeemer cannot cease to delight in His redeemed jewels. The Sanctifier cannot cease to delight in those with whom

He has promised unceasing companionship throughout their earthly pilgrimage. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.' We are now brought to notice, —

II — JEHOVAH'S DETERMINATION — "Then He will bring us into this land." First of all we will notice *the land*. Men with poetic license have taken this land to represent the realms of eternal bliss, and I must confess that I do love that sweetly figurative hymn of Dr. Watts', —

"There is land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain."

Ofttimes in spirit I find myself humming it, yet it conveys not *the* truth concerning the land. Canaan, or Palestine, was called the *land of promise*; but the Canaanites were there, and doubts and fears in respect to the promise were experienced by the people of God in it. It was styled *the Holy land*, yet corruption and depravity were plentiful there. It was also called *a good land*, but wickedness, disobedience, and rebellion cropped up in wild profusion. Now mark! Up yonder there are no doubts, no fears, no corruption, no depravity, no disobedience, no rebellion!

Let us look at the land typified in the text in a threefold light: 1. The land of covenant relationship; 2. The land of Divine revelation; 3. The land of spiritual promise. Now, "If the LORD delight in us, He will bring us into" the experimental possession of these blessed privileges: 1. That He is our covenant God and Father in Christ, and has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ; 2. That the Father reveals His Son in us (Gal. i. 16), that the Son reveals the Father to us (Matt. xi. 27), and that by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation the Father and the Son are known, approved, and appreciated in their will, ways, and works (Eph. i. 17 — 23). Here we shall know and feel that the Canaanite is still in the land,

but Christ will be our Salvation; that the Assyrian will come into the land, but Christ will be our Peace; that doubts and fears will arise, but Christ will be our Confidence. Mighty giants, DISTRUST, DEJECTION, and DESPAIR, will defy; and walled cities, such as *Ignorance, Insincerity, and Infidelity*, will annoy; but, in the face of all, "*He will bring us in.*"

"*He will bring us in.*" Do you notice that! Our possession of covenant privileges is not by dint of any power, wit, will, or wisdom of ours. Oh, no! He must do it all. Read for yourselves Psa. xlv. i. 3: "Because Thou hadst a favour unto them!" Look also at Deut. ix. 1 — 6. It was because of His covenant determination, His choice of them that His own arm and eye guided them into the possession of their inheritance. So now, it is because He loved, chose, and redeemed His covenant people in Christ Jesus, that He brings them into the enjoyment of covenant relationship with Him, the blessedness of Divine revelation, and the possession of spiritual promises. Now let us look at a few characteristics of the land.

1. *A land of Divine revelation.* Gen. xii. 1: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto *a land that I shall show thee.*" Every nook and corner of Divine revelation must be known by the teaching of Father, Son, and Spirit, and by that alone.

2. *A land inalienable.* Lev. xxv. 23: "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." My dear friends, just look at the marginal reading of that verse, and may God bless it to you: "The land shall not be sold *to be quite cut off.*" Sometimes when dangers, difficulties, doubts, and devils abound, every promise seems to be cut off; but God has passed His word that "the land shall not be sold *to be quite cut off*" "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform, or *finish* it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6; see Rom. viii. 35 — 39).

3. *A land of covenant favour.* Psa. lxxxv. i: "LORD, Thou hast been favourable unto Thy land." Yes, God has marvellous favours in store for His people. All we have in Him is by favour (Psa. xlv. 3). Protected by favour (Psa. v. 12). Exalted in favour (Psa. lxxxix. 7). "Satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD" (Deut. xxxiii. 23). And mark!" By this I know that Thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me" (Psa. xli. 11).

4. *A fruitful land.* Lev. xxvi. 4: "The land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." Did you mark that word *fruit*? not fruits. "But *the fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23). "Being filled with *the fruits* of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. i. 11). All these shall spring up in His time and in their season, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. *A land of glory.* Psa. lxxxv. 9: "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; *that glory may dwell in our land.*" This is the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The glory of the covenant! the glory of His salvation! the glory of His righteousness! the glory of His intercession! the glory of His humiliation in His coming down to the wants and necessities of those who, through dangers and difficulties, are brought into the experimental possession of His favour. "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5). Into this land JEHOVAH is determined to bring all His loved, elect, and redeemed people. What know you of it? Now, a word or two, and I have done. III. — JEHOVAH'S DONATION — "And give it us." Not sell it, but *give it*. Not ours because we have paid for it, fought for it, or wrought for it. Not mine because of any right I have in myself, my doings, or performances. Oh, no! To His own people God gives, and He gives like a God. Who can declare the bounty, the benevolence, the liberality, the free-grace of our God? Himself! He gave His Son! He gives His Spirit! He gives His righteousness! He gives a new heart! He gives precious faith! He gives all things! See Rom. viii.

32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also *freely give us all things?*" All things, not some things. There are those, and preachers too, who torment many of God's children. They can *talk* free-grace, which deceives, for a time, God's very elect. With marvellous profusion they can utter words about election, and with astonishing fluency they can maintain the doctrine of particular redemption, and that grace alone can put a sinner in possession of spiritual privileges; *but* — But what? Well, the enjoyment of peace, comfort, and happiness, depends upon your faithfulness and consistency. Be off home with your faithfulness and consistency, such wont do for me. If my peace, comfort, and happiness depends upon my faithfulness and consistency, I should always be fighting, mourning, and miserable. No, my dear friends, our choice, salvation, justification, calling, standing, peace here, and glory yonder flow from the free, sovereign, uninfluenced grace of our God.

"*And give it us.*" "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. li. 12). All things freely given to His own, *in, by,* and through Christ Jesus, from the first communication of Divine life down here to the first communication of Divine glory up yonder. Blessed be His Name, all flowing from His free, unbought, spontaneous grace, and communicated by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. "If the Lord delight in us." He proved that He does in covenant. He proved that He does on Calvary. He proves that He does in the presence of the Father for us. He proves that He does by His tender sympathy. He does delight in us. He will bring us in. "He will give grace and glory."

"*A land which floweth with milk and honey.*" As I came up the passage this morning that word "*floweth*" came with much sweetness to my mind. We delight in the flowing of God's life and love in our hearts; which, mark you, is neither for the *sickening or surfeiting* of His children, but for their *sustenance and satisfaction*. That which His poor and afflicted ones need this morning He will

graciously supply, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Has He a waiting one in that gallery or anywhere in this place? See! He is a God ready to save thee from all thy dangers, difficulties, and doubts, and nigh at hand to bless thee with an introduction into the land of covenant favour, causing thee to sing, —

"He who hath brought me hitherto  
Will bring me all my journey through.  
And give me daily cause to raise  
New Ebenezers to His praise."

May the Lord add His blessing for His own Name's sake. Amen.

## XX. ABIGAIL.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning, Mat  
18th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats : and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail ; and she was a woman of good understanding, and of beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb."

— 1 Samuel xxv. 2, 3.

DAVID'S history, from the moment he was called from keeping his father's sheep to be the deliverer and king of Israel, to the day when he laid his weary head upon his dying pillow, confessing his faith, hope, and confidence in the covenant of JEHOVAH, reveals much that is truly typical of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In many parts of the New Testament we have direct allusions to David as a type of Jesus, and in the 23rd chapter of the second book of Samuel, we find, "David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue." The diligent, intelligent, and spiritual student of God's Word loves to trace out the mind and will of God

concerning His Son Jesus Christ in every part of Divine revelation, and in the history and character of David he has a wide field for inquiry and observation. Was David a shepherd? He reminds us of Jesus the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. Was he a King? He speaks himself of God's Christ, the anointed King in Zion. Was he a man of war? He points to our Lord who fought the battles of His people. David was a man peculiarly blessed, and distinguished as "the man after God's own heart" — that is to say, he was a favorite of JEHOVAH, a man on whom the heart of God was eternally fixed, a man concerning whom God had designs of mercy, love, and grace, yet he oftentimes gave lamentable proof that he had a heart and disposition of his own vastly contrary and wonderfully antagonistic to the heart of his God.

But let us look at the similarity existing between the type and the Antitype. The moment David was manifested to the public gaze as an object of the Lord's special favour, persecutions and trials beset him from the most unexpected quarters. No sooner was the Son revealed as the Head and Representative of grace, and the Surety of the covenant, than Satan questioned his high prerogative. Was David anointed King over Israel? Saul's inveterate enmity was manifested against him. Turn to Matt. iii. 16, 17: "And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him. This was the true fulfilment of that which He spake by Isaiah, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD hath anointed Me" (chap. lxi. 1). It was the fact recorded in Acts x. 38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him." Satan hates God's Christ, and cannot but level his hatred against Him. Now having read of His anointing at the banks of the Jordan, and the Father's approving voice from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," let us notice what immediately follows: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." As it was true in the experience of the great Head of the Church, so it has been, so it is,

and so it will be true in the experience of every individual member of His mystical body, that, as the favours of a covenant God are revealed, the frowns of Satan and the world are sure to be encountered. If a favorite of heaven is brought into the presence of the King cleansed, clothed, and crowned, Satan is sure to be at his right hand to resist him.

The few preceding chapters reveal the deep-rooted enmity and spleen of Saul against David. In the twenty-fourth we are informed, "And it came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats." Here Satan's enmity in the person of Saul was manifested against God's favorite — against God's anointed. At the end of the chapter we see David magnanimous in sparing the life of his enemy, Saul. Now look at the commencement of the twenty-fifth chapter: "And Samuel died, and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah." Saul the persecutor spared. Samuel the prophet taken home! We find this to be the case oftentimes; the highly favoured one whose life has been a continued round of usefulness to the tried and tempted saints of God, whose testimony has been greatly blessed to the waiting hearts of God's mourning ones, whose faithful, fearless, and feeling enunciations of truth have braced up the fearing ones in Zion with hope and encouragement, is taken home right in the midst of his usefulness when God's Zion appears dependent upon him for instruction, comfort, and edification, while the enemies of God's Christ, and the haters of God's people, are left in the world to carry out the devices of their father the devil.

At the time of Samuel's death, "David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran." And David heard that Nabal did shear his sheep, and sent out ten young men to greet him, who were treated churlishly by him. The young men informed David of the arrogant conduct of the churl; David was indignant, and vowed vengeance.

Now there was among the servants of Nabal a sensible young fellow, who carried the report of these circumstances to Abigail, whose marvellous prudence and timely interposition allayed the wrath of David, and saved the house of Nabal from impending ruin. In the narrative of these interesting circumstances we find the portion which I have read as my text, and may we, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, extract some little instruction, comfort, and consolation therefrom. We will notice —

- I. — *Nabal, in his character and doings, as a fit representative of the world.*
- II. — *Abigail representing the Church.*
- III. — *Abigail's knowledge of David.*
- IV. — *Abigail's glory in union with David.*

I. — Nabal, In His Character And Doings, As A Fit Representative OF THE WORLD. Look at him in his name and its signification; Abigail said to David, "Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: *for as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name (FOOL — see margin), and folly is with him.*" Now mark! Nabal a fool! Is not this the character of all mankind by nature? Certainly it is. All fools, and filled with folly in reference to Christ the Wisdom of God, and the glorious revelation given of Him in the written Word. Fools rushing heedlessly upon the fiery waves of destruction, sporting with death, and determined to be damned. "*But the man was churlish and evil in his doings.*" Does not this represent the surly, niggardly, selfish spirit abounding on every hand in this wretched sinful world? Selfishness reigns! Look where we will self rears its haughty and defiant head. In religious circles one cannot bear to be behind another. In earthly things the heart of the child of God is sickened with the incessant cry concerning rights and privileges. If we look to the political world, we behold naught but the strife of parties as to who shall be the greatest. Survey the professional world, and emulation is rife. We find no fault with just emulation, but as we behold the vast majority of doctors, lawyers, musicians,

and parsons, we are pained with the fact that each considers himself better than the rest, and the attempt at disparaging and lowering every one but *self*. Nabal is an exemplification of that selfishness and churlishness which appears in every one of the sons and daughters of Adam.

But let us look at this in Nabal's conduct toward the young men sent to him by David, and notice his insolent, insinuating, and reproachful answer: "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall *I*?" O, this great *I*! "Shall *I* then take *my* bread, and *my* water, and *my* flesh that *I* have killed for *my* shearers, and give it unto men whom *I* know not whence they be?" Just like the world! Now turn to 1 John iii. 1: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God: *therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not.*" Are we, as the name of David denotes, beloved of God? Are we called by the Father, through the Son, in the witnessings of the Holy Ghost, "the sons of God?" Then Satan will hate and assault, and the world will insult, and count us as the offscouring of all things. When David was anointed and known to be the future king of Israel by the will of God, then *Satan, in Saul*, persecuted him, and the world, *in Nabal*, ridiculed him. "*Who is David? who is this son of Jesse?*" Why, my dear friends, I have experienced this treatment again and again, and all through the declaration of God's glorious Gospel and the marvellous sovereignty in the

Preservation in the midst of this naughty world of an eternally loved and elect people, *to* whom He will manifest His glory, *in* whom He will reveal His covenant love, and whom He will bring into blessed oneness with Himself in eternal glory. O, says the profane and *pious* world, you consider yourself to be something better and different to other people that God should favour you and not others! In Adam we do not, for in him there is no difference. In ourselves we do not, for we feel ourselves to be the vilest of mortals. But if God has distinguished me from others, if He has left some to love sin and

practise it, while He has taught me to hate and avoid it; if He has left some to hate and despise His Christ, while He has brought me to love and honour Him, I cannot help but acknowledge and adore His distinguishing and discriminating grace and mercy.

All through the Scriptures we find the same Nabal-spirit brought to light and exposed. Go to Job xxi. 7: "Wherefore do the wicked live?" Job accurately describes the wicked reprobates of his day: "They spend their days *in mirth*, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. *What is the Almighty that we should serve Him f and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?*" What is God's Christ that we should bow to Him? What is the Lord's Anointed that we should acknowledge Him? Such is the audacious language of every reprobate under the sun. The natural man can bear or tolerate any worldly or devilish thing; but God's Christ, God's salvation, God's truth, and God's people must have no place. If you desire further confirmation of this fact, turn with me to Exodus v. 2. Moses and Aaron declare God's mind to Pharaoh, when he insultingly cries, "*Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.*" Now turn to 2 Kings xviii. 35. Rabshakeh blasphemously rages against Israel's covenant God: "Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, *that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?*" But do notice the conduct of the people: they "held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, Answer him not." You may rest assured that if we are brought into straits and difficulties, and under them to bear the world's persecuting taunts, our wisdom will be to hold our peace, wait God's will, and watch His hand. But the world's impudence, ignorance, and enmity reached its climax at Calvary. See how the disciples met together with one accord blessing and praising God for His delivering hand. They shout, "Of a truth against thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy

counsel determined before to be done." This all in accordance with David's prophecy: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*" (Acts iv. 25 — 28; Psalm ii. 1 — 3). This is just the state of the religious and irreligious world in our days. Every grade of society combine in denouncing and ignoring the sovereignty of that God who reigns over all, and gives to each his place and portion. Senators, bishops, priests, and deacons, with the masses at their back, would break the bands of JEHOVAH'S unalterable covenant of grace, cast away into everlasting oblivion the very mention of the cords of electing and predestinating love, and hurl from the face of Divine revelation the fact of every son and daughter of the Lord Almighty being bound together in the bundle of life with the LORD their God. But it can't be done. The attempt is "a vain thing."

Now let us notice the consummate selfishness of Nabal, as described in his own words: "Shall *I* then take *my* bread, and *my* water, and *my* flesh that *I* have killed for *my* shearers, and give it unto men, whom *I* know not whence they be?" You see how great *I* puts in an appearance here. *I* stands up in direct opposition to God's sovereignty, and in bitter enmity to God's Anointed. Did you ever notice the language of Pharaoh as recorded in Ex. xv. 9! The enemy said, "*I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.*" This is self-will and self-assertion with a vengeance; but notice God's determination: "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." Now mark well the boasting language of Lucifer in Isaiah xiv. 13, 14: "*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*" But what is God's declaration concerning him?" Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." Here is

one who, in his ignorance and insolence against the people of God, arrogates to himself equality with Deity; but, human nature in its pride and enmity against God would never be satisfied with anything short of absolute control over the great JEHOVAH. Pharaoh's great "I," Rabshakeh's arrogant "I," Lucifer's proud "I," and Nabal's niggardly "my," give lamentable proof of hearts too full of self even to tolerate a God equal to themselves. There is one point in the history of Nabal which I desire you not to overlook. You will find it at the end of the third verse; "*and he teas of the house of Caleb.*" Caleb was a man who followed God fully, was loved of his God with an everlasting love, and yet here is one of his family who proves to us that grace does not run in the blood. Some of us know this to our cost; we know our inability to communicate grace to those who are near and dear to our hearts, and can with aching heads and sorrowful hearts join with David, and say, "Although my house be not so with God," for there are those who manifest the spirit of Nabal, but not the grace of Caleb.

In meditating upon these phases and features of the world, worldlings, and worldliness, do not think that I have done so in a spirit of railing; do not think that I wish to cast a single stone at any person who may be left out of JEHOVAH'S secret. I know something of what that means: "For who maketh thee to differ?" or, according to the margin, "Who distinguisheth thee?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). God, in His rich and distinguishing grace, has wrought that in my heart's experience which I believe is found in the experience of every truly-begotten child of His, and which you find in Psalm xxxvi. 1: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." Where does the transgression of the wicked speak? The Psalmist says, and so do I, "*within my heart?*" Mark! That is not merely from the lips of defiant Pharaoh, blasphemous Rabshakeh, arrogant Lucifer, and churlish Nabal; but "*within my heart.*" That is, there is as much pride, enmity, and rebellion in my heart to cause me to say it with my lips as there is in the most incorrigible reprobate — just as much; and it is only His distinguishing grace that brings me to His feet adoring

Him, bowing to His will, and acknowledging His truth. Archbishop Cranmer's translation of the Psalms renders this verse thus: "My heart showeth me the wickedness of the ungodly." My heart, as laid open and bare, by the power of the Holy Ghost, showeth me the enmity, folly, churlishness, and pride of the ungodly, and that in myself I am not one whit better than Pharaoh, Rabshakeh, Lucifer, or Nabal. Who can tell the sorrow and distress experienced by the God-fearing at the discovery of the irrecoverable enmity to God of poor proud human nature in that world of iniquity — *my own heart*? Nabal's ignorance and pride caused him to despise David, insult David's messengers, and reject David's peace. Does not the world manifest its madness in the same manner toward God's Christ? Certainly. Nabal's ignorance kept him in the dark in respect to his insulting and casting out as evil the very men who were his protection and security. The world hates and rejects God's elect, who are "the salt of the earth," and for whose sake the earth is preserved from destruction. We now approach a very blessed aspect of this interesting subject.

II. — Abigail Representing The Church in three particulars: — 1. The meaning of her name, Abigail; *the gift of the Father*. Who can fail to see in her a striking figure of the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife! What does her name teach? It teaches distinguishing and discriminating grace bestowed by the Father before the worlds were framed. It suggests to our minds the glorious truth that God's election of His eternally loved people to be the bride of His Son was unconditional, personal, eternal, and irrevocable. See how often the Church as "*the gift of the Father*" is presented to Him in that precious prayer recorded in John xvii. In six verses, but really seven times, our blessed Lord and Saviour, our all-prevailing Intercessor, lays His people before the gaze of the Father under that appellation .or denomination. Mark!" He should give eternal life to *as many as Thou hast given Him*" (ver. 2). "I have manifested Thy Name unto *the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me*" (ver. 6). "I pray not for the world, but for *them which Thou hast (riven Me*" (ver. 9). "Holy Father, keep

through Thine own Name *those whom Thou hast given Me*" (ver. 11). "*Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept*" (ver. 12). "Father, I will that they also, *whom -Thou has given Me*, be with Me" (ver. 24). O what wondrous grace!

Now, let us look at the declaration which fell from His sacred lips concerning His sheep, in John x. 27 — 29: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any" (the word "*man*," is in italics, and ought not to be there). See! It means any sin, any folly, any evil, any devil, or any amount of these combined. "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. *My Father which gave them Me*, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." *The gift of the Father!* A marvellous wonder it is to me to think that though a poor, wretched, and rebellious creature against His mind, will, and authority, yet eternally loved of my God, and given by Him before all worlds to the Son, to be preserved in Him through the dark days of my unregeneracy, upheld by Him through the trying days of my pilgrimage, and at last introduced by Him, my Glory-Bearer, into His own glory-home.

2. "*And she was a woman of good understanding*" A woman of that kind is worth having. Yet how often we find such women wedded to some of the greatest simpletons in creation: and you may depend upon this, when Abigail was wedded to Nabal, either her understanding was not in lively exercise or she was sorely deceived. But let us pass from the representative to the represented. Have you a good understanding? See! "And we know that the Son of God is come." Where is He come to? To my heart and blessed me with His salvation! To my head and told me He would be my Wisdom! To my house and taught me that I cannot manage my own affairs, promised to manage them for me. and gave me strength and wisdom to leave all my concerns in His gracious hands. What! Do you call that a good understanding? Yes, you may rest assured of this, when a sinner ceases from his own fleshly will, determination, and desire,

and leaves all in the hands of a gracious and compassionate Saviour that sinner is possessed of a good understanding. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." Yes! *Know Him* as my Surety in covenant before all worlds! *Know Him* as my Substitute on Calvary's tree! *Know Him* as my Advocate in the presence of the Father! *Know Him* as my Brother born for adversity, for He has revealed Himself to me many times as such! *Know Him* as my Counselor in perplexity! *Know Him* as my Eyes to guide me in distress. *Know Him* as my Arm to guard me from all evil! You see I cannot live without Him! "and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This!" — this gracious Person who took us to Himself and into whose gracious hands we have committed all our concerns — "*This is the true God and eternal life.*" Well, many of God's poor children though in possession of a *good* understanding bestowed by God Himself, yet oftentimes they falter and fall. Hence the necessity for that prayer which you find in Eph. i. 17, 18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." I want mine to be enlightened this morning as much as ever I did in my life that "I may know what is the nope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

You read also in Luke xxiv., how the two disciples walked with the Lord Jesus on the way to Emmaus, and His words of Sure love and fond affection gave them a spiritual heart-burn. He made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread; but the moment they know Him, behold, He was gone! "And they said one to another, Did not our heart bum within us, as He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" He appeared to them again!" And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. *Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.*" We to whom He has given an

understanding need a spiritual Interpreter, a Divine Expounder, to clear away all doubts from our minds and to cause our cold hearts to burn with His love, and this can only be by giving to us a bright and blessed apprehension of Himself. "*She was a woman of good understanding.*" In these days of error and sentimentality we have an awful amount of pandering to the whims and fancies, the foibles and follies of the people. "Preach the Word," is the Divine injunction! Preach my experience, or, that which suits me, is the demand of the age. Instead of "the sincere milk of the Word," *soothing syrup* is dealt out; and you may rest assured that such is not good to keep [people in a healthy state. Look at JEHOVAH'S gracious promise to His People — Jer. iii. 15: "And I will give you pastors after Mine own heart, *which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*" And, blessed be God's holy Name, He will fulfill His gracious promise; and though His children may be deficient in apprehension and dull of comprehension, He will see to it that they shall be blessed with wise and understanding hearts.

3. "*And of a beautiful countenance.*" O what glorious truth we have here. In Abigail we see the Church prefigured. Before all time she stood in all the beauty of her Husband and Lord.

"Then, in the glass of His decrees,  
Christ and His bride appeared as one;  
Her sin, by imputation, His,  
While she in spotless splendour shone."

But in time the Church fell into sin and disgrace. Where then is her beauty? Look at that glorious declaration of grace, pity, and compassion recorded in the first part of Ezekiel xvi. The Church is represented under the similitude of a wretched infant, as cast out, polluted, trodden under foot. But God says, "Now when I passed by thee, behold, thy time was the time of love."

"*Thy time*" the time of thy helplessness, the time of thy baseness, corruption, and depravity, the time when sin and Satan had marred

the fair beauty of thy countenance — then, I took thee, washed thee, clothed thee, adorned thee, "and thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.' "*Thy beauty!*" The experience of the child of God is often one of gloom through the temptations and assaults of Satan and the burden of indwelling sin and corruption, and no other confession can be extracted from the burdened soul than, "*lam black;*" but the judgment of the Bridegroom from which He can never swerve is, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." But who can conceive what she will be when, in His everlasting kingdom and glory, He presents her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish?

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood  
From wrinkle and from blemish free:  
Loved with the dateless love of God,  
And blest by the Great Sacred Three."

Beautiful in the beauty of Jesus! Comely in the comeliness of Jesus! Perfect in the perfections of Jesus! Complete in Him! O what a mercy it is for us to know that the LORD laid upon Him all our ugliness, all our sin upon Him whose visage was marred more than any man, and that all the beauty of His innocence, all the beauty of His meekness, all the beauty of His righteousness, all the beauty of His lowliness, all made ours experimentally by the power and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, and to know what that means: "*As He is, so are we in this world,*" "*Of a beautiful countenance!*" A sense of sin mars our cheerfulness and saddens the heart. Joseph in prison saw the sadness of the souls of the butler and baker through their countenance. So the countenance of God's child is marred, and sadness is depicted thereon, through the convicting grace of God the Holy Ghost; the knees are feeble, the hands hang down, the eyes are sunken, the soul is sorrowful; but a good word from the lips of the King makes the heart glad and the Oil of Gladness makes the face to shine. Marvellous grace! Wondrous kindness! The Church in Christ

meets and fulfils all JEHOVAH'S highest expectations, being graced with all the perfections which from the ages of eternity He designed for her.

III. — Abigail's Knowledge Of David. She is bound to Nabal (the world), but the hour is approaching when the bonds will be broken, Nabal dead, and she united in wedded love to David. See how she beholds in David the fugitive the future king of Israel. He typifies Jesus who is still despised and rejected of men. But how came she by this knowledge? God's Word is silent. The silence of Scripture is suggestive and significant. Listen!" Father, I thank Thee, Lord of heaven and earth,. because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 25 — 27). "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" (Psalm xxv. 14). O how blessed to know something of His grace whom the world knows not, and to wait for brighter manifestations of His beauty and blessedness! Notice this! Abigail's heart was not for Nabal. The new heart of the child of God is not for the world, which knows nothing of the joys and sorrows of living souls, and all it contains can never satisfy the cravings of that heart which experiences the absence of Jesus. Such an one loves to tell Him something of its knowledge of His present grace and future glory.

Abigail made haste with her presents to meet David; but "*she told not her husband Nabal.*" Why should she? He would only mock and deride! How like the world. Our meetings and communications with our spiritual David must be, and are, unknown to the world. "And when Abigail saw David she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid speak in thine audience, and hear the words

of thine handmaid." Mark well her humility and profound respect: she had been taught something of his worth, and addresses the hated and despised one as "*my lord*." Is Jesus revealed in thee? In secret, in the wilderness thou wilt love to own Him and speak to Him as "My Lord and my God." Abigail presents her offering, but mark her words, "Let it be even given to the young men that follow my lord." See! those who have a good understanding in the ways of the Lord are truly anxious for the well-being of, and attentive to the wants and necessities of, those who are spiritually one with our spiritual David, who will acknowledge the same before assembled worlds: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. xxv. 40). Notice her petition: "When the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, *then remember thine handmaid*." This reminds us of the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." In the dying Saviour the brokenhearted thief sees a glorious King, and expresses his hope in a kingdom which could never be moved. The cry from the anxious hearts of favoured sinners is, "Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people. O visit me with Thy salvation." David blest God, blest Abigail's advice, and blest her. "And David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house ; see I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." Is not that like Jesus? JEHOVAH is blessed in Him, and all in union with Him shall be eternally blessed. We now briefly notice, —

IV. — Abigail's Glory In Union With David. Just notice Nabal's death (verses 36' — 38.) He was feasting and drunken when judgment came suddenly upon him. This reminds us of Asaph's experience recorded in Psa. lxxiii. 3 — 20. A child of God in adversity not knowing how to make ends meet and tie, while the wicked prosper. But such are brought into desolation in a moment, and are utterly consumed with terrors. As it was with the antediluvians when the flood swept them away; as it was with the Sodomites when fire from heaven destroyed them ; so it will be with

the world when Christ shall come to take His ransomed bride home to glory. Reprobates who have made the hearts of the righteous sad, and who have made the souls of elect ones to tremble, are taken away in their wickedness, while the objects of their cruelty and scorn are left as monuments and trophies of the sovereign grace and preserving mercy of Israel's God and King. Nabal is dead, and Abigail, who saw in David rejected Israel's future king — in David persecuted God's anointed, is now one with Him in his kingdom. So is it with us when the world, self, law, and sin are dead to us by the death of Jesus, then we rest in His love, lean on His bosom, and live in His life. As one with Him we suffer with Him here; but we shall be glorified together — bound with Him in the bundle of life. Like Abigail, we are ready to perform the most menial service for those in whose walk and conversation the marks of the Man of sorrows are seen, and the sufferings of the suffering Saviour are revealed. "And David sent and communed with Abigail, and she became his wife. And she arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, *Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.*" Well, blessed be His holy Name, in that glorious day when the Son of Man shall sit as the Shepherd-King, and divide between elect sheep and reprobate goats, He will then acknowledge the fruits and works of His own grace — "Ye gave Me meat — ye gave Me drink — ye took Me in — ye clothed Me — ye visited Me — ye came to Me!" O Lord, when? We do not know that we ever did a good work in all our life!" Inasmuch as you were a comfort to that sorrowing one of Mine — refreshed that weary one, and had a smile for that poor outcast when the world and hypocrites frowned upon him, 'ye have done it unto Me. Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen and Amen.

# XXI. "A MAN IN CHRIST."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,  
May 20th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"A man in Christ."

— 2 Cor. xii. 2.

THROUGHOUT the two epistles to the Church of God at Corinth, the apostle Paul endeavours, by the teaching of the ever-blessed Spirit, and the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to give full proof of his apostleship. His reason for so doing was because of the many dissensions, divisions, and schisms, or as they are styled in the margin of the third chapter and third verse, *factions*; these arising from partiality and undue attachment to certain preachers and teachers. This attachment sprang from the flesh and was excited by some outward peculiarity of the preacher. You will see something of this in the first chapter of the first epistle and ver. 12: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas" — and others taking higher ground! Mark that expression, *taking higher ground*; not put into the experimental possession of it by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit, but presumptuously taking it, say, "*and I of Christ.*" Jam more highly favoured. *I* am more deeply taught. *I* have clearer views. *I* have brighter apprehensions. You see how the accursed "*great I*" will assert itself even in connection with sacred, solemn, and eternal

things. At the latter part of the chapter the apostle states this remarkable fact, that the calling of God's elect is not through bright and shining instruments; but "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;" then you find the two words "*are called*" in italics, which, if omitted, the passage shows that the calling is not of the wise, mighty, or noble to the work of the ministry; but the calling of the elect of God by His grace and power through foolish, weak, base, and questionable instruments. The theme of the chapter is that of ministry. Look at ver. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Not *of* Paul with all his elegance! Not *of* Apollos with all his eloquence! Not *of* Cephas with all his zeal!" But *of* Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who *of* God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Now there is something very blessed when we are brought to see these things as a whole, all of a piece, according to God's revelation of them. The true-born child of God mourns, ay, and weeps in secret because of the contentions and factions in Zion; yet it is consolatory to know the mind of the Spirit in this matter as recorded in the words of the apostle (chap. xi. 19): "For there must be also heresies (margin — *sects*) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." How are the approved made manifest? It is by their abiding' by the stuff. What stuff? That which a covenant God has provided in the covenant of His grace — the election of a people in the unalterable *purpose* of the Father, the redemption of the same in *purchase* by the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, and the regeneration of every elect vessel of mercy by the *power* of the Holy Ghost. Father, Son, and Spirit glorified, exalted, and honoured in the choice, salvation, preservation, and glorification of an eternally loved people. Abiding through evil report and good report by the faithful ministry of the Word, in which are set forth the Father's everlasting love *for* His elect, the Son's eternal identity *with* His redeemed, and the Spirit's unceasing work *in* His quickened and called ones. That stuff which God sends by the Son of His love for

the comfort and edification of His children through the ministry of His own commissioned, qualified, and sent servants.

The greater part of these two epistles to the Church at Corinth is taken up in vindicating the commission and qualification of Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ, which was challenged and questioned by false apostles and teachers in the corrupt Church of Corinth. Mark that expression: *the corrupt Church of Corinth!* Yet the apostle never counsels separation or division. What! Does he not counsel them to come out of that Church? No! You cannot find a word to that effect. He writes against sects, separations, schisms, and strifes in the Church, and counsels to unity with the one risen and glorified Head. It is no small mercy to have to do graciously with Him in whom all the brethren dwell together in unity; He who arranges and settles all things well for the good of His own Church even in the midst of the wildest confusion, corrupt practices, and damnable doctrines which assail *the Church*. In writing upon these things the apostle directs the minds of the Corinthian Christians to the fact of his call by the Great Head to the apostolic office. He abides by his separation, call, commission, and qualification to preach the Gospel of the grace of God by the anointing of God the ever-blessed Spirit. But certain persons, "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ," ridiculed the apostleship of Paul. These were *converted characters*, but they knew nothing of God's regenerating grace. See! Here is conversion without regeneration!" 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. xi. 13 — 15). Ay, and such parties have not yet ceased to be. Shoals abound who are loud in their demands for conversion, education, improvement, reformation, and restoration, but are utterly destitute of the Spirit's regenerating grace and the resurrection-life and power of Jesus. Such can boast of transformations, visions, and raptures; they can talk of clear revelations, sweet visitations, and deep experiences; they can speak of the spot, the day, the hour, the moment of their frames, feelings,

and fancies, while the poor child of the living God who thinks upon His Name (Mal. iii. 16), desires to fear Him (Neh. i. 11), and sighs, "Let me hear Thy voice" (Song ii. 14), is thoroughly staggered at such gushing and glowing language. But the apostle comes down upon such persons with a sweeping censure at the commencement of the chapter from which I have read the words of the text: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." As much as to say, Do these lying apostles glory in their experiences and exploits? I could, if left to make a fool of myself, glory more than they all. Do they boast of visions and revelations? So can I. I had one above fourteen years ago. Fourteen years ago! Paul, hast thou been faithful to thy commission in keeping that vision or revelation secret for so long a time? Let me ask the preachers or teachers of the present day who are blessed or cursed with visions and manifestations — mark what I say, *blessed or cursed* with visions or manifestations — Would you let fourteen years, or fourteen days, or fourteen hours pass away without making such known again and again? I know you would not. The true minister of the Gospel needs to keep a jealous eye upon himself, his words, his motives, and desires, knowing that Satan is on the watch to gain an advantage over him. Visions, revelations, manifestations, and even blessings are used by him to exalt the creature, which ever would exhibit itself instead of making known the perfections, beauty, and blessedness of Christ. The poor, tried, and tempted children of God, in looking up to the deeply taught and highly favoured are bowed down with sorrow and regret, and from the depths of anxiety and perplexity they sigh and groan to be brought to possess an experience which God never designed for them. But what saith the apostle? I can glory in visions and revelations! I could boast of an experience which would make you stare and wonder; but that is not my business. It is mine to exalt Him who has endeared Himself to me in delivering me from the power of Satan, sin, and self. It is mine to uphold His honour and dignity who has made His beauty and comeliness mine in sweet experimental possession. It is mine when I stand up in His Name so to speak that His voice of love may be heard speaking pardon and peace to broken and contrite

souls; that He may be seen by the eye of God-wrought faith in the beauty of His Person, the perfection of His work, the efficacy of His sufferings, the solace of His sympathy, and in the prevelancy of His intercession up yonder, in that glory which He will reveal to His own when they are all safely gathered around Him in the Father's many-mansioned house.

In dwelling upon this important subject, Paul directs the minds of the Corinthian Christians to the fact that he knew "*a man in Christ*" above fourteen years ago. Notice the manner in which he introduces this fact. He says, "*I knew.*" Why does he speak in the third person and past tense? Because when true humility reigns the first person is hidden. When God's grace is in active exercise by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, "*great I*" must retire. The apostle, as guided by the blessed Spirit, though speaking of himself, says, "*I knew a man in Christ.*" We will now notice the words of the text in three parts: —

- I. — "A MAN."
- II. — "CHRIST."
- III. — "IN CHRIST."

I. — Look at that expression — "A MAN." It is a mercy in looking through the Scriptures of truth to see the apostles and prophets standing in the same position, and on the same level with all the rest of God's tried and tempted ones. You see this in the case of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, as recorded in Acts xiv. When the people saw the wonderful miracle which had been wrought upon the lame man, they brought out oxen, and would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, thinking that Barnabas was Jupiter and Paul was Mercury — two heathen gods; but this was immediately repelled, and the people rebuked thus, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also *are men* of like passions with you." You see there was not a particle of difference naturally between Paul and the veriest idolater in Lystra. The people who would have worshipped Paul and Barnabas were idolaters, and over them Paul claimed no superiority. Grace alone

makes a difference, for the seeds of idolatry and of every sin are in us, and all that is lacking for their budding and blooming is time and opportunity. Look again, James v. 17: "Elias was *a man* subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." "*A man subject to like passions as we are.*" That is a marvellous expression when we view it in connection with the circumstance named by the apostle. "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain." Don't you think that is a nice prayer for a man of God to pray? A prayer that the clouds might not drop their fatness, that the earth might not yield her increase, and that famine might desolate the land, and this the prayer of a man of God? Yes! But he "was a man subject to like passions as we are;" so says the Holy Ghost by James. Look again at Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 8, 9. John, who had fallen at the feet of the Ancient of Days, at the feet of the God-Man, here confesses, "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." John "was *a man* subject to like passions as we are." Paul was *a man*, and, blessed be God's holy Name, he gives ample evidence of the same; but before we dwell upon this, let us look upon *man* as he appears in the pages of inspiration.

You find the creation of man recorded in Gen. i. 26, 27. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." What! After the shape of God? After the form of God? No! God has no shape! God has no form! What then does this image or likeness mean? See! It means that form or model set up in the councils of eternity, which the God-Man Mediator should assume in the fulness of time. So you see that super-creation councils had respect to new creation work. Adam in his form as a man was made like to that object which should be formed in the womb of the virgin by the power and operation of God the Holy Ghost. Adam was formed in all the perfection of human nature, the detail of which is given in Gen. ii. 7:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Read the next chapter carefully at your leisure, where you will see man fallen. The inspired comment upon that fact you will find in Rom. v. 12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Here we have Adam's fall clearly stated. Fall from what? From grace? Never! From the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings which were bestowed on the Church in Christ before all worlds? No! But from his high estate of earthly perfection and privilege. See! 1 Cor. xv. 45 — 47 : "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from heaven." The first man before his fall enjoyed the blessings of an earthly paradise, but experienced not the blessings of the covenant revealed in the glorious declaration of the Gospel of the grace of God, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Adam fell from his high estate of earthly dignity, but never from the grace bestowed upon him in Christ Jesus.

Now throughout the whole of the Scriptures of truth concerning man, what find we? Man fallen, man depraved, man corrupt, man a sinner, and an enemy of God. Man altogether and always evil (Gen. vi. 5). Man. What is thy name? Sinner. What is thy nature? Sin. What are thy best doings? Sins. Man at his best estate is altogether lighter than vanity and enmity against God (Psa. lxxii. 9; Rom. viii. 7). Such was Paul. Look at him like an infuriated wild beast, for such is the description given of him at the commencement of Acts ix.: "And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Just read the account he gives of himself in Acts xxvi. 11: "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Here you see what elect, redeemed, and regenerate man is in himself. Marvellous fact!

An elect vessel of mercy persecuting, and persecuted saints blaspheming! Saints brought to such a pitch of annoyance, distress, irritability, and perplexity that they blasphemed! Lord, what is man? Some persons speak of the apostle Paul as if he were the paragon of Christian perfection. Papists have canonized Peter as chief of saints, while Protestants have canonized Paid as chief of the apostles; but the truly enlightened sinner looks off from all to Jesus (Heb. xii. 2). Look to Paul as a pattern of unswerving obedience and fidelity? Never! A greater mistake could not possibly be made. Fidelity to Jesus when he had a vow and shaved his head? (Acts xviii. 18). Fidelity when, to allay the prejudice of the Jews, he circumcised Timothy? (Acts xvi. 3). Look through his epistle to the Churches of Galatia, where you will find him by the Holy Ghost condemning as antagonistic to the Gospel of Christ the very ceremony which, in a moment of weakness, he performed upon Timothy. Ah, my friends, we have no true pattern, no perfect example, but in the only true Man that ever lived, the Man who was not shapen in iniquity nor conceived in sin, the MAN CHRIST JESUS. Here we obtain a blessed view of the subject. Those out of Christ are not worthy of the name of man. The true and sincere milk of human kindness flows not in the bosoms of such, and only those who are brought by the Holy Ghost into experimental union with Jesus are worthy of the name of man. Let us pass on from the dark side of the subject to consider,

II. — CHRIST. A variety of titles are given in the Scriptures of truth to our great and glorious Master. In quoting these titles much confusion oftentimes exists through attributing acts of Deity to humanity. God's Christ is the union of the two natures, God and Man, in the person of our adorable Lord and Master. He is God over all, blessed for ever. He is Man obedient unto death. When, as the Christ of God, He is revealed to our understanding and embraced in our affections, we know Him not as God only, nor Man only, but God and Man one Christ. Look through the Scriptures! *Here* they speak of His Deity, and *there* of His humanity. But other portions speak of His complexity as God-Man Mediator. Here Socinians and

Unitarians err. Through lack of discerning this, much confusion has existed in the minds of many of God's children, and awful error has been rife in the so-called Christian Church. Turn with me to Col. i. 15, 16 : "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." Was God the firstborn of every creature? No! Were all things created by a creature? No! But as our hearts embrace and adore God's Christ, God and Man in covenant union with His people from all eternity, we rejoice that He who is the firstborn of every creature is also God the Creator of all things, and that God the Creator of all things is Emmanuel, God with us. As God only, no created being, however pure, could claim kindred, or stand in union with Him; but as God and man in one Person, He fills with grace and truths all thing ascribed to Him in covenant, creation, redemption, grace, and glory.

You see the very same in Hebrews i.: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.' Here we see Him in His co-equality and co-eternity with the Father; yet in His appointment to the heirship of all things we cannot look upon Him only as God, for as God all things were His. We see Him as "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins." "*By Himself*." We must be careful here, for as God in co-existence, co-equality, and co-eternity with the Father, He had no blood, and without blood there is no atonement, and no remission of sin; but as God-Man Mediator of His Church and people He shed His precious blood, He purged away their sins, and now He sits at the right hand of the Father to carry to a successful issue every gracious and glorious thing concerning them. Now look still further at Him in the quotation from Psalm xlv. 6, 7 : "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God hath

anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." This is Christ the Anointed of the Father. Christ the Head set apart with His members. Christ the Bridegroom-Elect with His bride. See!" For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). Christ personal for Christ mystical set apart, anointed, appointed to His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King, which He ever will maintain until "He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father," and God is All in all (1 Cor. xv. 23 — 28).

Look now at the three anointings to office in Old Testament Scripture. To the prophetic office, as we see in the case of Elisha, who was anointed prophet in the room of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 16). To the kingly office, as we see in the case of David (1 Sam. xvi. 13). To the priestly office, as we see in the case of Aaron (Exod. xl. 13 — 16). Now God's Christ is the anointed Prophet of God to His people — that is, He is the only appointed and duly qualified Revealer of the Father's will, the only true Expounder of the Father's Word to the hearts of His people. He is also God's anointed Priest, our Great High Priest. Yes!

"One Priest alone can pardon me,  
And bid me, ' Go in peace ;'  
Can breathe those words, ' I pardon thee, '  
And make these heart-throbs cease.  
My soul hath heard His priestly voice,  
He said, ' I bore thy sins, ' rejoice!"

This is the Priest appointed and anointed to make full and perfect satisfaction for all the sins of all His people; the Priest anointed to make intercession for His own tried and exercised ones; the Priest anointed to lift His hand of blessing upon His little ones all the way to glory. And, blessed be His holy Name, He is God's anointed King upon Zion, the hill of His holiness (Psa. ii. 6). A King, to reign over all things for us, and a King to reign over all things in us by His grace and power. Now concerning this blessed One, He is God as

well as Man, and Man as well as God. He took to Himself in the womb of the virgin a real human nature, united it to His Godhead, and, as Augustine of Hippo declared, "Never to be divided." No separation can ever take place between the two, a sure and certain pledge that no division can ever take place between Him and us. At this very moment He stands before the throne of glory as the God-Man, Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King for His people, THE CHRIST OF GOD.

III. — IN CHRIST. "*A man in Christ*" is a Christian, and all else are heathens. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts xi. 26). Mark that word "*called,*" no doubt in contempt and derision; but let it be remembered that the appellation, "FRIEND OF SINNERS," was given to our precious Saviour in scorn and enmity, by Satan's religious brood, and is retained and welcomed by those to whom He has endeared Himself; so the appellation "*Christian*" is hailed and understood by the living children of the living God. You find the word again in 1 Pet. iv. 16: "*Vet if any man suffer as a Christian,* let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." Mark! he is not to suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or *as a busybody in other men's matters*. What is a Christian? It is an elect and redeemed sinner in living union with God's Christ, God's Messiah, God's anointed One. Are we Christians? That is a question which none but God the Holy Ghost can answer for us and in us. See! Jesus in prophecy, and Jesus in preaching, declared, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Luke iv. 18; Isa. lxi. 1). Am I one of God's poor? Has HE preached His Gospel to my poor heart? Has He endeared Himself to me? Am I brought into an apprehension of that which we have in 1 John ii. 20, 27?" But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. .... But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." Has the anointed

Priest sought us *i* Has the anointed King brought us? Has the anointed Prophet taught us? Then we shall abide in Him.

Look at that expression, "IN CHRIST." Turn with me to 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Sometimes we hear such an expression as this, "*Put into Christ.*" I have noticed this in connection with the union of the Church to the Lord Jesus Christ under the figure of the vine and the branches. Let me ask you, Will such language hold good in respect to the vine? Is there such a thing as grafting branches into a vine? No! such is contrary to nature, and it is astonishing to think how men of ordinary intelligence can use such an absurd figure. Why talk at all about putting into Christ when the figure is unnatural and the language unscriptural? If in Christ at all we were in Him eternally, —

“From the dateless, timeless periods  
He hath loved us without cause;  
And for all His blood-bought myriads  
His is love that knows no pause.  
Matchless Lover!  
Changeless as the eternal laws.”

This union is without beginning, without end. As is the life of JEHOVAH, so is the union existing between Christ and His Church, according to that blessed verse of dear old John Kent,

"Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus  
Long ere time its race began;  
To His Name eternal praises,  
Oh, what wonders Love has done!  
One with Jesus,  
By eternal union ONE."

Glorious truth! In connection therewith let us look at a few portions of God's blessed Word. We will turn first to Eph. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*. According as He hath *chosen us in Him* before the foundation of the world." All spiritual blessings *in Christ*. Chosen *in Him* (ver. 3). Accepted *in the Beloved* (Ver. 6). Redemption *in Him* (ver. 7). Revelation *in Him* (ver. 9). "*In whom* also we have an inheritance" (ver. 11). What is this inheritance that a child of the living God is brought into the experimental possession of *in Christ*? See 1 Pet. i. 4: "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Is heaven this inheritance of the saints? No! The inheritance is laid up in heaven. As the people of God is His inheritance, so God Himself is the inheritance of His people. Our Father, our Inheritance who art in heaven, reveal Thyself through the Son of Thy love by the indwelling of Thy blessed Spirit, who "is the Earnest of our Inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of Thy glory." In Christ I have every blessing needful for time and for eternity, every blessing for the supply of my necessities, for the putting away of my sins, for the scattering of every doubt, and the securing to me a safe and certain conduct to eternal glory. Uh, say you, I wish I could experience this more and more. Wait, my dear friend. Everything in its season, at the right time, and according to His mind and will who is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." He comes at the set time of favour to purge away those sins which sorely distress thee. He comes in His time of love to chase away thy doubts, fears, and indifference which bring so much sorrow to thy heart. "*In Christ*" feelingly and experimentally. See Eph. ii. 5 — 7: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us Bit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." You see there is no getting away from Christ. Where Christ, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, appears, there His elect and redeemed ones must of necessity be.

Look now at that glorious eighth chapter of Romans: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*." But, according to chap, vii., there is the law and death, the flesh and wretchedness, the conflict in our members between the law of sin and the law of God. Our friend Battereby gave a very blessed exposition of the whole chapter the other Wednesday evening, at St. George's, in the Borough. Those of you who were not there will do well to get that sermon when it is printed. In the first place we have deliverance from the law of God, and then brought to experience the law of sin in our members, causing us to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Yet, in the face of all this, "*No condemnation*." But the law of sin works in my members!" "*No condemnation!*" Satan tempts, the flesh yields, fears prevail, doubts distress, and unbelief is bitterly experienced! "*No condemnation*" says God; no, not one condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*. The sinner who is thus taught his standing *in Christ Jesus* by the Holy Ghost is a new creature, or a new creation (see 2 Cor. v. 17,). *If any man, woman, or child, be in Christ the same is a new creation*. God sees such as He sees His Son. I am here this morning surrounded with accursed influences, and filled with doubts and fears, and fainting hope almost expiring, yet blest with a little assurance that the Father beholds me standing in all the glorious perfections of the Son of His love. Can it be possible that I who have manifested the enmity of my nature against Him can be thus loved and blest? Yes, it is all true. "*Though sinning, yet free from all sin*." Is it not almost too good to be true?" "*A man in Christ!*" Loved *in Christ*! Chosen *in Christ*! Blessed *in Christ*! Redeemed *in Christ*. Justified *in Christ*! Accepted *in Christ*! Glorified *in Christ*! And, like Apelles, Approved *in Christ*! Not approved in ourselves. Oh, no I Lord, the burden of my sins is intolerable, and the number of them more than the hairs of my head! Ah, My child, the blood of Jesus Christ, My Son, cleanseth thee from all sin. But, Lord, I am such a desperate sinner! The Person and work of thy Surety meets My gaze, *in Him* I am well pleased, and well pleased with thee.

Blessed be God! In Christ Jesus, no condemnation! From Christ Jesus, no separation!

Let us notice a few of the figures given in God's blessed Word to illustrate the intimate union existing between Christ and His people.

1. A BUILDING (Eph. ii. 20, 22). As the stones are in a building, so the people of God are in Christ. But why this metaphor? To denote durability, firmness, and stability. Yet all earthly buildings decay, fall into ruins, perish, and pass away. The metaphor fails.

2. A TREE (John xv. 1 — 8). What is the lesson taught in this? Fruitfulness. As the branch derives its life and fruit from the stem and the root, so the children of God live in Christ. But see! Trees die, decay, perish, and pass away. The metaphor fails.

3. A BODY (Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12). As the members of the natural body are guided, governed, and nourished by the head, so also are the members of the body of Christ. In Him they live, and move, and have their being; but, mark this! bodies die, decompose, perish, and pass away. The metaphor fails.

4. THE MARRIAGE UNION (Eph. v. 22, 33). Here we have love, communion, familiarity, and fellowship, which must be experienced mutually between Christ and His Church. But notice this! Once these few words thrilled through my soul and made me tremble: "*Until death us do part.*" See! marriage unions are dissolved. "But they -which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection (Luke xx. 35, 36). The metaphor fails.

Come with me to John xvii. 21 — 23. No metaphor, no failure here: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us. . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that

they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." O what a glorious reality! As is the union of the Godhead, One in Three and Three in One, eternal, indissoluble, immutable, so is the union existing between God's First Elect and the whole election of grace; between Christ, the Head, and the members of His mystical body. Yes, and such is the union existing between the poor sinner who mourns his deadness and leanness this morning because of the revelation of a precious Christ in him, though of like passions with the rest of mankind, subject to the same follies, frailties, sins, and sorrows, yet, blessed be God, he is "A MAN IN CHRIST."

I was asked to preach in Leicester, to-day, the funeral sermon of that dear old saint, Thorpe Smith, but I refused, as I had no desire to be absent from this spot, though it is with a fluttering heart and faltering step I oftentimes ascend these pulpit stairs to declare God's mind and will to you. I cannot let this opportunity pass without an allusion to his change from grace to glory. I knew Thorpe Smith only as "*a man in Christ*." I was never in his company but his theme was Christ in covenant for a covenant people. In his walk and conversation he was "*a man in Christ*." In his testimony he was "*a man in Christ*." In life and death he was "*a man in Christ*." Though he knew himself to be "*a man in Christ*" he confessed himself a sinner saved. Those who knew him best will mourn his absence from the flesh, but rejoice that he is in glory, "at home with the Lord," "A MAN IN CHRIST."

## XXII. WE KNOW

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,  
May 27th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

— 1 John v. 20.

YOU will find it a very profitable employment to read carefully the whole of this epistle, and, if you are blessed with the guidance and grace of God the Holy Ghost, to mark prayerfully the different verses in which John uses those two words which occur in the opening sentence of the text, "*We know.*"

There are many voices in the world, many manifestations and significations, and along with these many classes of hearers. The Lord Jesus knew this would be so, therefore on one occasion said, "Take heed *how* ye hear;" and, at another time, "Take heed *what* ye hear." The latter has respect to the preacher; "*What!*" the former to the hearer; "*How!*" Sit in judgment upon what you hear and upon yourself in hearing, testing all by the infallible touchstone of God's written Word. Well, there are many voices in thin world, but there is only one that can meet the necessities and sorrows of the living

family, the voice that speaks from heaven to those who know that the Son of God is come, to whom He has given an understanding, that they may know Him that is true. Do notice the number of times the apostle makes use of this expression, "*We know*." Sometimes, with his knowledge, he soars far beyond the regions where little faith can breathe freely, or the spots of Divine consolation where fainting hope is almost expiring; but while he soars aloft on the wings of Divine revelation and sweet meditation he loses not sight of those whom he has left behind. Graciously and lovingly, with that compassion and consideration peculiar to the spirit of his Master, he comes down to the weakest capacity, the feeblest apprehension, and the faintest comprehension, and gives to us this blessed declaration, which has cheered more than one heart within these walls, "*We know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Now this is a blessed spot to a poor child of God who cannot claim possession of a brighter evidence of Divine life. To him there is no company like that of the sons and daughters of the living God, and no communion so, sweet as that in oneness with the broken-hearted followers of the Lamb. To this the world will cry out that we are narrow-minded, warped in our views, cramped in our opinions; well, let the *charitable* world and *liberal Christianity* say what they will, we who are taught by the Spirit, and brought by a loving Saviour to sit at His feet, to experience fellowship with those who have been plucked by Him as brands from hell, those whom He has brought from the horrible pit of corruption, and whose feet He has fixed firmly upon Himself, the Rock of Ages, care little for their charitable and liberal reflections. If for Christ's sake we are accounted as fools, let us be still greater fools! Are we looked upon as the scum and offscouring of all things? We thank and praise His holy name that He has counted us worthy to suffer contempt and shame for His sake who manifested such rich and marvellous love to us as to give Himself, shed His precious blood, and appear in the presence of the Father with all the sympathies of His nature for us. Yes, it is gloriously true that even now He is a compassionate and sympathizing High Priest, having respect to every infirmity, sorrow, sadness, and temptation that the weakest and most insignificant

members may be experiencing. But let us, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at these things as they are stated without any human gloss whatever, without those contracting influences which abound in the various factions and cliques of the professing Church. It M our mercy to look at God's Word as revealed in doctrine, experience, and practice. In doctrine, Christ the Way; in experience, Christ the Truth; in practice, Christ the Life.

I. — A SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE — "And we know that the Son of God is come."

II. — A SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING — "And hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true."

III. — A SPIRITUAL UNION — "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ."

IV. — A SPIRITUAL LIFE — "This is the true God and eternal life."

I. — A SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE — "And we know that the Son of God is come." The question arises, What is the nature of your knowledge? I ask you not, What is the extent of your knowledge? for if you know Him you will never be able to explain the extent of the knowledge with which He has blessed you, while you will mourn that you know so little, and daily pray that you may know Him more. In reference to spiritual knowledge I would direct your prayerful attention to several portions of God's most Holy Word, and in doing so would have you notice that I believe that one great design of Satan for keeping the children of the living God in doubt, fear, and darkness, is an ignoring of knowledge and an exalting of feeling. Mark this! Feeling without knowledge is fanaticism! Knowledge with feeling is stoicism. But some of you may be ready to ask: Do you ignore a feeling religion? To which I readily answer, No! A religion without feeling is not worth a rush. You know that sweet declaration in two lines of Hart:

"True religion's more than notion,

Something must be *known and felt.*"

Mark that!

"Something must be *known and felt.*"

Not only the possession of knowledge Divinely communicated, but the communication of Divine knowledge, producing feelings in the heart unspeakable and full of glory. Only as we are brought to a true spiritual knowledge of what the Lord Jesus Christ is to us as sinners, and of what He is to us in our varied necessities and infirmities, and the peculiar temptations surrounding us, can we feel aright. And upon our feelings the Church itself would sit in judgment, and condemn the very points and particulars in which God has brought us into the rich realisation of what He is to us as our covenant God. Oh, it is the joy and the delight of one's heart to know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. This is not merely freedom from the chains of sin which bound me to the world, but from those of selfishness which bound me to *Great I*. Yes, and I also allude to the meshes which are oftentimes cast around unstable souls, binding them to men's opinions, the judgment of the pastor, the mind of the Church, or the will of lordly deacons. May God in His infinite mercy grant you sweet freedom from all such shackles as these, and as so many Naphtalis may He set you as hinds let loose upon the mountains of covenant favour, and bring you into the rich fair fields of Divine revelation, where you may feed and lie down, none daring to make you afraid.

In looking at several portions of God's Word we shall see that the description given of those who are in a state of nature and distance from God, is *ignorance of Him*. Just turn to that remarkable description given in Eph. iv. 18 — 21: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if

so be that ye have heard Him." Mark that!" *Heard Mm.*" Paid does not say. If so be that ye have heard this deeply experienced one, or that wonderfully taught preacher; but, "If so be that ye *have heard Mm*, and have been taught by Him." I wish you to notice especially the next clause, because you will rarely, if ever, hear it quoted. Is that true? Yes! I will be bound to say you will hear it misquoted nine times out of ten. Here is the misquotation, "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*" No such thing! Not the truth as it is in Jesus, because there is no truth out of Jesus. It does not matter to what we look, morality, education, or religion, all these away from, or out of Christ, are one huge lie, and the nearer these approach to, or are associated with, Scriptural truth, and the greater Satan's lie appears to enlightened minds, and the more powerful in his hands for deceiving unstable and ignorant souls. It is a positive truth that I am telling you. Now just notice how the passage reads: "*as the truth is in Jesus.*" "The truth is in Jesus." Have we been taught by Him? Have we been brought to sit at the feet of the patient Teacher to know Him as He is described in Mark x. 1? — "And as He was wont He taught them again." If He taught you feelingly and blessedly last Sunday, you have perhaps forgotten every word before now; ay, and it may be that the words of grace which He brought home to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost were all gone before Monday morning. This is the painful part of the experience of those who are under the teaching of God the ever-blessed Spirit, but He, as the faithful Remembrancer, will see to it that though we are leaky vessels, not one word from Jesus' lips to our anxious souls shall be eventually lost. One lately said in the hearing of some of us, "*We are only oyster-shells.*" But mark! In some oyster-shells are found a pearl, and the pearl is formed through what? A distemper in the fish. Marvellous truth! You may rest assured of this, there would be no Saviour in your heart or mine were it not for that wretched distemper, SIN, which distresses us day by day.

"*And we know.*" Blessed be His holy Name, in His own time, when His glorious truth shines, and His love is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us, then we know and feel that which the

two disciples experienced as He walked with them, and talked to them by the way. If Jesus be with us, and His sweet words of grace drop with melting power upon our souls, we shall oftentimes remember the same, and exclaim with adoring gratitude, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 32)? I might talk here for a couple of hours or more and not a single heart burn with His love; but let His gracious presence be felt, let His words of grace be heard, let your plaintive inquiry, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" be answered in faith's adoring view of Him; if your request to Him, "Let me hear Thy voice, let me see Thy countenance," be answered, tell me, Do you not experience a glowing of love, a melting into nothingness at His sacred feet unknown to you in all places else beside?

*"We know."* We will look at this truth in connection with the experiences of God's saints as recorded in His Word. Job was harassed and tormented. His three free-will friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, understanding not the spiritual training through which God was leading him, came to the rash conclusion that such terrible visitations could not exist except Job was guilty of some secret and unconfessed sins. Job was patient. Was he? He was not very patient when he heard his free-will friends talking such legal rubbish. He denounced and discarded their insinuations and reflections, and told them they knew not what they were talking about. But sometimes they did speak wondrous truth, to which Job gave his unfeigned consent. Such you will find at the close of the eighth chapter; but, at the commencement of the ninth, "Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth; but how should man be just -with God?"] He knew by painful experience that God was just in all that had befallen him; but what he wanted was a present tense blessing. The cry of his heart was. Do tell me how, at this very moment, I can stand just and free from all sin in His sacred and solemn presence with whom I have to do. Now, instead of this, they heaped accusation upon accusation upon his character and conduct. What is Job's comfort and consolation under such trying circumstances? Listen to his firm

assurance, as recorded in chapter xiii. 18: "*I know* that I shall be justified." I have a firm and settled conviction that He will bring forth my righteousness as the light, and my judgment as the noonday, when you will be confounded with a sense of your lamentable ignorance as to God's dealings with me in providence and in grace. *I know* that every accuser of mine will be silenced, and that my God will cause me to answer effectually every railer and reprover. Look still further at Job xix. 25 — 27: "*I know*," not I feel, for at that moment he did not feel that God was near, while he was assured that God was for him. "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." I love to look at that confession of his confidence just as God the Holy Ghost put it into the mouth of Job, thus: "*I know*" that my Goel, my Next-of-Kin, liveth for me. "*I know*" that my Redeemer from hell, from the curse of the law, from this wicked world, and from deceit and violence, liveth (Psa. lxxii. 14). You are laying charge after charge, and accusation after accusation against my character, but *I know* that my Vindicator liveth, ) holds my character safe in His faithful hands. Ay, and He who is my Redeemer and Vindicator is my Avenger too. Vengeance belongeth unto Him, and I am content to leave my

person, character, and possessions in His sacred hands. See how the apostle by the Holy Ghost blessedly states this: " Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us (2 Thes. i. 6, 7). Would to God we had more of this rest, sitting at the feet of Him who is the only Rest of His weary, waiting people. "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." There is a glorious rendering of that word "*latter*," not referring to the day, but to the last Adam, who can never fail in any of His undertakings for His people. "And though after my skin worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

"I shall be with Him when He comes  
Triumphant down the parting skies:

And, when His voice breaks up the tombs,  
Among His children I shall rise."

There I shall see Him who took part of the same flesh and blood with me, and who has so graciously told me that I am a member of His body, and of His flesh, and of His bones. Oh, precious truth! We shall see Him as He is, we shall be like Him, and we shall sing with sweet intelligence and undisturbed assurance, —

"Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears;  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers;  
With what rapture  
Gaze we on those glorious scars."

Come with me to the last chapter of Job and second verse, the precious declaration with which God opened my testimony in this great metropolis: "*I know* that Thou canst do everything." Lord, *I know* that Thou canst soften this hard heart of mine, Thou canst illuminate this dark understanding of mine, Thou canst teach this ignorant mind of mine, Thou canst subdue this rebellious will of mine, Thou canst settle matters with all my foes and accusers, Thou canst blot out every sin from this sensitive conscience, Thou canst bring me near to Thee and keep me in Thy loved embrace. "*I know* that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee ;" or, as you read in the margin, "*no thought of Thine can be hindered.*"

Now turn with me to Psalm ix. 10, a very precious declaration: "And *they that know Thy name* will put their trust in Thee." Those who know, who are intimately acquainted and who hold sweet communion with Him, to whom He has communicated His mind, and with whom He has confided His secret, these will put their trust in Him. See Psalm xxv. 14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it." When was

His covenant with them? When they believed? When they repented? When they gave their hearts to the Lord? We do not deal in such tinsel as that here! It was with them when the LORD began to deal with them in the Son of His love before the worlds were framed. It was with them in the womb as seen in the case of Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (i. 5); as in the case of John the Baptist. See Luke i. 15 and 41; and, according to Psalm cxxxix. 14 — 16, in the case of every member of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at those two precious Psalms, the xxii. and lxxi.; there you see that from the very first moment of their existence upon earth God has to do with His own; He graciously preserves them; His covenant is with them, and in His own time and way *He will make them know it.*

Now look at God's covenant promise in Jer. iii. 15: "And I will give you pastors according to Mine own heart, *which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*" But here is what is styled an Arminian text. Blessed be God, there is not an Arminian text in the whole of the dear old book, not a vestige of Arminianism to be found in the whole of my Bible. Is there any in yours? Here is the text: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea iv. 6). Is it possible that one for whom Christ died can be destroyed? Yes, it is possible. And cut off from God's favour? No! Fall into eternal perdition? Never! \_ For if one for whom the blood of Jesus was shed should be lost in hell His name would cease to be Saviour, and God's Christ would be a nonentity. Yet it is a truth that God's people are destroyed in their feelings, frames, and enjoyments. They may have as many feelings and frames as they like, but when the time of trial comes I ask, Where is your life? Ah! say you, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." Where is your hope?" My hope is perished from the Lord" (Lam. iii. 18). Where is your peace?" Behold, for peace I had great bitterness" (Isa. xxxviii. 17). Where is your joy? I mourn in my spirit and am vexed. Frames and feelings are evidences of life, but not the support of life. What, must I not live on my

frames and feelings? No! Listen!" 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 xvii. 2, 3). There is life alone in Him who gave Himself for us, and there is not one spark a hair's-breadth away from Him.

We now come to New Testament Scripture, and see the grand and glorious harmony existing between the Old and the New. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles are all agreed. Look, for instance, how cordially Paul agrees with his brother John. Turn to Rom. iii. 19, where, speaking of that deep law work through which many of God's dear children have to pass, while others are more favorably dealt with, as you see in the contrast between the Philippian jailor, whose heart the Lord broke open with a sense of guilt, wrath, and condemnation, and poor Lydia, whose heart He opened like the gentle unfolding of the rose before the rays of His own bright sun. God works as He will, and is accountable to none. But, says the apostle, "*We know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;*" or, as we read in the margin, "*subject to the judgment of God.*" Are we subject to His judgment? Have we been brought to bow before the revelation of His Divine sovereignty? See! In the application of God's holy law to our hearts, and brought into the presence of infinite excellency, we find that in ourselves we are nothing more nor less than fit fuel for hell. That is God's judgment in me. You may say, I have done my best, I have striven, I have prayed, and groaned, and cried. Why, my dear fellow, all these without Christ are but adding fuel to the fire. Everything performed apart from personal union to the Lord Jesus Christ, as I know and confess with shame before His sacred Majesty, says Amen to my eternal ruin and damnation. Now turn to Phil. Hi. 8 — 10: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" No! Though that is precious. "*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*

ding, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; *that I may know Him.*" Paul did know Him, but with all his knowledge he felt himself a fool, and could not boast. But, does not knowledge puff up? Not this knowledge, for it humbles and melts every regenerate soul into nothingness at the feet of Jesus. The more I am brought into communication with Him, the more I understand His gracious mind and will, and the greater fool I feel myself to be. As I am taught to sit at His feet and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and the oftener my cry is, Lord, what I know not teach Thou me. Look again! 2 Tim. i. 12. This is another of those portions which are nearly always misquoted: "For I know *in* whom I have believed." Is that right? No. You will see it reads thus without the interpolation, "w" — "*I know* whom I have believed." I know HIM. I am personally acquainted with Him and He is acquainted with me. He knew me before the worlds were framed, and wrote my name in the old family register, from which neither men nor devils can ever erase it. What, have you been privileged to read it there? O, yes, again and again. Presumptuous mortal! You presume to say That you have been lifted up to the third heaven to .read your name there? My dear friends, I know what it is to suffer in my mind from such taunts as these, but they move me not from the truth of God. As God's Gospel is brought home to our hearts by the power of God the Holy Ghost we can not only read our name, sinner; but we can also read the name of Him we love, Jesus, Friend of sinners. We read our characters and we see also how well He is suited to save us from every sin, and to succour us in every sorrow. Are we wanderers? He seeks. Are we lost? He finds. Are we sinners? He saves. Are we broken in heart? He heals.

"*We know.*" It is all very fine talking about knowing, but what do you know?" *We know that the Son of God is come.*" This is a blessed knowledge, but it is not every one who has it. You may read in your Bibles of Jacob's prophecy that Shiloh should come, and unto Him should the gathering of the people be (Gen. xlix. 10), and you may

know that Shiloh, the Pacificator, the Prince of peace, in the person of Jesus, came to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to Jerusalem, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary, and now He reigns in glory. You can read and learn all that from the Book; but wait a moment, my friend, this is the point: Has He come with power, and grace, and glory to your heart? Is the experience of thy heart one with the Psalmist when he cried to the Lord, "*When wilt Thou come to me?*" Lord, let me hear over the hills of doubt and mountains of guilt, even the rumbling of Thy chariot wheels of full salvation and covenant love. Look at Habakkuk's anxiety and importunity: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower to see what He will say in me. . . For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Turn now to Luke xix. There you see a little man with big desires running before a multitude, climbing up into a sycamore tree, desiring to see Jesus who was to pass that *tree*. Yes. he was to pass that very spot, according to covenant arrangements. At the appointed time He was there, —

"Not to propose, but call by grace."

He calls! He parleys not. He asks not for acceptance at the hands of Zacchaeus. Just imagine a sovereign Saviour coaxing a sinner thus: Zacchaeus! will you accept My salvation? Ridiculous to think that the Lord Jesus Christ would waste His time like that. Zacchaeus! here is an offer of salvation ; you know you can be saved or damned, as you decide. Rubbish! rubbish! Jesus commands like a king: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Did He ever call you down from your high flights? Precious mercy if He has done so. He will not ask you for a lodging, but will take possession of His own house, even the heaving bosom and the contrite heart of His own eternally loved one. Zacchaeus "made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." Now look at the glorious declaration of Christ: "This day is salvation *come* to

this house," salvation *come* in the person of a precious Jesus. It was the same with the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. A priest passes by on the other side. That is just as much as *showy religion* can do for wounded sinners. A Levite comes, looks on, and passes away. Education, or human teaching can do nothing for a child of God who is made sensible of his sinful and hell-deserving condition by the teaching of God the eternal Spirit. Rationalism, and even Ritualism according to God's commands and institution, can do nothing but aggravate the case of a poor sinful wretch who is groaning under a sense of his exceeding sinfulness before God. "But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed *came where he was,*" to the very spot. Is not that like Jesus in His Gospel? Do you know what it is to groan under the intolerable load of your sins and sinfulness? Do you know what it is to groan under the weight of a body of sin and death which you daily and hourly carry about with you? Do you know what it is, through a sight of the beauties of Jesus, to sigh to have done with pilgrim perplexities and anxieties, and enjoy His sweet company at home? Then it is blessedly true that He has come to your house; and if your experience be that of a lonely outcast. He has come, and will come again just where you are. With the enjoyment of His love and His presence as our Saviour, Friend, and Companion, "*we know that the Son of God is come.*"

Well, my dear friends, *I know* by blessed experience that the Son of God has come into this pulpit, ay, and into this heart. This preserves the lips from presumption, and gives the blessed assurance that He with whom I have held intercourse has put His words into my heart and in my mouth to make me a witness for Him ; to preach Him, to declare His salvation, succour, and sympathy for the comfort and consolation of His weak and weary ones. Blessed be His name, He has declared that neither sin, death, nor hell shall ever chase one of them from the reach of His loving arms, or estrange the sympathy of His heart from them. "We know that the Son of God is *come.*" Who is come? "The Son of God!" Arian! Socinian! Unitarian! where are

you? Who dares to call into question the true, proper, and eternal Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? All such are declared by the loving John to be liars. This may appear harsh to delicate ears, but it is God's own truth concerning such as oppose the glorious truth of Christ's Divinity. Here I wish you to notice a particular point in the disputings of these persons: Oh, say they, there are others who are styled sons of God beside Jesus. Mark well this fact: you never find in the whole compass of your Bible a person other than Jesus styled "*The Son of God.*" You never find the definite article before the word son, when referring to ordinary persons; but when referring to that extraordinary Person whom we love and adore, it is "*The Son of God.*" To whomsoever He comes by the teaching and anointing of the Holy Ghost, there is a son of God, there is a daughter of God. The Son of God comes to your home and to your heart to prove to you that you are sons of God in Him and with Him, sons of God by sovereign, eternal, unconditional, irrevocable election; sons of God, begotten of the Father (James i. 18); sons of God quickened together with Christ (Eph. ii. 5); sons of God "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter i. 23). In Jesus, the Son of His love, we are God's dear children. "And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. t5). Blessed union! Precious testimony! Sweet witness! Now look at that glorious declaration in 1 John iii. 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but *we know* that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And look at the first verse: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called *the sons of God.*" Called and acknowledged by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. By the witnessing, anointing, and sealing of the Spirit *we know* "that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

II. — A SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING — “And hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true.” Several times of late I have endeavoured to direct your attention to this part of the subject, especially in the discourse on Abigail, who was a woman of good understanding. I shall, therefore, not enlarge upon it here. But, have we this spiritual understanding? Do we know Him that is true in covenant, in communication, in communion, in crucifixion, and in resurrection power? Has He come as God's Salvation to our hearts? and is He God's Peace for us before the throne? You may rest assured of this, though He has given to us an understanding, we shall need it enlightening everyday; and this understanding can receive nothing except it be given directly by Himself, and the understanding be opened by His love and power, according to Luke xxiv. 45. Mark! An understanding to "know Him." *Know Him* as my Saviour from every sin, my Strength in every conflict, my Succour in every temptation, my Friend in every infirmity, my Companion in every tribulation, my Life in death, and my Solace when my eyes are glazed, and my tongue has ceased its words of consolation for those near and dear to me. *Know Him* when I soar aloft and see Him on His judgment throne, and He graciously invites me to sit with Him there. *We know Him*, but *we know not* what we shall be.

III. — A SPIRITUAL UNION — “And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ.” In Him? Yes! How? As the stone is in the building, as the branch is in the tree, as the member is in the body; but these metaphors all fail to shew forth the eternal, inalienable, indefectible, indissoluble union of Christ to His people and His people with Him. Look here! John xvii. 2 : “That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may .be one in us.” Glorious union! In Him blessed with all spiritual blessings! Chosen to all eternal good! Saved with an everlastings salvation! Justified from all things! Preserved from all dangers! Glorified together with Him!

In Him, no condemnation!  
From Him, no separation!

Mark well those words: "*In His Son Jesus Christ!*" In HIS SON, therefore we are *sons!* In His Son JESUS, therefore we are *saved sons!* In His Son Jesus CHRIST, therefore we are *anointed sons,* according to 1 John ii. 27: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." As we continue and abide in the anointing, we shall praise and adore His holy Name for the grace that brought us to His home and heart.

IV. — A SPIRITUAL LIFE — "This is the true God and eternal life." This Person! This Son! This Jesus! This Christ is the true God! Who says so? Isaiah — "THE MIGHTY GOD" (chap. ix. 6); Paul — "THE GREAT GOD" (Titus ii. 13); Jude — "THE ONLY WISE GOD" (ver. 25); Matthew — "GOD WITH US" (chap. i. 23); "THE TRUE GOD" (1 John v. 20). Take away the Godhead of Christ, and the Bible is a myth. Disprove His Divinity, and salvation is a sham. If Jesus be not God, there is no God at all. But Jesus is God over all, blessed for ever, and God in the affections of His chosen, blood-bought, and living people. "This is the true God and eternal life," for which spiritual and gracious revelation of Himself we thank and praise Him with grateful and adoring hearts.

May the Lord add His blessing for His own name's sake. Amen.

## XXIII. CHOSEN FROM THE BEGINNING.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,  
June 3rd, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

— 2 Thess. ii. 13, It

GLORIOUS and terrible truths are stated by the Holy Ghost in this chapter. Glorious inasmuch as the glory of a sovereign God is revealed to the faith of God's elect, the faith which worketh by love, overcomes the world, and has for its end the salvation of the soul. This faith is of the operation of God, and beholds wondrous glory where unbelief and carnal reason see naught but what is hateful and obnoxious. I speak not this in a spirit of railing, or with a desire to wound or offend, but wishful to speak plainly the things of God, that each of us may know something of the position we occupy in relationship to a covenant and sovereign God. In this chapter we have described two distinct parties, who, in spiritual and eternal things, are at the very antipodes to each other. Look on this picture and on that. These He loves — those He hates. These He accepts — those He rejects. These He chooses to salvation — those He leaves

to damnation. Do any of you object to this? Why, you do the same yourselves. You accept to your companionship and confidence whom you will, and yet question God's right to do as He will. Look at the enemies of God! They aspire not to equality with Him, but to superiority over Him. They not only question His authority, but in their feelings and fancies they usurp His sovereignty. Poor, proud, and puny reason sets itself up in antagonism to eternal and infinite wisdom, calls into question the truths of Divine revelation, scouts the glorious doctrines of grace, and would drag JEHOVAH from His throne. And, mark you, my carnal mind is not one whit better, for it is Enmity against God. As the transgression, enmity, and wickedness of my heart are revealed to me by the grace of the Holy Ghost, I see *there* the opposition and enmity of the ungodly to God and His truth. Who maketh me to differ?

But let us look at a few of the interesting features of this chapter. The apostle commences: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him." When Jesus comes to our hearts it is by the power of the Holy Ghost, and then we are gathered by the same power to Him. The cry of the weary pilgrim is, "O when wilt Thou come to me?" The command of the pilgrim's Friend is, "Come unto Me." A precious Christ comes to His own and His own come unto Him. This is not mere reciprocity, but mutual love. The Divine nature in the member yearns for communion with the same nature in the Head. Look at that precious description given of Jesus in Isaiah xlii. 1: "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth." Is He elect? They are elected in Him. Is He the Father's delight? They are His delight in Him. These desire and long for each other's company ; and thus the existence of the election of grace is demonstrated by the person, power, and preciousness of Jesus. In each heaven-born sinner Jesus sees the travail of His soul, He beholds a living witness to the truth of the Father's sovereign, unconditional, and irrevocable election. Seeing them in possession of the glory which the Father entrusted to Him for them before the world was, and partakers of life everlasting with His matchless

perfections, He rejoices over them with joy untold; and His joy, which is their strength, will never be truly comprehended while His people are in the flesh. Look at the second verse: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Here prophetic students point to that arch-impostor at Rome, the Pope, who is the personification of enmity against God — he is pointed at as the "man of sin" and the "son of perdition." I do not say he is not, for I am confident that the "man of sin" and the "son of perdition" is there. There is no question about that in my mind; but I do not restrict the terms to the Pope and Papists. In making such a statement, do not go away and say I have consigned all Papists to eternal perdition, for my experience and observation have led me to this conclusion, that amidst the haunts of superstition, idolatry, and blasphemy, God preserves His hidden, sighing, and groaning ones. See! It is not for me to make a wholesale sweep of Papists, Arminians, Wesleyans, and free-willers; but, mark you, I do hate with a cordial hatred, Popery, Arminianism, Wesleyanism, and free-willism. I believe I drank in hatred to Popery with my mother's milk; and as I grow in years my hatred to that awful system of opposition to the rights of God and the well-being of men is intensified. The more I am brought into an intelligent acquaintance and oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ and the more I hate all those systems which deny His sovereignty, burlesque His salvation, and question His power. Yet God has His jewels hidden beneath much rubbish, and in His own time He will deliver and discover them.

In looking at this Scripture I see God's truth leveled against everything that opposeth itself to God's Christ, God's salvation, and God's people, whether it be in others or in myself. Yes, I see my wretched self included in this matter — God says to me, "Thomas Bradbury, that day shall not come to thee except there come a falling away first." You may depend upon it, if you know not what it is to

experience a falling away of your fleshly conceit, confidence, righteousness, and pride, I stand in doubt of you, and am forced to the conclusion that you know nothing of a single day of the Son of Man. If your mountain stands strong every day and every night, without some questionings within; if you remain satisfied and pleased with yourself and your surroundings, with no burden of a body of sin and death, no annoyance from a deceitful heart and a tempting devil, again, I say, I stand in doubt of you. The Holy Ghost by Paul continues His description of the man of sin: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." Now is not that my old nature? Is it not your old nature? Let anything in the order of God's providence tell against your happiness, your peace, and your nicely-arranged schemes of earthly joy and worldly prosperity; yes, let anything oppose and thwart your honest and well-meant plans, and where are you? In the dry places of questioning and rebellion. Or, when blest with a little enjoyment of His reconciling love, you can look up and say, Lord, Thou knowest that in the honesty and integrity of my heart I have adopted plans and have taken steps to live honest and righteous before the world, and to enjoy sweet communion with Thee, and fellowship with Thy people; but the more I have endeavoured to ascend the hill of Prosperity and peace, with an eye to Thy glory, and the more I have had to mourn in the vale below. The more I have sought for the company of Thy saints in communion with Thee, and the more I have been shunned by them, or left in loneliness to learn what a wretch I am in myself, not deserving a passing glance from Thee, nor the slightest notice from them. You may depend upon it, this is a point in the spiritual pathway to which many of the family are brought. But we must proceed: "So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God." Is this the Pope? Is this St. Peter's at Rome, where the statue of Jupiter has been transformed into that of Peter, and where you find altars and gods innumerable? Call this the temple of God? You might as well call any pig-sty in the world the temple of God. It is a temple of idolatry, blasphemy, and superstition, with nothing worthy of a covenant God about it. But notice the teaching of the whole New Testament Scripture in reference to the temple of God (1 Cor. iii. 16,

17): "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Again (1 Cor. vi. 19): "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" The temple of God is a spiritual temple, yet the spiritual worshippers oftentimes find therein that which is stated here: "*So that he.*" Who is he? Self, lordly reason, noble intellect, imperious self, "as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." We find all this in the natural tempers, wills, and dispositions of the children of God. Paul proceeds, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." What is this mystery of iniquity? Turn with me to 3 John ver. 9: "I wrote unto the Church; but Diotrephes, *who loved to have the pre-eminence among them*, receiveth us not." There is the workings of the mystery of iniquity — a determination to be somebody and to appear to be somebody at the expense of the peace and prosperity of Zion and of the glory of God. Paul knew this by painful experience, therefore was qualified to write thus: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." Let the Father appear in His pure electing love, and the world is sure to question! Let the Son appear as the Redeemer of His elect ones, and the devil is sure to oppose! Let the Spirit appear in His regenerating grace, and the flesh is sure to struggle against Him. But let the God of all grace make His way to a redeemed sinner's heart, and all these opposing forces are taken out of the way, and wicked self is seen in his true colours. But the Lord alone, "with the Spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming," can settle matters with him. We who know these things find the flesh in ourselves and our surroundings ever opposing God and His truth. In the Book of the Revelation you see the opposition of the beast and the false prophet. I am not prepared in this to throw stones at the Pope and the Turk —

for I find so much of the Pope, and of the Turk, too, in me, that I am constrained to cry to the God of all mercy to keep them down in me. After stating many startling truths the Apostle comes to this solemn declaration: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Can this be God's truth? It is God's truth, or it would not be here. Know you not that declaration in Isaiah lxvi. 4?" I also will choose their delusions." Know ye not Micaiah's account of the LORD'S sending a lying spirit to deceive Ahab, and granting success to his lies? (1 Kings xxii. 19 — 23). This is marvellous sovereignty. All attempts to disprove it must fail. Our reason bows, our faith adores before the revelation of such glorious mysteries. "That they all may be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But!" — This is one of God's "*buts.*" I do love to look at them as they appear in the pages of God's most Holy Word, so sovereign, so gracious, as so many breakwaters to repel the surging billows of error and superstition. "But." Here we come to this precious text: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We will look at it in the order in which God the Holy Ghost has given it to us: —

I. — *Confession and congratulation* — "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord."

II. — *Choice and Salvation* — "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

III. — *Sanctification and Faith* — "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

IV. — *Grace and glory* — "Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. — Confession And Congratulation — “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord.” Here I would give you a hint. Was this epistle written to the Thessalonians? No! It was written “unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” But that is rather too distinguishing and too discriminating for the fleshly religious mind. Look at it! — *In God* with all His fulness! *In the Father* with all His affection! *In the Lord* with all His sovereignty! *In Jesus* with all His salvation! *In Christ* with all His anointing! Now for these Paul, and Silas, and Timothy were bound to give thanks. It is a blessed privilege when a preacher of God’s Gospel is constrained and moved by a gracious necessity — according to the words of the text *he is bound*, he cannot help himself, he must give thanks for the manifestation of covenant blessings and privileges to the people whom God has given to him in the bowels of Jesus Christ. We will notice a few instances in these two epistles where thanksgiving is rendered to God for the conveyance and confirmation of covenant mercies to the saints at Thessalonica. Go to the first epistle, i. 2 — 4: “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.” You may rest assured that there will be very little thanksgiving where there is no praying. See! I do not make my appearance in this pulpit without groans, and sighs, and cries; and these not presented by way of duty, but produced of necessity by the hidden movements of God the Holy Ghost, that my brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus may be instructed, refreshed, and comforted through His testimony from my exercised heart. You whom I know in the bonds of the covenant, in the freedom of the Gospel, in brokenness of spirit at His sacred feet, are oftentimes remembered as I walk by the way, as I lay my head on the pillow, and as He shuts me out from the world in hallowed seclusion with Himself. I cannot help but make mention of you in my prayers. You ask, What kind of prayers are these? I answer, Ejaculations, sighs, desires, and longings, sometimes only a breathing homeward, heavenward, Godward, that in the riches of His grace and mercy He may bless, instruct, comfort, and preserve you, and keep us humble at the feet of a dear Redeemer, so that, when our anxious heads are throbbing

and our weary hearts are aching, we may find a sweet pillow of rest upon His ever-loving bosom — I can truly say that the burden of my preaching and of my prayers is that you may be kept very near to Himself. But to return!" We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

Now turn to the third chapter of the first epistle and 6th verse: "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." That is to say, we live hopefully and joyfully in witnessing your faith and fortitude, and in the enjoyment of fellowship in union with you. "*For what thanks can we render to God again* for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in you faith?" Look now at 2 Thess. 1.3: "*We are bound to thank God always for you*, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly." Some of you are ready to say, That is not me, for I cannot see that I grow at all. If there is a growth it is in the knowledge and loathing of my heart's depravity and deceitfulness. Well, my friends, there is only one spot where such knowledge is truly gained, and that is in the presence of redeeming Love. The more we grow in love with Jesus, and the more we are sure to grow in distrust and in disgust with ourselves. "We are bound to thank God." Paul and his companions were worshipping priests in union with Christ, offering the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on the behalf of those whose election of God was known, whose faith grew

and whose love abounded. In this confession of what was known of the Thessalonian Christians, they are congratulated as "*brethren beloved of the Lord.*" *Brethren*, one with Jesus in the bonds of the everlasting covenant of grace, in eternal election, in all-wise predestination, and by spiritual regeneration. Jesus is the Elder Brother, the Firstborn among many brethren; brethren in the family of God who are brought and taught by the Holy Ghost to know their unchanging oneness with Him.

II. — Choice And Salvation — "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Here we have a glorious reason why God receives the thanksgivings of poor sinners — "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." I wonder how many pulpits in London to-day have heralded out thanksgiving to God for the sovereign, unconditional, and irrevocable election of His people in Christ Jesus? Or, I would ask, How many preachers in London, destitute of the faith of God's elect, and ignorant of the love of a covenant God in Christ Jesus, have in their hearts been cursing this glorious truth? I speak advisedly and deliberately in asking these questions, knowing that every unregenerate person in his inmost soul despises the sovereignty of God, calls into question His everlasting love, and delights to laugh to scorn the elect of God. Well, blessed be God, there is one pulpit at least, *if it is near the top of a hill, and in an out-of-the-way spot*, where the covenant verities of JEHOVAH are honestly declared, and His glorious sovereignty, though feebly, yet fearlessly, faithfully and feelingly proclaimed. Why say I this? Because I desire to be singular amongst the preachers and teachers of the day? No! I say it because God has so united Himself to me, a poor, sinful worm, that I cannot help but speak the things that I have seen and heard concerning Him, and sound forth His praises. He has manifested His love to me in days gone by and up to the present moment in such a wonderful and gracious manner, that it behoves me to uphold His glorious sovereignty before men with every word of my tongue, every action of my body, and every volition of my mind. O may He entwine the affections of His own elect and called ones more closely round my

poor heart, and may I find my affections clinging more closely to His elect, despised, and persecuted ones. But let us now look at this part of the text in the light of God's Word, that is Scripturally, and may the Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlighten our understanding and comfort our hearts.

"*God hath from the beginning.*" What does this mean, from the beginning of time? Previous to that! Previous to that! "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). But the choice of the eternally loved people of God was —

"Long ere time its race began."

It took place in that period before time, which we, through our shortsightedness, call eternity past. The command of the Father to the Son, the Surety of the covenant, was, "*Prepare Thy work without*, and make it fit for Thyself in the field; and afterward build Thine house" (Prov. xxiv. 27). Preparation for the work of redemption was made *without*, or outside. Outside what? Time. Time is that short parenthesis separated, or cut off from eternity, beginning with the creation as recorded in Gen. i. 1, and ending with the declaration of the angel, who "swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are. and the sea, and the things which are therein, *that there should be time no longer*" (Rev. x. 6). Previous to creation's work, ere time had its being, elect man dwelt in the thoughts of God. But one portion of God's most Holy Word confirmatory of a truth is better than a whole hour's argument; therefore, turn with me to John i. 1: "*In the beginning was the Word*, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now look at the first verse of His first epistle: "*That which was from the beginning*, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." What beginning is this? Turn to Prov. viii. 22, 23: "The LORD possessed Me in *the beginning of His way*, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or

ever the earth was." As you read the subsequent part of this chapter, you will see that God's works of old were, laying the foundations of the earth, preparing the heavens, and strengthening (he fountains of the deep. Now turn to Psa. cii. 25, quoted by the apostle in Heb. i. 10: "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." But see: "The beginning of His way before His works of old," was His election of His people in Christ Jesus, and the manifestation of His love to them in that eternal, unconditional, irrevocable act. "*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.*" If we want further Scriptural proof, let us turn to Matt. xxv. 34: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from the foundation of the world.*" Again, Eph. i. : "According as He hath chosen us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Again: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began.*" Now look at this:

"*Chosen you to salvation.*" Here we have God's election, God's choice. Some of you may be ready to ask, What is God's election! It is God's choice of a people for Himself, in whom He will be everlastingly glorified. This may not be clear enough for you. Well, if you were in the North of England, you would often hear an old Saxon phrase like this, "*Pick which you like.*" Pick or choose! What is it to pick or choose? Let us be plain here. You go into a shop, when certain articles are put before you. The person waiting upon you says, Pick or choose which you like. This does not mean that you are to take the whole lot, but that you are to take those you prefer and leave the rest. When God's Word speaks of His choice, His election, it means that He, in His counsel and covenant, chose a people to be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, and left the rest who are born in sin, live in sin, love sin, die in sin, and perish in sin. O, say you, I cannot believe that! Who said you could? Who asked you to believe it? I never ask any one to believe this

solemn but very precious truth, it being my privilege by God's grace to "preach the Word," and leave Him to do His own work, for —

"Application  
Is the work of God alone."

*"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."* Has He chosen you as the sheep of the good Shepherd, the bride of the heavenly Bridegroom, the heirs of His glory, and the partners of His throne? Glorious choice! He has knit together His elect in one fellowship in the mystical body of His dear Son to experience His salvation here below, and His glory up yonder.

"Christ be My First Elect, He said,  
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head,  
Before He gave the mountains birth,  
Or laid foundations for the earth."

He chose Christ as His First Elect, and then gave His elect people into His safe keeping. All in Christ are elected. All out of Christ are rejected. This is God's solemn truth. But if you want still further confirmation in these precious verities, turn to Rom. xi. 5: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Were it not for the election of grace salvation would be an utter impossibility. No election no salvation! Without God's election the eternal damnation of all Adam's race would be certain. This is the truth, whether you believe it or reject it. Mark well that solemn declaration in Rom. ix. 11: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." This is election, irrespective of works, merit, or anything seen in the creature, simply because He had a favour unto us. Some of His elect within these walls this evening may be sighing and crying, and inwardly inquiring, How am I to know that I am one of those for whom thanksgiving is rendered to God because of their

election? To such say, Notice the fruits of election abounding in the text.

"*Chosen you to salvation.*" Salvation "according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1 — 9). Salvation in the Person, blood, and obedience of Jesus. "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). Salvation by the power and gracious indwelling of the blessed Spirit from Satan, sin, the world, and self. Look at this!" Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11). What does that mean? That a day is coming when we shall put off this body of death and corruption, when we shall be everlastingly free from all sin, suffering, and sorrow, when we shall enter into the presence of the King, and sing through a never-ending and glorious eternity, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." If at this very moment the curtain which hides the heavenly country from our view could be drawn aside, and we were permitted to cast our eyes over the vast multitude of elect, redeemed, and glorified sinners, we should not see a single *free-wilier* or *co-operator* there. There is no free-wilier in glory. Every will is swallowed up in that of a sovereign God. Not one discordant note of creature merit, nor jarring sound of man's free-will can mar the sweet music of the glorified saints' song of everlasting praise to God. He hath chosen us to salvation, therefore we must be saved. If there is any failure between eternal choice and everlasting glory there must be a reflection on the character, love, wisdom, and power of JEHOVAH. But, blessed be His holy name, there is no failure seen by His own taught ones, and no reflection cast upon Him by any of His own who are brought into experimental union with Himself. We will now consider how we are to know that we are saved.

III. — Sanctification And Faith — "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Sanctification! What is it? It is *setting apart, laying aside, consecrating, or separating* to solemn and spiritual purposes. The most essential part of sanctification lies in

the Source or Fountain thereof. Creature power, or creature holiness, have no place here, it being wholly of the Lord. See! it is set before us in the New Testament in its origin, work, and perfection. I love to view it in its sevenfold aspect. 1. Sanctified by the Father (Jude 1). 2. Sanctified by the Son (Eph. v. 26). 3. Sanctified by the Holy Ghost (2 Thes. ii. 13). 4. Sanctified by faith that is in Christ (Acts xxvi. 18). 5. Sanctified by the Word of truth (John xvii. 17). 6. Sanctified with His own blood (Heb. xiii. 12). 7. Sanctified wholly (1 Thess. v. 23). Do we know and love the Father? Then we are sanctified or separated from the world. Is Jesus revealed in us as our Wisdom, Righteousness, *Sanctification*, Redemption, and Glory? Then we are sanctified, or separated, from the service of the devil. Is the Holy Ghost our Teacher, Guide, and Comforter? Then we are sanctified, or separated, from allegiance to the flesh. Is the faith of God's Christ (Gal. ii. 20), of God's elect (-Titus i. 1), of God's operation (Col. ii. 13), precious to you? Then you are sanctified from the faith of devils, and from the false duty-faith of fleshly professors. Has the Word of truth come with living power to your heart? Then you are sanctified, or separated, from every word save that of Jesus. Is the blood of Christ your only plea for acceptance? Then you are sanctified, or separated, from all the vain hopes and fleshly endeavours which characterize a carnal religion. Is Christ Jesus made of God unto you *Sanctification*? Then you are sanctified, or separated, wholly to God. This sanctification is seen, not in the improving, mending, or progressive renovation of our wretched fleshly nature; but in beholding the flesh in all its deformity and depravity low in the dust, while the elect sinner sighs for the period when, divested of the burden of the flesh, he will be for ever shut in with God, away from sin, and Satan, and *hateful self*.

*"And belief of the truth."* Belief of the truth, or obedience thereto, is the means God has appointed and retains in His own hands for the purification of the soul (1 Pet. i. 22) and the manifest sanctification of the saints (John xvii. 17). This is too simple for unsanctified souls, hence their endless objections to God having all things His own way with His own. Oh, say they, your election and

sanctification does away with prayer, believing, and good works. Nay, Master Objector, you are totally wrong. We believe and maintain that all things pertaining to life and godliness are of God. Ejection is of God! sanctification is of God! prayer is of God! faith is of God! good works are of God! Turn to Luke xviii. 7: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, *which cry day and night unto Him?*" Is that doing away with prayer? No! the grace of election and the spirit of grace and supplication are inseparable in living souls. Look here! Titus i. 1: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, *according to the faith of God's elect*, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." Here we see *faith and election* joined together by Divine decree and Divine power, and none can put them asunder. Now what about good works? Turn to Isa. lxxv. 22: "For as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and *Mine elect*, shall long *enjoy the work of their hands.*" God's elect, who are quickened into life by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, are a praying, believing, and working people; but they can neither pray, believe, or work at will, or by the authority, command, or dictation of mortals. Blessed be His Name, they pray, they believe, they work, not to influence His love, but because His love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. We now consider briefly, —

IV. — Grace And Glory — "Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Election and sanctification are revealed in calling. We see two callings in the Bible, one *outward*, the other *inward*. The *outward* sounds in the natural ear, the *inward* is received and obeyed by the spiritual understanding. See Matt. xx. 16: "Many be *called*, but few chosen." Look at Rev. xvii. 14: "And they that are with Him are *called*, and chosen, and faithful." In both of these quotations calling comes first. This is illustrated in the case of Gideon's warriors. Numbers responded to his call, but comparatively few stood JEHOVAH'S test. So in God's call, the declaration of God's Gospel, the preaching of His Word, only those who stand the fire and endure the furnace are the chosen of God. The fleshly mind will object, Oh! if that is the truth then away goes all necessity for diligence. Don't

be in a hurry! Just ask our friend Peter. Listen! "Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10). Calling, election, and diligence appear here in sweet harmony, and all elect vessels of mercy within the sound of my voice know that when called by the sovereign grace and love of God to hate sin, dread Satan, and fear temptation, they do give diligence to make their calling and election sure. Sure, not in respect to God, but in their own heart's experience. Objector asks, "Is this sureness dependent upon my diligence? No more than the sustenance of your body is dependent upon the food you eat. God gives the appetite. God gives the food, God gives His blessing on what is eaten, to the nourishing and building up of the body. God is first. God is last, God is everything in providence and grace to His own Spirit-taught children.

"*Our Gospel.*" Not a yea and nay Gospel, but one which proclaims a full, free, and everlasting salvation for all who spiritually need it.

"*The obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Not the incommunicable glory of His Godhead, but the *obtaining*, that is by the lot, or will of JEHOVAH, the glory which He treasured up in Him before all worlds, the glory of His kingdom, for He is *our Lord*; the glory of His salvation, for He is our *Jesus*; the glory of His communications, for He is our *Christ*, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. See how this is confessed from His opened heart to the Father, in John xvii. 22: "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." Precious Saviour! privileged sinners! See! He commands: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (ver. 24). The love of the Father to the Son revealed in His sons and daughters is the glory bestowed upon and obtained by the election of grace.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

# XXIV. DAVID SITTING BEFORE THE LORD.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,  
June 10th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto!

"And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord GOD; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD."

"And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD, knowest Thy servant."

— 2 Samuel vii. 18 — 20.

BEFORE proceeding to notice the precious words I have read for our meditation this evening, I would ask you to take a glance at the circumstances in connection with which they are recorded for the instruction, comfort, and edification of the Church of God throughout all time, and to notice a few prominent points which appear, in which you may be blest with food for meditation and truth for instruction. At the commencement, we find counsel for preachers and caution to hearers. David sat in his house, the Lord having given him rest round about from all his enemies. It is a marvellous fact that rest, even to the children of God, is irksome to their restless

nature. They are never long at one stay. If He blesses them with His own sweet rest, through the love, blood, wounds, and righteousness of Jesus, they must be seeking out *something to do*. The most precious privilege that a child of God can enjoy is to sit at the feet of Jesus, learning His will, and never-to start on an errand but at His bidding. You see something of this spirit in Mary (Luke x. 39; John xi. 20). Martha, good and gracious, but busy and bustling; while Mary, who "sat at Jesus' feet," is commended. Look also at John xxi. 20 — 22. Peter seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved, saith, "Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me." That is counsel given to one whose restless spirit wanted to be doing some thing, if that something were only to be meddling with another's affairs. It was not given to John, who was absorbed with Jesus, who had learned to sit at the Master's feet, lean on the Master's bosom, and nestle close to the Master's heart.

David had rest from all enemies round about. And "the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." What did he mean by this? The suggestion was simply that which reigns paramount in the hearts of all ceremonialists and Ritualists, and on the surface appears very specious. Ought we to live in a house grander than those *we* erect for God? The house of God ought to be beautiful and pleasing to the sight. This appears very plausible, but depend upon it, Satan's cloven foot is lurking near. As for grand, gorgeous, and ornamental places of worship, the child of God desires them not, while he docs look for 'that which becomes the worship and service of God, and is comfortable, convenient, and creditable. But see how the prophet of the Lord is caught in Satan's net, in the very meshes which David had thrown around him. " And Nathan said unto the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee." He, God's prophet, coincides with the shortsighted views of God's king. His reply sounds well, but underneath there is something contrary to the mind and will of God. This is calculated to teach us a very important lesson, winch is this: however highly gifted, or deeply taught a

teacher may be, however wonderful his view of God's Word, or his ability to trace out the varied experiences of the father or the babe in Christ — see! don't pin your faith to his sleeve, nor risk your peace of mind, comfort, or confidence on that man's judgment. May God, in His infinite goodness and mercy, lift you up above the will and judgment of men, and give you to know what that means: "But he that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man" (1 Cor. ii. 15). "*Go, do all that is in thine heart.*" A pretty figure we should make of ourselves if we had such a license granted to us. It is not the desire of the child of God to do all that is in his heart, but to wait for the revelation of God's will, and to watch the guidance of His hand, without which all must go wrong.

"And it came to pass that night that the Word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go, and tell My servant, David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build Me a house for Me to dwell in?" This was as much as to say, Nathan, go and tell My servant David that thou hast led him astray altogether. Didst thou tell him to go and do all that is in his heart to build a house for Me? Now tell him that he shall not do all that is in his heart, but I will do all that is in Mine. Tell him that he shall not build Me a house, but I will build one for him. See verse 11: "Also the LORD telleth thee that *He will build thee a house.*" You see a vast difference between Nathan's counsel and God's determination. God will build a house for David, but David shall not build a house for God. Now mark! it was God's design that a house should be built to His name; and the history of that house should be a lesson to His children throughout all time. Where is that house at this moment? Gone! Not one stone is left upon another; and the cold crescent floating in the breeze proclaims the dominion of the infidel. Here we have a word for Christian idolaters, for those who make so much of the sign of the cross, for the blood-thirsty pietists, whose covetous and idolatrous eyes are on the so-called holy places in the land of Islam — places upon which God, in His all-wise Providence, and in the order of His irrevocable decrees, put His veto, and trampled under His foot long years ago. The tooth of time has eaten away the sculptured work of Solomon,

and Ichabod is seen upon every nook and corner of that which was once the glory of all lands. As for *the holy places*, one's heart sickens to think of them. They are unholy indeed as evidenced by the strife and bloodshed oftentimes witnessed in them, and that not from the hands of the Turk, but from Christians so-called — the Greek and Latin. And we have those in Parliament, and other places, who are trying with all their might to work upon the gullibility of John Bull, and create sympathy for those whom they style their fellow-Christians in the East. Fellow-Christians indeed! Bloodthirsty ones, who love the dagger more than they love the cross. Now, don't you think that I am appealing to your sympathies in favour of the Turk. The Turk is about as good as the Czar, and the Czar about as good as the Turk; they both belong to the same family, and have the same father; but their father is not mine. Thus you have my mind upon that matter. God's veto and condemnation are upon these *unholy places*, and Satan, with the envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness of his brood, has a rare time of it. The potsherds of the earth, whether Pope, Czar, Turk, or others, must strive with the potsherds of the earth, but it is our privilege to rest in the LOU!), and to know that there is no place holy under the sun but that which our Jesus sanctifies with His gracious presence, and where He breathes His own sweet peace in the hearts of His tried and tempted brethren. O how glorious it is for the child of the living God to turn away from the natural to the spiritual, and to see God's promises to David all fulfilled in Christ, and in the experience of the members of His mystical body.

Another point I wish you to notice is in reference to the controversy which has been long in existence among professing Christians, as to the eternal preservation of the Church of God in Christ Jesus. Mark what I say: *the eternal preservation of the Church of God in Christ Jesus*. I do not say "*final perseverance*," for you may rest assured that it would be queer perseverance without the upholding hand of Israel's covenant God. Now Satan is sure to question God's Word in the hearts of God's children. They are perplexed as to the possibility of losing the evidences of their sonship, falling away from grace,

and being eternally lost. The enemy brings forth examples from God's Word, but when these are fairly tested, they prove to be no examples at all. Solomon is produced as an illustration of falling from grace. Blessed be God, he was a gracious character. When? He was the object of God's love and grace before ever the Lord revealed Himself to him. And after he wandered away from the Lord, after outlandish women made him to sin and fill Jerusalem with idolatry and adultery. Is that the case according to God's blessed Word? It is, most assuredly. Oh! to preach such a doctrine is very dangerous, and will produce licentiousness! Well, friend, if that is thy conviction, never give away another Bible, for it is full of covenant promises and declarations of the everlasting security of every elect and redeemed sinner.

"What from Christ that soul shall sever,  
Bound by everlasting bands?  
Once in Him in Him for ever,  
Thus the eternal covenant stands;  
None shall pluck thee  
From the Strength of Israel's hands."

As to Solomon, he did wander, he did fall; but never beyond the reach of JEHOVAH'S arm, or from the love of His heart. There are those who will have Judas saved and Solomon damned; that they will, for I have heard such unscriptural declarations again and again. You may rest assured that "Enmity against God" is in all such declarations. Now look at the gracious statement God makes concerning Solomon in the 12th verse of our chapter: "And when thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; *but My mercy shall not depart away from him*, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." Is not that sufficient? God's

unalterable will and purpose concerning poor, erring, wandering, foolish Solomon.

Another point, and it is a very blessed one, you will find in the 27th verse: "For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house, *therefore hath Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee.*" See! *He found* in his heart a prayer, and a spirit of prayer to pray it! O, says Mr. Formal Professor, I can pray any, or every hour of the day. That being your confession I should not like to live with you. I have no desire to live with anybody that can pray by the clock, for such praying is but polluted breath, and in the estimation of JEHOVAH it is but hateful prating. It is one thing with a broken heart to pray to God in the time of need; it is another thing altogether with a whole heart to address Him in terms of impudent dictation. Do notice well that precious sentence: "Found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee." Does not the word "*found*" indicate that prayer was a precious privilege to David? Pebbles are common, jewels are scarce, mien you find anything, that which you find must be scarce, or must be wanting. Prayer with David was heart-work. He felt his need, and therefore, as a spiritual beggar he prayed. He felt his weakness, and as a spiritual child he cried. It is a blessed privilege to see things as God declares them, according to that precious testimony: "In Thy light we shall see light" (Psalm xxxvi. 9). David now sees matters, not by the dim light of reason, but in the brightness of God's revelation. Mark well God's teaching and David's profiting thereby; it is not now David building a house for God, but God building a house for David. It is not David working for the Lord, but the Lord working for David. It is not David talking about doing for the Lord; but having learned of the Lord's doings for him, he could say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." David brought by the power of the Holy Ghost to experience his weakness, want, and woe, and having the promise of his God to perform all things for him, says, "Therefore hath Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee." What was this prayer based upon? Covenant promises, and

characterized by covenant pleas: "And now, O LORD God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as Thou hast said." This is faith's plea before the throne, and such asking was proof positive that David was living ' on JEHOVAH'S promise, which he believed would be performed in his heart's experience. Let us now, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of Him who has been promised to the Church to guide each member into all essential truth, look at this precious portion. It is blessed for us to know that what is essential and necessary for us to know will be communicated to us, because the Holy Ghost, the faithful Witness in the everlasting covenant, has held Himself responsible, and bound Himself by the most solemn obligations, to communicate the will of God to every one of His children. Let us notice,

I. — "*Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD.*" "*Then!*" When? Let us read the preceding verse: "According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David." This was the communication of God's mind through human instrumentality, the conveyance of heavenly treasure through a poor earthen vessel. Now the moment the blessed Spirit applied the message to the mind of David, "*Then*" in a time of finding, (Psalm xxxii. 6.), a time of love, a time of gracious revelation, a time of sweet anointing, a time of precious bedewing, a time of hallowed communion, when the mind and will of the king rested in sweet acquiescence with the purpose and pleasure of his God. Let us now notice the attitude of David when he entered into the presence of JEHOVAH. See! "*And sat before the Lord.*" In various portions of God's most Holy Word, we see different positions peculiar to the varied experiences of God's children. Sometimes prostrate before Him, at another time we see the child of God on his feet, ready to do anything for the Master, and at another, not prostrate, not standing, but enjoying a higher point of spiritual and heavenly privilege, even the gracious position set before us in the words of the text — "*And sat before the LORD*)" We will notice these three positions and their peculiarities: —

1. Prostrate as a *miner*.
2. Standing as a *servant*.
3. Sitting as a *son*.

Now tell me, which of these three positions is most acceptable to you, and to the desires of your soul before God? Is it groveling in the dust, groaning in service, or sitting at His gracious feet, looking into His smiling face, receiving those looks of sweet recognition and words of patient grace which melt the heart into nothingness before Him? Is it not the latter? Certainly it is. Blessed position! Precious privilege! Approved in Christ and sitting at His feet like the demoniac. (Luke viii. 35). Loved and taught by a precious Christ, as in the case of Mary (Luke x. 3(.))- Favoured and caressed like loving John who sat at the table with Him, and leaned upon His bosom (John xiii. 23). But first of all we must consider what it is to be prostrate before Him. Know ye anything of this humbling experience? Prostrate before the great and glorious God of heaven as sin-convicted, law-condemned, devil-tormented sinners. What were the means that JEHOVAH used to bring you thus to His feet? Ask those favoured sinners whose names appear in God's most Holy Word, and beg of His Spirit to lead you into a right judgment in so solemn and important a matter. First we see it in the application of God's spiritual, perfect, and fiery law. I do not say *moral law*; that may do for outsiders, mere professors and hypocrites, who rest satisfied with their outward conduct and consistency before men, but know nothing of soul prostration before God. A *moral law* will never do for a true-born child of God. The law of God is spiritual, and the moment I experienced its spirituality, I felt something of its fire, and was overcome by the perfection of its demands. "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14). By it I find I have no standing whatever before that God against whom I have sinned, whom I have offended, and whom I must have wearied out and out were it not for His unchanging patience and uncomplaining love. But turn to Rom. iii. 19: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that

every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." As the law is applied in its spirituality, we see that we are to yield unvarying obedience to every command in the Decalogue. See! We are to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Now this command in its spirituality brings the child of God into something deeper, something higher, and something more mysterious than the mere Sabbatarian can detect. *The Sabbath!* What was it *l*. Blessed be God, it was a type of that rest which He has appointed, prepared, and preserved for His people in the person and work of the Son of His love. One of the restrictions in connection with the Sabbath was this: "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day" (Exodus xxxv. 3). Now, Mr. Sabbatarian, where art thou? Got any fire in thy habitation to-day? O, say you, I must have my victuals cooked! You must, must you '. But what about God's prohibition?" Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day!" When I am brought to understand the spirituality and design of the law, that it was my schoolmaster to Christ, and that Christ, in the perfection of His finished work, is my Sabbath; and when I am brought to sit at His gracious feet, and feel the warmth of that fire kindled in my heart by the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, I then rejoice in the possession of that eternal, uninterrupted, and unceasing rest given by Him to the Church in union with Him. You may ask, o you enjoy that every clay of the week? I am not talking about that, but of the rest which God has provided for His people in Christ Jesus ; and blessed be His holy name, He leaves not His own children to kindle their own fire (Isaiah 1. 11); but kindles it for them, according to Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us."

Thus the love of God in our hearts kindles a flame within which leaps homeward and heavenward; and Oh! what will it be when, free from the burden of the flesh, and away from Satan's assaults, the world's temptations, and free from all sin, we shall lay our now weary heads upon the bosom of everlasting love. Sometimes, when

through grace I do enter into rest, and experience the fires of the Spirit's kindling, I long to be for ever with my blessed Lord and Master. When the moment of dissolution arrives, may we be blest with the same confidence and sweet assurance once manifested by a poor dying lad, who, when some one said, "Let us sing

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,"

cried out, "No, no! Not stormy banks to me. The tempests are past. All, all is peace." Such is the experience our longing souls desire to have when the summons comes for us to enter into the joy of our Lord, and have done with sin for ever.

Look at those words, "mouth stopped," and "guilty before God." See how this is experienced by the convicted children of the living God. Before the revelation of a precious Christ in His spotless purity, unsullied holiness, and unclouded glory, poor nature quails and falls. When Isaiah beheld the glory of Christ in the temple 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" (Isaiah vi. 1 — 5). Look again at the experience of the man greatly beloved, that model of moral excellency, Daniel. When his Lord and Master appeared to him in His excellency, majesty, and glory, he said "There remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan. x. 8). Ar Saul of Tarsus journeyed toward Damascus and saw the glory of the Lord shining beyond the brightness of the noonday sun, he was cast down to the ground, speechless, sightless, helpless, and none can tell the sorrows of his three days' fast (Acts ix. 3 — 9). John, after many precious revelations, and sweet love-visits from his Master, sees His glory as the King-Priest in the lonely sea-girt isle of Patmos. He says, "And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." Now then, what is our true position before Him? Ofttimes it is that of trembling sinners prostrate in the dust.

2. *Standing as a servant.* Service is the order of the present day. What kind of service? God will settle that question for each of us sooner or later, either in confidence or confusion. Awakened sinners generally want to do something, either to appease God or to improve their position. The three thousand on the day of Pentecost, as they were pricked in their hearts, cried, "*What must we do?*" The Philippian jailer, trembling, cried to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, *what must I do* to be saved?" The children of God would stand before Him on legal ground if they could. They would appear in His sacred presence on ground of their own preparing if they must; but God in the riches of His grace has some better thing in store for them. They stand not before Him on the ground of their service to Him, or by their doing, praying, obeying, or believing. Blessed be His holy name, it is all of His own rich, free, sovereign, uninfluenced grace from first to last. He gives His children every inch of spiritual ground and every particle of spiritual privilege, which they shall enjoy up yonder, when all the family are gathered around His throne, and without a discordant note the song ascends, Salvation to our God and King. The highly-gifted Toplady well understood this when he said,

"Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law's demands:  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone:  
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Now let us look at an illustration or two to the point. You well remember the case of Jacob sending his ten sons into Egypt to buy corn. They went down expecting to meet *the governor*. They address him as "*my lord*," and when convicted and troubled in their consciences, Judah said, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we are my lord's servants." He dealt with them in the spirit of a lord, a ruler, a governor. "Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him." But after a time he called them to him,

made himself known to them, and said, "I am Joseph your brother." Are there not those here to-night who have striven and groaned to stand before Jesus on the ground of service? Certainly there are! But when He appeared and made Himself known to you as your Brother and Saviour, showed to you His pierced hands, and feet, and side, and thorn-crowned brow, and gave you to experience the sweet sympathy of His loving heart, then you were prostrate before Him in adoring gratitude. See! "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. *Moreover he kissed all his brethren*" (Gen xlv. 14). But look, you who think you know the most and are entitled to much because of your rare and deep experiences, look at Joseph ; he fell upon the neck of the youngest, and gave the youngest and weakest the first kiss. Do notice that! Ah, you may depend upon it there are many poor, weak children of God, whose life and experience are questioned by the fat and the strong, who receive many love-visits and sweet kisses from the lips of Jesus. The burden of the Word of the Lord in my ministry here is, that He may come and reveal Himself graciously to your waiting hearts. "*Moreover he kissed all his brethren.*" Not one left without a sweet token of his love. The last as sure as the first. As brethren of the governor they enter his house, sit at his table, and are waited upon by his servants. O how blessedly this was the case with David. "Then went king David in and sat before the LORD."

Don't you know another blessed instance in which *service* is anticipated, but *sonship* was enjoyed? It is the case of the Prodigal son in Luke xv. The son wandered from his father's house, spent all in riotous living, and began to be in want. Want caused him to think of something that existed long before his want. What was that? The comforts of his father's house, the bounties of his father's board, and the love of his father's heart. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." He fain would, but could not. God's living children cannot feed upon the husks with which the swinish religious multitude are satisfied. And he said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called

thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off." Mark! A great way off the enjoyment of his Father's love. Not a great way off from his Father, for the Father is ever near to His children though they know it not. "A great way off" describes the feelings of the son, not the affections of the Father. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." See! He looked up into that offended but loving Father's face, and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Why did he not finish that which he intended saying? Because he could not. Why? As the now glorified Parks of Openshaw once said, which found a place in my heart, the sweetness of which I have not lost to this day :- — "*The father stopped his blubbing lips with a kiss.*" "But the father said to the servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf." The son sits at the father's table, and is waited upon hand and foot by the father's servants. So it is with all those who are brought into experience of God's everlasting, unchanging, and uninfluenced love. They can sing with the Spirit and with the understanding also:

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
    And my Beloved is mine;  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
    Into His ' house of wine :'  
I stand upon His merit.  
    I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
    In Emmanuel's land."

"Then went king David in and sat before the LORD." Blessed privilege! Sweet position! We may well join in with Watts, and sing,

"My willing soul would stay,  
    In such a frame as this,

And Kit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss."

Objector says such preaching will lead to presumption, but Objector knows nothing at all about it. The sinner who enjoys the love and grace of God, his covenant Father, through the wounds, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, is truly humble, self-denying, and self-ignoring. David sought, David sat, David said.

*"Who am I, O Lord God?"* Mark! The greater the experience of grace and the greater the sense of unworthiness. Is this question raised in the hearts of God's elect? The answer though different in words is the same in spirit.

Who am I? *"Dust and ashes."* — Abraham (Gen. xviii. 27).

Who am I? *"I am less than all."* — Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 10 — margin).

Who am I? *"Behold I am vile"* (Job. xl. 4).

Who am I? *"A worm and no man."* — David (Psalm xxii. 6).

Who am I? *"A sinful man, O Lord?"* — Peter (Luke v. 8).

Who am I? *"Chief of sinners"* — Paul (1 Tim. i. 15).

Who am I? *"As dead"* — John (Rev. i. 17).

My dear friends! The more we are brought by the blessed Spirit into the enjoyment of our covenant Father's love in Christ Jesus, and the more we shall know what those two lines mean,

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes  
The humbler I shall lie."

"Who am I?" — not only personally, but relatively — "*and what is my house?*" Look at this in regard to the house from which David sprang, and you find it was the least of all the houses in Judah. Look at it in reference to his kingdom, and you see revolt and corruption on every hand. Look at it as respects his family — his children — the children of a man after God's own heart. See! Adonijah — fast, forward, impudent! Amnon — unclean, filthy, obscene! Absalom — disobedient, obstinate, rebellious! And Solomon with all his wisdom, when left to himself, was foolishness indeed. Let David look at his house, in whatever light it was presented to him, he was truly humbled before his God, and knew full well that no house would do for him but that of God's framing, rearing, and establishing. Now notice,

"*Thou hast brought me hitherto.*" I like that word "*hitherto.*" It leads me back to the days of eternity, so that I can sing intelligently with Dr. Watts, —

"O God, our Help *in (yes past,*  
Our Hope fur years to come,  
Our Shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal Home.

"*Hitherto!*" From the moment I was formed in the womb. See Psalm xxii. 9,10: "Them keptest me in safety when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother's belly." O God! for Thomas Bradbury to think that he should drink in nourishment and strength from the breasts of Mary Ann, his mother, a poor, weak woman, is marvellous indeed. Mysterious are Thy ways, O God! The weak mother gone home! The child left in the wilderness to sin, to sigh, and at length to sound forth the praises of His covenant God; yes, and sometimes to sing,

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"When in the slippery paths of youth  
With heedless steps I ran,

Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,  
And brought me up to man."

"*Hitherto!*" To the time of love, to the time of need, to the time of favour.

"*And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord GOD.*" Blessed be God, He does not despise the day of small things, neither does He despise those whom He has made small in their own estimation. What are His people? Specks on the ocean of time! Motes in infinite space! Mere worms of the earth! Yet, think of this, —

"Design'd to deck His crown, they were  
Chosen of old and bought with blood."

"*A small thing.*" Yes, the children of Zion are sometimes small in their desires, small in their evidences, small in faith and hope, but large in their apprehensions and fears. Yet He has a desire to the work of His own hands, however small such work may appear.

"*But Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come.*" How long is that? So long as David behaved himself? That would not be "*a great while to come.*" I do love this plain, homely language. Listen (verse 16)! "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee." I must hasten.

"*And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?*" Lord, men deal not with each other as Thou art dealing with me. My dear friends, if you should forget every word I have spoken to you to-night, may you remember this (Hosea xi. 8, 9), "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Adman? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, *I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man.*" If our God were to deal with us after our sins, or according to our dealings one with another, where should we be?

The ways of our God are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. A God of everlasting and unchanging love.

*"And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD, knowest Thy servant."* David's heart was swallowed up in wonder, love, and praise. Lord, Thou knowest all my sins, and yet Thou art my Salvation. Thou knowest all my sorrows, and dost bless me with Thy succour. "Thou knowest the way that I take, and when Thou hast tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job xxiii. 10). "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path" (Psalm cxlii. 3). O ye tried and tempted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted ones, He who knows all about you, and

"who has brought you *hitherto*  
Will bring you all your journey through,  
And give you daily cause to raise  
New Ebenezers to His praise."

The time is gone, and I'm sorry for it.

# XXV. AN ADVOCATE FOR SINFUL LITTLE CHILDREN.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,  
June 17th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

— 1 John ii. 1.

THE spirit of those words gives evidence that the writer had been blest with close communion with his Master, and privileged to sit at His feet and learn those sweet lessons of love which none can communicate but a precious Christ. Hallowed familiarity was his lot as he leaned upon Jesus' bosom, melted into nothingness under the power of those looks of pure and unchanging love which fell from His oftentimes tear-dimmed eyes. As one of the special favorites and constant companions of the gentle and ever-loving Saviour, he drank in much of His spirit, which is breathed throughout the whole of his writings. As "evil communications corrupt good manners," so association with gentle and loving characters or dispositions tends to an assimilation therewith. You may see this in that precious statement in chapter iii. 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear *we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*"

Association with Jesus produces gentleness, kindness, patience, love. It is when He tenderly takes us aside from the world, and whispers into our anxious ears, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," that we experience a brokenness and melting of heart, and a willingness to be anything or nothing in serving the brethren of so loving a Master.

Let us, in humble dependence upon His gentle Spirit, meditate upon this precious portion which He has given us to consider tonight. In it we find much to instruct, comfort, and edify our minds. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." We will consider,

I. — *The persons addressed* — "My little children."

II. — *The writing* — "Write I unto you."

III. — *The subjects* — "These things."

IV. — *The reason* — "That ye sin not."

V. — *The caution* — "And if any man sin."

VI. — *The encouragement* — "We have an Advocate with the Father."

VII. — *The character of the Advocate* — "Jesus Christ the Righteous."

I. — *The Persons Addressed* — "My little children." This title of endearment demonstrates the loving spirit of John. He not only drank in deeply of the spirit of his Master, but he learned also to speak in the same heavenly language. This title he oftentimes heard from the gracious lips of Him who spake as never man spake. Turn with me to the thirteenth chapter of his Gospel, commencing with the 31st verse. We read: "Therefore when he was gone out." Who was gone out? Judas, the incarnate devil; for devil he was, as we read in John vi. 70: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve." Why did He

choose a devil? To do a devil's work, which none but a devil could do. Judas was gone out, and that restraint upon Jesus being removed, He could now breathe freely, communicate His mind without reserve, and enjoy unfettered communion with His own eternally-loved ones. "Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him. *Little children.*' Do you notice this is the very title John uses in our text? The rest of Jesus' language here is also that of John which I read in the first epistle, second chapter, for our instruction this evening. See! "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 34,35; 1 John ii. 7 — 10). Now look at John xxi. 5. When Jesus appeared to His disciples, after His resurrection, at the Sea of Tiberias, He said unto them. "*Children*, have ye any meat?" Though they had forsaken Him again and again, and were wholly taken up with their old worldly occupation and its associations, yet He is ever the same, He rests, or, is silent in His love, and with no complaining or upbraiding word He owns them as His children still.

"His love no end or measure knows,  
No change can turn its course;  
Eternally the same it flows  
From one immortal source."

Paul had been taught the same language, as we see in Gal. iv. 19: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Though the Galatian Christians were so fickle and changeable in their dealings with Paul, yet, with the spirit of his Master, he burned with love for them. He longed to see the evidences of spiritual life, the fruits of the Spirit, and the marks of the chosen family; but instead of these the works of their wretched flesh, such as complaining, murmuring, and strife were manifest in them. Still they were Paul's little children, and he rested not satisfied

concerning them until Christ, and Christ alone was seen and enjoyed in them.

*"My little children."* This winning and endearing title bespeaks both a loving interest in them, and a spiritual relationship to them. They were members of the same eternally-loved, elect, redeemed, and living family. But they were, no doubt, John's spiritual children in the Lord. The word "children" implies birth, life, and subsistence. They are "born of God," live in God, and He is their subsistence. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again (margin — - *from above*) he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). John declared, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John i. 12, 13). In this act of regeneration God is a Sovereign. He uses instruments, or He dispenses with them just as He pleases. Paul was a spiritual father in the Gospel. Turn with me to 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15: "I write not these things to shame you, but *as my beloved sons I warn you*. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; *for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you again through the Gospel.*" See how affectionately He addresses Timothy (first epistle, first chapter, second verse): "*Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith.*" Look again (second epistle, first chapter, second verse): "*To Timothy, my dearly beloved son.*" Still further (Philemon 10): "*I beseech thee, for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.*" Did you notice the means? Mark that well! THE "WORD! THE TRUTH! THE GOSPEL!

1. BEGOTTEN. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth" (James i. 18).

2. QUICKENED. "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psalm cxix. 50).

3. BORN. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." God's own sent ministers are His instruments, and His own pure Word is the effective cause of the new and spiritual birth in

elect vessels of mercy. No other means can avail. The command is, Preach the Word! Preach the Truth! Preach the Gospel! Those who "have renounced the bidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commend themselves to men's consciences in the sight of God," find the ministry a burden indeed. They labor for the family of God. They travail in soul for the bringing forth of spiritual children, and, blessed be God, their labor and travail is not in vain in the Lord. They are blessed with spiritual children, and though oftentimes these may give them much concern, yet they are eternally and indissolubly united. Can I ever forget the sorrowing saint from whose exercised spirit and anointed lips I first drank in the words of eternal life? Never! A bond of spiritual union and heavenly relationship was then formed which I believe can never be broken. But mark well each of these three words in your minds. "*My little children.*"

1. "*My.*" Personal relationship.
2. "*Little.*" Affectionate relationship.
3. "*Children.*" Legitimate relationship.

*Children of God. Little* in their own esteem. *Mine* in the bonds of the Gospel, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost. We will now notice,

II. — The Writing — "Write I unto you." God's Book has a variety of names, but generally accepted as the Holy Writings. See! "The Scripture" (Rom. iv. 3): "The Scriptures" (Rom. xv. 4): The "Holy Scriptures" (Rom. i. 3). God has put signal honour upon the Scriptures of truth in giving through them a gracious revelation of Himself to His covenant people. In fact, all that is to be known of Him graciously and in covenant relationship must be revealed therein by the teaching of the blessed Spirit. You remember the scene described in the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation! "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is

called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the spirit on the Lord's-day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last; and *what thou seest write in a book.*" Why write in a book? Because God would have it that by what He caused to be written, individuals and Churches should be guided and governed. The Popish figment of tradition finds no favour at the hands of God. In Old Testament time there was a "*Thus saith the Lord.*" In the clays of our Lord's sojourn upon earth it was "*Verily, verily I say unto you*" and even His sacred declarations were accompanied with direct appeals to what was written. In this dispensation of the Spirit we are safely led by "*What saith the Scripture?*" See how our blessed Lord meets and defeats the attacks of Satan with "*It is written*" (Matt. iv. 4, 7,10). He addresses the Jews thus, "*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me*" (John v. 39). See how He was occupied with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus : "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). Look at the effect of tin's: "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures'?" (verse 32). Look at Him again as He sat at meat with His disciples: "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, *which were written* in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding *that they might understand the Scriptures*" (verses 44, 45). You remember also how the Bereans were commended before the Thessalonians (see Acts xvii. 11): "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the Scriptures* daily, whether these things were so." Here we have true Protestantism, as Chillingworth declared, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." But we go further than this and say. The Christ of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, and revealed in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the only religion that

will satisfy us. Paul contended for this as we see in his remarkable words to Timothy: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them (see John vi). And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. in. 14 — 17).

While dwelling upon this portion of the text I desire to draw your attention to an astounding declaration of Peter which is oftentimes misquoted and perverted by Romish controversialists and perverters of God's Word. You will find it in 2 Peter i. 16 — 21: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see by this that Peter knew and felt something of the power and coming of Jesus to his heart. He did not, like an expectant visionary, make known to them what he expected, but that which he had experienced. "For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure Word of prophecy." A wonderful but very precious declaration! The written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, a more sure Word of prophecy than seeing with the natural eyes the real humanity of Jesus, or hearing with the natural ear the voice of the Father from the excellent glory, ay, or both combined. Do you believe it? Precious few do. A dear soul said to me the other Sunday *in that aisle*, "O that I could but have that one word from His lips, I feel I should be satisfied!" Ah, my dear friends, if we get one word we want another, and another, ay, a thousand more. But mark! "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; *whereunto ye do well that ye take heed*" That is Peter the servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, not Peter the Pope of Rome.

Blessed be God, no such presumer ever lived! But those presumers who profess to be Peter's successors with one accord proclaim concerning the Scriptures of truth, "whereunto ye do well *not* to take heed." Who is right? Peter, or the Popes, *priests*, and presumers who steal his name for their own purposes? Peter by the Holy Ghost is right: "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." That is the portion which Popish perverters wrest to their own destruction. Notice their devilish craft in altering the sense by substituting the word "*for*" in the place of the word "*of*," rendering the portion thus: "No prophecy of the Scripture *is for* any private interpretation." The simple meaning of the Holy Ghost by Peter is, that the Scriptures in their origin and authorship are not according to the private, special, or individual mind of the writers; but as stated in 1 Peter i. 11: "The Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Or, the Scriptures were not given, like that glaring imposition the book of Mormon, through one man; but, as stated so clearly by the apostle: "For the prophecy came not in old time *by the will of man: but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" O how precious it is for us to know that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope' (Rom. xv. 4); and that the Lord and not the writer speaks therein.

III. — The Subjects — "These things." What things? Look at a few of them as recorded in the previous chapter. "*That* which was from the beginning." You see how abruptly the epistle commences. John is filled with the Spirit and love of His Master, that he bursts forth with a glorious strain of inspired and experimental truth. "*That!*" O what wondrous beauties, blessings, and glories are couched beneath that marvellous and mysterious word. All JEHOVAH'S fulness of love treasured up in a precious Christ for an eternally-loved people is here revealed to the enlightened understanding. "*That* ' everlasting

covenant ordered in all things and sure which is all the salvation and all the desire of the children of God. "That" eternal act of the Father in which a definite, but to us innumerable, number of elect souls were given to Christ. "That" blessed One who undertook our cause and pledged Himself to save, succour, and bring to glory all the given ones. "That" undivided, uninfluenced, unalterable love of the great Sacred Three which no finite mind can comprehend nor created intelligence ever explore. "That" which was from the beginning" John had heard, seen, and looked upon, ay, and had handled and felt of the Word of life. "That" which John knew and experienced he must declare, not for the luxury of talking and telling, but that others might enjoy sweet fellowship with Him in the persons, purposes, promises, and performances of JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Mark the fourth verse: "And these things write we unto you, *that your joy may be full.*" The joy of the saints is described *as full*; but the joy of JEHOVAH is exceeding (Jude 24). Exceeding, overflowing, and as the droppings or showers descend in His season, the joy of saved sinners is unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter i. 8).

"*These things* — God is light." Light which reveals to me my sin and Himself my Salvation. Light which discovers my weakness, and then shows me that the LORD is my Strength. Light which makes manifest my dangers and distresses, and then displays to my wondering gaze my Deliverer and Defense. Now see I "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." It is ours to *wait* and *watch* for the light when it is dark, for walking at such a time tends to stumbling. Wait! Watch! is the command of the King to benighted travelers, and to obey is the gracious privilege of all those who have fellowship with Him. "But if we walk in the light, 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." Do notice the exact phraseology of this precious portion! It is not in the past but present tense. It is not "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son has cleansed us from all sin." If it were so, the perfectionist might boast; but it is in the present tense, "*cleanseth*" to

show that there is not a moment of my life but I need the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. As I walk along the sands of the desert my pilgrim feet contract defilement, and each day's close finds me asking Him to wash them in the full, free fountain of atoning blood. Yes, and here we can come a little closer home. What about the sins of the pulpit? What about the sins of the pew? Still closer home we come. The very prayers I utter in the moments of my closest retirement and communion with Him need purging by His precious blood. Blessed be His precious Name!" The blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth* us from all sin." Purgatory, that Popish fable, finds no place here, while perfection in the flesh, that *free-will* delusion, is scattered to the winds. The children of the living God, though cleansed and free from all sin, are sinners still and sinning oft; hence the necessity of John's caution and consolatory counsel: "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. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us." "*These things!*" What glorious subjects! The eternal, life-giving Word! Eternal life in union with Him! Fellowship with Him and the Father! All-cleansing blood! Confession of sin! God's faithfulness and justice in forgiving His people! Look through the whole of the epistle and you will see that Love, Life, Light, and Liberty attend you at every step. "*These things!*" Why did He write them?

IV. — The Reason — "*That ye sin not.*" It is our mercy to know that the publication of covenant verities, electing love, and salvation by free and sovereign grace leads not to sin or licentiousness. The whole scheme and spirit of the Gospel is against sin. The Father hates and reveals His detestation of it in putting all that belonged to His people upon their sinless Surety and Saviour. The Son declared His abhorrence of it in His groans and agonies when enduring the load thereof in dark Gethsemane and upon dreary and dreadful Calvary. The Holy Spirit manifests His hatred of it in the deep convictions He works in the consciences of elect vessels of mercy, the confessions He brings from the sorrowing souls of quickened

sinners, and the loathings of the living family against it. Look at the glorious doctrines of the Gospel in their design, aim, and end! Eternal election is a loud call for separation from sin! Particular redemption reveals a Deliverer from the guilt and power of sin! Complete salvation is JEHOVAH'S unceasing proclamation against sin! Effectual calling is an alluring from the love and life of sin! Regeneration is the quickening and bringing of elect sinners from the death and drudgery of sin! But our wretched natures love sin, would wallow and glory in it, and at last leave us to perish by it. Hence the necessity for the things that are written, "*that ye sin not.*" Tell me, ye who have been blest with a spiritual sight of the Man of sorrows in His deep distress, who have seen His tears in Bethany, His agony in Gethsemane, His desertion on Calvary, is not the language of your heart well expressed in the words of Lyte?

"Dwell on the sight, my stony heart,  
Till every pulse within  
Shall into contrite sorrow start,  
*And hate the thought of sin.*"

Let me ask you who love Him, hate sin, and are sick of yourselves because of your coldness, deadness, and hardness of heart, to read that precious poem of dear Hart's on Gethsemane, and others of a like nature, and if you can read them often without some melting of heart and sorrow for sin, your experience is different to mine. But we must pass on to notice

V. — The Caution — "And if any man sin." Here we have marvellous grace! How differently this sounds to the duty-faith demands and free-will foibles sounded out from ten thousand pulpits to-night. With frantic fervency the fleshly-religious preachers cry, If any man believe! If any man repent! If any man pray! But the Gospel of the grace of God proclaims, "*If any man sin!*" This just suits me! Why? Because I can do nothing else but sin! Yes, this is fact! If I pray I sin! If I praise I sin! If I preach I sin! What the Church would call my good works need washing in atoning blood.

My prayers are infirmities. My faith is worthy of no other name than unbelief. My praises are poor. My repentance needs to be repented of. My daily cry is, and I don't expect to get beyond it, while I am on this side heaven's gates, "God be merciful to me a sinner." See how a sense of sin crops up in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings viii. 46): "If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not)." Mark well how he declares again in Eccles. vii. 20: "For there is not a just man" — that is, a justified man, loved and accepted of his God — "that doeth good, and sinneth not." In some things we offend all, and in all things we offend some. David saved was a confessing sinner. Daniel saved was a praying sinner. Peter saved was a cursing, swearing, lying sinner (Matt. xxvi. 74), after which he became a weeping, repenting, confessing sinner. Are we better than he? In no wise, "for the Scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. iii. 2). "*If any man sin*" Every broken-hearted, sin-sick, and devil-hunted sinner within these "walls can come in there and bless God for such a precious testimony as that which He has given to His elect, redeemed, and regenerate people through Peter in His first epistle, iii. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Unjust we are in everything we do, yet brought to the home, to the throne, to the heart of God in the arms of Incarnate Love. Yes, we would do good, but evil is present with us. We would pray, but we don't know how. We would praise, but our hearts are cold. I would preach, but He teaches me that I am a fool. Well, blessings, and honour, and glory crown His sacred brow; when I cannot pray, He prays for me. When I cannot sing, He sings in me. When I cannot preach, He whispers His own sweet words of love into the tried and exercised hearts of His poor and needy people, according to His covenant declaration: "And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 20).

VI. — The Encouragement — "We have an Advocate with the Father." Now for a moment look at the persons for whom Jesus

Christ the Righteous appears as Advocate. "We," who have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. "We" who walk in the light, as He is in the light, and have fellowship one with another, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. "We" who though the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin, yet we cannot say we have no sin. "We" who daily confess our sins, and find our God and Father faithful and just to forgive us our sins. "We" who have learned the evil of sin by the revelation of the greatness and the glory of the person of the Deliverer. "We" who though delivered from the curse of the law, yet groan under the weight of a body of sin and death. "We" who have been blessed with the assurance that sin shall not have dominion over us, yet daily mourn because sin is so great an annoyance to us and in us. "We" who through our Advocate have access by one Spirit unto the Father, find an adversary at our right hand to accuse and resist us. Now notice this; the advocacy of Christ is co-equal with the propitiation. He pleads for all those for whom His sacred person was given, His precious blood was shed, and His perfect obedience was rendered. Are they sinners saved? They are sinners still in thought, in word, in deed. Satan hates, assaults, tempts, and worries them. The world despises, persecutes, and rejects them. Sins prevail. Corruptions distress. The deceitfulness of the heart wounds the susceptibilities and sensitiveness of the new heart of God's giving. If any one of these sin in any way whatever, the precious truth to them is, "*we have an Advocate with the Father.*"

"*An Advocate.*" Who is an Advocate for? Not for those who behave themselves, and who are always acting up to the rules of strict propriety. Oh, no! This Advocate is for sinful little children: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." See! As assuredly as God brings a poor, vile, trembling sinner into fellowship and communion with Himself, the adversary is sure to be near. You see this in the case of Job: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan (*the adversary* — see margin) came also among them" (Job i. 0). But Job's Vindicator lived and Prevailed for him. Look at Psalm cxl. 12:

"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor." The accuser of the brethren and the hater of God's poor is sure to question both their cause and their right; but God will maintain both. That is a precious view of our Brother, Redeemer, and Friend in Proverbs xxx. 8, 9: "Open Thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open Thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." Is not that an Advocate worth having? Look at that interesting scene described in Zech. iii. 1 — 5. There you have a sinner saved standing with acceptance before the Lord, with Satan (an adversary) standing at his right hand to resist him. Does he succeed? No, there is one at his right hand nearer than the adversary. Though the sinner admits the accusations to be true: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was a beast before Thee. Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand" (Psalm lxxiii. 22, 23); yes, at the right hand of all the brethren whom Satan accuses Jesus is ever found. Look at the nature of His advocacy. It is a rebuke and defeat to the adversary. It is life and encouragement to the accused: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Here JEHOVAH declares that the two great pleas, and all-powerful ones too, are election and redemption. Though elect and redeemed, yet sinners still. Satan chases them with his accusations; but Jesus upholds them by His advocacy. At the very throne of grace the adversary tempts and taunts. We are cold, we are dumb, we are weary, we would pray, but we don't know how. The sweet language of Miss Steele just suits our case:

"When sins and fears prevailing rise.  
And fainting hope almost expires,  
Jesus, to Thee I lift mine eyes,  
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires."

He opens His mouth for His poor, dumb children. He pleads His all-atoning blood-shedding, and His all-justifying obedience. He points

to His wounded hands, and feet, and side, and brow once crowned with thorns. He remembers His temptations and sorrows, while the sympathy of His once-broken heart flows to His tried and tempted ones here below.

"Past suffering now, the tender heart  
Of Jesus on His Father's throne  
In all our sorrows bears a part,  
And feels them as He felt His own."

VII. — The Character OF The Advocate — "Jesus Christ the Righteous." Blessed be His name, He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. He is righteous in His appointment and legal qualification to His office. For such an office, ability and will are not sufficient, though our Advocate has both. He received His appointment from His Father, was sworn in by the oath of God, and was, and is faithful to Him that appointed Him (Heb. iii. 2, v. 4 — t>). Appointed, sworn in, confirmed, and approved of God. O ye sinful little children, what want ye more? The children are not only sinful, but poor. Here is an Advocate who claims and takes no fee. His Advocacy is without money and without price. Is your case desperate? Do you seem clean shut out from God, from the privileges of His house, and from the promises of His covenant ( See! The infinite dignity of His Person, the transcendent excellencies of His character, the perfection of His righteousness, the all-atoning efficacy of His blood, and the unspeakable value of His sacrifice outweigh all the sins, guilt, and infirmities of His sinning people, and silences all the charges of their adversary and accuser. Jesus is a successful Advocate! He never lost a case yet. He pleads the Father's covenant promises made to Him before the world was (see Isa. liii. 10, 11). He has made Himself perfectly acquainted with all the infirmities, temptations, and sufferings of His brethren, which, with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge dwelling in Him, make Him exceedingly precious to them. He accepts every hard case, He enters into every difficulty, doubt, and distress. He sympathizes with every sorrow and suffering that His members

experience upon earth. He admits of no desert, merit, or motive in them, but wholly pleads His Father's promises, His glorious Person, His precious blood, His spotless obedience, His everlasting love, and Plea cannot plead in vain. Look at that heart-melting scene in the graveyard of Bethany (John xi. 41, 42): "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, *"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always."* Eloquent Pleader! All-prevailing Intercessor! "*Jesus Christ the Righteous.*" He never forgets and never leaves those whose cases He has taken in hand, however much they may sin and grieve Him. See how blessedly this is set forth in the case of Peter (Luke xxii. 31,32): "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. *But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" Peter, though very sinful, was very safe. See! "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" (Heb. vii. 25). Precious Advocate! In His death we find acquittance. In His resurrection we are justified. In His session we reign. In His intercession we repose. Yonder He holds undisturbed possession of our heaven and our joy, and sweetly declares to our adoring hearts, "Because I live, ye shall live also." He is JESUS — God's salvation. He is CHRIST — God's Anointed. He is RIGHTEOUS — God's Prevailer. He is an Advocate with the Father, His Father and our Father, therefore He must prevail. He pleads with authority: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). Just notice that blessed wind-up of Isaiah liii. — and may God bless it to your hearts — "HE MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS."

May He bless us with His own sweet sympathy and succour. Amen and Amen.

## XXVI. "WHAT MANNER OF LOVE."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,  
June 24th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

— 1 John iii. 1.

THE theme upon which John was never weary to meditate and to proclaim was LOVE. We find it in each of his writings. His Gospel, sent out by the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost to the universal Church, proclaims the love of the covenant Three-in-One. Love is here declared in that glorious harmony existing in the Three Persons of the One glorious Godhead. In chapter iii., verse 16, we read — "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Which world did God love? Chapter i., verse 10, reveals the fact, which carnal reason is determined not to understand. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." See! In this verse we have the word "*world*" three times, and each has a different meaning. "He was in *the world*;" He trod this earth of ours. "And *the world* was made by Him ;" all created things are the production of His hand. "And *the world* knew Him not;" the greater portion of mankind, not everybody, because there

was a few waiting for the consolation of Israel, a few on the look-out for the Redeemer who should come. He came to His own possessions, but His own brethren after the flesh received Him not; while His brethren after the Spirit received Him, and thus were manifested as the sons of God (John i. 11,12). "God so loved the world." Did God love the reprobate mass that hated His Son, cast Him out, crucified Him, and threw their vile aspersions into His face? These persons loved by Him? O, yes, say some; the Saviour says, "*God so loved the world.*" The world of the Father's love is the world of the Son's love and salvation. See John iv. 42: "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour* of the world." The Saviour of that world loved by the Father with an everlasting love. Turn to John xvi. 8. Speaking of the Spirit of truth, Jesus said, "And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on Me." This cannot mean the whole mass of mankind, for common sense would show that such are not convinced of sin because of unbelief. But we who are convinced by the indwelling *power* of God the ever-blessed Spirit mourn because of our unbelief. We find that with the faith of the operation of God, the faith of God's elect, the faith that overcome the world, we are still unbelieving. We are convinced of sin, but still we feel and know that the world has been overcome, and will be overcome again and again. The world overcome yesterday may overcome us to-day. Such will be the conflict to the end of- our brief existence here upon earth. The world loved by the Father in election, is loved by the Son in redemption, is loved by the Spirit in regeneration, and will be loved by the covenant Three-in-One throughout eternity.

Love is the theme of John's Gospel. "The Father *loveth* the Son" (chap. v. 20). "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus" (chap. xi. 5). "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (chap. xiii. 1). "If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (chap. xiv. 23). "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you; continue ye in My love"

(chap. xv. 9). "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (chap. xvi. 27). "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, *the world hath not known Thee*; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me maybe in them, and I in them" (chap. xvii. 24 — 25). Here we see the love of the covenant Three to all the election of grace, and the love of the election of grace to an eternally-loving God. Now look at John's first epistle. Each chapter sounds forth the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (chap. iii. 1 and 14). "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. We love Him because He first loved us" (chap. iv. 7 and lit). Look at his second epistle: "The elder unto the elect lady and her children *whom I love in the truth*" (verse 1). Read his third epistle: "The elder unto the well-beloved Gains, *whom I love in the truth*" (verse 1). Come to the book of the Revelation (i. 5): "*Unto Him that loved us*, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

What kind of love is this? Mark you! It is not a mere spasmodic feeling or mawkish sentimentality. It is not that figment with which Satan lulls to sleep unstable souls, which men call "*universal charity*." John knew nothing of this, for with all the love that God had bestowed upon him, he expressed a spirit of intense hatred to Satan, to Satan's brood, and to Satan's lies. The love which God shed abroad in John's heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him was of that sterling nature which caused him to look at facts, not fancies, and speak of them just as he found them, without any human gloss, false charity, or foolish yielding to men's notions for the sake of peace at any price. See! He declared the love of God as revealed in the everlasting Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, not in his own words,

but in those of God's giving, ever separating between the precious and the vile, the elect and the reprobate, the redeemed and the unredeemed, the regenerate and the unregenerate. Does he write to one whom he loved in the truth? He styles her "*the elect lady.*" You may rely upon this, she was no Arminian. Writes he concerning the two seeds? He says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The language is plain — nothing dark or ambiguous here — no necessity for any explanation whatever — "the children of God, and the children of the devil." The children of the devil are manifest by their professed love to everybody, which is rank hypocrisy. The children of God are manifest by their love to God and to one another. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." These love those who are loved by the same Father, saved by the same Saviour, quickened by the same Spirit, and enjoy the same privileges which were secured to them in their great Head and Surety before the worlds were framed. The love of which John writes is not a wanton or adulterous love flying about from one object to another, but a love fixed on the persons of God's eternally-loved ones, not for anything in them naturally, but because of the revelation of God's Christ in them, and the manifestation of God's sovereign mercy to them. Wherever this is experienced there is humility — no presumption or vain boasting — no taking possession of that which the child of God is not entitled to — no parading of an experience which God has not bestowed, conveyed, and applied by the power of His indwelling Spirit.

This brings to my mind a little melting of heart I experienced last Thursday afternoon, in the tent at the Camberwell Aged Pilgrims' Asylum. I thank God I was there, with all the rubbish the children of God are called upon to bear from *liberal, large-hearted, broad-gauge Christians*. While I was there, a man whose name I know not, but whose face I oftentimes see here, came to me and said, "I was down at Grays the other day, and, while reading a sermon of yours, a man asked me if that was one of Mr. Bradbury's sermons, when, upon my answering in the affirmative, he began to open up to me the experience of his heart. He said, "The last time I spent a few

days in London I went to Grove Chapel. After nine years of despair and almost of desperation, I sat in darkness and doubt listening to that dear man preach, or rather to God's gracious testimony to my soul through him. I walked out of Grove Chapel a free man in Christ. My chains were broken, my burden was gone, and the sweetness of that liberty I have not lost to this day." In listening to this my heart was melted, and my eyes moistened with tears of God's own giving. Such precious testimonies to the love and grace of God do not inflate God's ministers with vain conceit, or set them on the stilts of pride and presumption. They humble the soul to the dust, and bring forth cries and sighs for the ears of Him who hears in secret and rewards openly. Yes, and I believe that in Grove Chapel He will do it yet. Lord, send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that Thy poor prisoners yet in the dark may be made manifest. Send forth Thy love, that the enmity in the hearts of many of Thy eternally-loved ones may be slain. Send forth Thy life, that elect ones dead in trespasses and sins may hear the voice of Incarnate Love, and live before Him. This is the burden of the Word of the LORD in this exercised spirit of mine. Let us now, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at the portion which I have read for our instruction, comfort, and edification. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

We will consider it in the following order : —

I. — *The call to attention* — "Behold!"

II. — *The Father's love* — "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

III. — *The consequence of love bestowed* — "That we should be called the sons of God."

IV. — *Its effect upon the world* — "Therefore the world knoweth us not."

V. — *The secret of the worlds ignorance* — "Because it knew Him not."

I. — *The call to attention* — "Behold!" In dwelling upon these particulars, may God enable us to pick up a few crumbs, and discover here and there a ray of His own sunshine that our hearts may rejoice and be glad in Him. One has well said, that when the word "Behold" stands at the door of any portion of God's Word, we may expect to find something wonderful within. Mark well a few portions of God's most Holy Word, to which I direct your prayerful attention. The first (Isaiah vii. 14) expresses wonder and admiration: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Behold, admire, and adore the riches of Divine grace, love, and mercy in the provision of a Saviour, in the person of the Incarnate God. "*Behold!*" It is a Scriptural exclamation denoting joy and gladness, as you find in Matt. xxi. 5: "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Here we see cause for joy and gladness to those who saw in the Despised and Rejected of men, their King and their God. "*Behold*" is also a sign or token of obedience, as you see in the case of Ahimelech in 1 Sam. xxii. 12, or as you will find in a passage more familiar to you, recorded in Isaiah vi. 8: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I;" or, as you read in the margin, "*Behold Me*" An expression of willing obedience. "*Behold*" is a word of solemn affirmation. Turn with me to Gen. xxviii. 15, and read how God positively affirms to Jacob: "*Behold*, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." "*Behold*" is a call to observation and consideration. See John i. 29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, *Behold* the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "*Behold*" also denotes certainty, as seen in the declaration of the angel to Zacharias (Luke i. 20). "And, *behold*, thou shalt be dumb." Look then at the word "*Behold*" in the light of each of these Scriptural significations. First — *Admiration*. Is there not something that fills my heart with wonder and admiration when I am brought to see, and

know, and feel the everlasting, unchanging, spontaneous, uninfluenced, inexhaustible love of JEHOVAH? This fills all heaven with rapture, the whole Church with praise, and all hell with dismay. Second — Joy and gladness. What is it that fills the heart of elect and redeemed sinners with joy and gladness? Is it not the communication of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord? See Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Third — *Obedience*. The apostle calls it the obedience of faith. The moment I experience the faith of the Son of God in me, I find that *that* faith works by love. Where God-begotten faith exists, there love also dwells in sweetest harmony. There may be faith in deep mysteries, marvellous truths, sound doctrine, and concerning God in creation, providence, and sovereignty over all things, where there is not one particle of love. You see this in the case of Balaam, who prophesied most wondrous truth, yet was bound to confess, "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh" (Num. xxiv. 17). You see it in the case of devils. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble" (James ii. 19). This is more than thousands of professing Christians do. They believe, but they have no cause to tremble. They believe, and are full of joy and cheerfulness all the day long. But listen —

"Devils believe and tremble too,  
But devils cannot love."

Oh no! It is the revelation of Incarnate Love in our hearts that begets willing and eager obedience to His gracious commands. Fourth — *Affirmation*. JEHOVAH has sworn to love with an everlasting love the objects of His choice, and they are brought in His own time to observe, consider, and understand the certainty of those things written in their hearts by the Spirit of love. Now let us notice,

II. — *The Father's love* — "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." Who are the parties meant by that word "*us*?" *We*, who have seen *That* which was from the beginning. *We*, who

have spiritually handled a precious Christ. *We*, who have fellowship with the Father as His own children. *We*, who are saved by Jesus alone. *We*, who are anointed in Christ. *We*, who bow in loving obedience to our Sovereign and Lord. *We*, who have been taught to *wait in the dark* and to *walk in the light*. If we walk in the dark, we are liable to stumble: "but if we walk in the light, 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." *We*, little children, young men, fathers, who sometimes sigh and mourn over our manifold sins, and at other times rejoice to know that we have an Advocate before the throne of God, who will carry to a successful issue all heavenly and gracious things concerning us. *We*, who are the children of God, not the children of the devil. What occasion have we to boast in this matter? None whatever, for "we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." What! were we the children of the devil? No, look at that expression in its connection, and read it carefully. Eph. ii. 2, 3: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," or, disobedient children. "Among whom also, we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Or, we were wrathful children by nature, and disobedient ones too. This wrathful disposition exists where there is apparent meekness, gentleness, and amiability. The application of God's righteous law, by the power of the Holy Ghost, reveals the wrath and enmity of wretched human nature. See Rom. iv. 15: "The law worketh wrath." Where? In that heart, where, previous to the application of the law, quietness and peace reigned. Mark you this! A polished exterior, a plausible address, smooth words, and honeyed expressions flow from hearts which are wholly enmity against God. Augustine, bishop of Hippo (not the Italian monk, whom Gregory sent over here to papalize this country), has a beautiful illustration of Rom. vii. 9, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He says, "Before the commandment came, I lay like a piece of quick-lime, calm, quiet, still, free from motion or

disturbance; but the moment God's law came, like rain upon the lime, my calmness, quietness, and stillness disappeared, and all was commotion, disturbance, and strife." Such is the effect of the operation of God's law upon a quickened sinner's soul. The children are thus brought to see their true state before Him; and in the light of His glory, which shines in the person of Jesus Christ, they find nothing in themselves, but bitterness, enmity, and opposition to God, to God's truth, and to God's people. Only evil, and always evil, is the Divine judgment on human nature. Only enmity, and always enmity, is God's description of the natural state and condition of all His children. But let us away from this.

*"What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."* Look at that word "*bestowed.*" Freely given, conveyed, and applied without money and without price. What manner of love is this? Angels can never experience it; none but favoured, redeemed, and saved sinners, those concerning whom one so correctly says,

"And only man is vile;"

yes, vile men, wretched sinners, enemies to God, aliens from His home, and strangers to His life, are brought to experience and enjoy the love of the eternal and unchanging God. Well may we have a note of admiration at the commencement of this precious portion: "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*"

1. SPONTANEOUS LOVE. Here we see it in its spring or source. Love is of God, for God is love. Wherever true love exists, it is from God alone, because it exists in its purity alone in God. As I have endeavoured to point out to you the human heart is full of wrath, enmity, hatred, and malice, so, if I am a partaker of Divine love, it must come down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James i. 17). Spontaneous love! It springs up and flows forth of itself to its objects independently of any extraneous influence. From the heart of JEHOVAH it flows to an innumerable company of Adam's lost race,

and, like a mighty river with its many streams, brings life, and joy, and refreshment wherever it comes. Here we may notice the difference existing between the love of God and those affections of His which flow to His poor children in their varied spots of want and necessity just as fully, freely, and liberally. See! there is a difference between love and grace — between love and mercy — between love and compassion — between love and pity — between love and patience. What difference can there be say you? See! *Mercy* has respect to *misery*. Misery calls for His mercy. *Grace* always has respect to *unworthiness*. A sense of unworthiness is a cry for His grace. *Compassion* has respect to *necessity*. The child's necessity calls forth the compassion of the parent. *Pity* has respect to *helplessness* and *infirmity*. The helplessness of the loved one is an irresistible appeal to the pity of the one who loves. *Patience* has respect to *obstinacy, provocation, stubbornness, and rebelliousness*, and these as they exist in us are so many calls upon the patience and longsuffering of our God. But when we come to contemplate His love we are lost in wonder and adoration. What has the love of a covenant God respect to? It has respect to what He was in Himself to His covenant people before the worlds were framed. Look at this: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). The first display of this love was in the setting up of Christ as the Head of His mystical body, the Husband of His bride, the Surety of His covenant people, and their Preserver and Upholder before any of them had an actual existence, or Satan had wrought his hellish work of sin and death upon the sons and daughters of men.

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood  
From wrinkle and from blemish free:  
Loved with the dateless love of God,  
And blest by the Great Sacred Three."

In Christ He sees Himself and His people eternally one. In the glass of His decrees He sees Christ and His Church eternally united in all

the perfections of Deity, and shining in all the glorious splendors of Godhead. The love of His heart is ineffable, and can only be poured forth upon, and shed abroad in the hearts of, the recipients thereof in grace, mercy, compassion, pity, and patience during their sojourn in these wilds of sin and sorrow.

2. ETERNAL LOVE. Dear old John Kent sweetly sings : —

"'Twas with an everlasting love  
That God His own elect embrac'd.  
Before He made the worlds above.  
Or earth on her huge columns plac'd."

Love eternal is JEHOVAH Himself, the Great I AM. Self existence is love. I AM LOVE. As is His life, so is His love, without beginning, without end. To the sorrowing soul of His exercised prophet He sweetly whispered, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer xxxi. 3). To such a communication the adoring response from every heart melted into nothingness under its power is, Amen, Lord, Amen.

3. UNINFLUENCED LOVE.

"What was there in me that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?  
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' I ever must sing.  
Because it seemed good in Thy sight."

You see I have learned that verse at last. That God's love is uninfluenced is evident from the fact that the only reason Jesus could find was, "For so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi. 26). What was there in me to call forth any expression of "love so great, so full, so free?" Nothing. I was a wrathful child. I was a wayward child. I was a rebellious child, determined to be damned, and bent upon my own destruction. Not one redeeming feature or

compensating quality could be found, but everything to call forth the everlasting condemnation and vengeance of JEHOVAH in the darkest spot in hell. Yet, in the face of all this, He has given me to experience a little of His love in my heart. Look at John xv. 25, where you find a quotation from Psalms xxxv. 19, lxi. 4, and cix. 3: "They hated Me without a cause." Jesus could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." There was no fault, failure, or flaw in our precious Lord for Satan to work upon. I stated last Friday evening to those who love to come to our prayer meeting, that some one well described the human heart as a tinder-box, and human nature as the tinder, waiting for the devil's spark of temptation; but I find my wretched nature more like gunpowder, for the moment Satan's spark is applied I find my nature worse than his. I recollect hearing the late rector of Openshaw say, "The devil never committed adultery, the devil never got drunk, and many of you cannot say so much for yourselves." The carnal mind continues in one continuous course of enmity and opposition to the sovereign love and grace of a covenant God in Christ; and as there is no cause to be found in Christ for the world's hatred, so there can be found no cause in us why He should love us with a love so great. I can look up with a little confidence and say, Lord, Thou hast warmed my heart with Thy love, but it is without a cause in myself; there was nothing in me to merit it, but everything to deserve Thy eternal wrath against me. Why me, Lord? Why me? But look still further.

4. INFINITE LOVE. What do we mean by that? It is love that knows no bounds or constraint concerning those who are the objects thereof. It matters not what may be the want, necessity, sin, or guilt of the child of God, infinite love is ever ready with both relief and remedy. Great fears and little faith are never disdained by love Divine. This love is so infinite in its nature, manifestation, and communication, that it meets not only the deep necessities of the heart, but the weak faith and fainting hope of despised and hidden ones. It delights in the long loud chorus of everlasting praise in the halls of the glorified, while it is ever ready to minister to the sigh and cry which arises from the anxious spirit of the weakest child in

the chosen family. Infinite love put a period to the sinful course of that devil of a man, Manasseh, slew his enmity, and brought him to the feet of his covenant God; and it is the same love that takes the babe from its mother's breast, ay, causes the babe to leap from its mother's womb into the very bosom of its God. Still further we search and find it,

5. IMMUTABLE LOVE. Unchangeable! invariable!

"Mine is an unchanging love.  
Higher than the heights above,  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death."

Look at those two precious chapters, Jer. xxxi. and Ezek. xvi. I do love them. God appears to weeping, complaining Jeremiah and says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Now look at the glorious declaration at the end of that chapter which reminds me so much of Romans viii.: "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is His name. If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith the LORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD" (Jer. xxxi. 35 — 37). Look at Ezek. xvi., where God's extraordinary love to Jerusalem is shown in the first fourteen verses. Then look at the rest of the chapter up to the sixtieth verse, where sin, adultery, idolatry, and every abomination abounds. Does this turn Him from His love? Never. Read from the sixtieth verse to the end, and you will see that JEHOVAH rests in His love. Blessed be His name,

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,  
    Though all others may and do;  
His is love that never falters,  
    Always to its object true:  
        Happy Zion,  
    Crowned with mercies ever new."

6. INEXHAUSTIBLE LOVE. It is the fountain from whence Abel drank of its rich and blessed streams; the fountain from whence flowed the waters of life, light, cleansing, and salvation to the poor, despised harlot, Rahab, whom your circumspect, consistent, *pious*, and proper professors will not deign to touch with the end of their pretty fingers. Yet, she fell into the bosom of everlasting love, and there she is to-day. It is the same love that gently stopped the blaspheming and reviling lips of the poor thief as he beheld in the person of his dying companion, Incarnate Love. It is the love which has saved, succoured, and sustained the whole election of grace up to this very moment without diminution. See! yonder sun pours its bright beams of fructifying power upon this earth of ours and shines as brightly now as it did the first moment when God created it. Yonder clouds still drop their fatness at His command, and will till time shall be no more. These are faint illustrations to show forth the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is an all-fulness which neither sin, Satan, death, or hell, nor all combined can ever decrease or diminish.

"His love no *end* or measure knows,  
    No change can turn its course,  
Eternally the same it flows,  
    From one eternal source."

7. INVINCIBLE LOVE. Before the force of this love all obstacles are swept away, all hindrances are driven from the way of access to the presence of our God and Father. Love humbles our pride, purges away our sins, subdues our will, melts our hard hearts, sweetens our cup, conquers death, triumphs over hell; and when we murmur and

repine, and find fault with His providence, we hear the rumbling of its chariot wheels as it hastens over the mountains of doubt and fear, and ere we are aware He is here. His kiss of fond affection assures us of an abiding place in the very heart of a covenant God. O how blessed it is to be brought into the enjoyment of such love. Electing love in covenant. Incarnate love in Bethlehem. Redeeming love on Calvary. Interceding love before the throne. Preserving love all the way through the wilderness. Sustaining love in weariness. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." Now notice,

III. — *The consequence of love bestowed* — "That we should be called the sons of God." Called! By whom are we called? By the Father in His voice of pure electing love. By the Son in every act of His redeeming work. By the Spirit as He bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. *Called* into His family, to His house, to His table, to His rest, to His glory, and to Himself. O what a precious call! By it the children feel and know they have a right, a privilege, and a title sealed with blood to enter into their Father's house, where they hear the sweet commanding voice of the King, their Elder Brother, saying, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved." As pardoned, justified, and accepted sons, we share with Him His reign and His reproach; for we must experience the call in,

IV. — *Its effect upon the world* — "Therefore the world knoweth us not." The world knows nothing of the calling and privileges of the children of God, and is a stranger — in fact, an alien — and an enemy to the language of Canaan. This language is sometimes expressed in sighs and tears, and sometimes we can neither sigh, nor cry, and all the evidence of life we have is a little breathing for life. By these things men live, and the realization thereof produces the fear of God's own giving, which, in His eyes and ears, is most eloquent and prevailing. The world knows nothing of sonship, hence it looks upon all those who glory in God's regenerating and adopting love as so many fools and fanatics. The cheerful religious world

counts the true-born children as mournful, morose, bitter, and uncharitable. Well, thank God we can, in the spirit of Him whom the world hates, cheerfully bear all this. We now glance briefly at,

V. — *The secret of the world's ignorance* — “Because it knew Him not.” “The world by wisdom knows not God” the Father in His electing love, while of God's Wisdom it is said, “Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. ii. 8, 14). “The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not; but, blessed be His holy name, we know Him by the Spirit which He has given unto us, and we grieve because we do not know and love Him more.

May He add His blessing. Amen.

#### HYMN SUNG BEFORE THE SERMON.

More of Thy love, my God, I find  
    In every hour I live;  
More of Thy peace in heart: and mind.  
    Doth each sharp trial give.

Up to my Father's high decree  
    Each act in time I trace:  
Up to the glorious Sovereign Three  
    Almighty Fount of grace!

The Man who lived, and died, and rose.  
    To perfume heaven with blood,  
To Him my soul her pardon owes,  
    And claims Him for her God.

There high He reigns, in ether bright.

The great Incarnate Word;  
Where suns to darkness dwindle quite  
Before their radiant Lord.

Thence low He stoops, to watch the lot  
Of souls to Him once given;  
And makes the dying sinner's cot  
The glorious gate of heaven.

And Thou eternal Spirit vast,  
What love can Thine transcend .'  
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast.  
Indwelling God and Friend.  
William Mikhett.

The End of Volume 1