



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.

VOLUME 1 of 2

LONDON

ROBERT BANKS, RACQUET COURT. FLEET STREET.

1877

LONDON:
PRINTED BY ROBERT BANKS,
RACQUET COURT, FLEET ST.

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."

Thomas Bradbury.
Grove Chapel, Camberwell.

XXVII. JUSTIFICATION

A Sermon

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

THOMAS-BRADBURY.

“It is God that justifieth.”
— Romans viii. 33.

THE covenant purposes of JEHOVAH toward His own elect having been accomplished in their salvation by Jesus Christ, and redeeming love having triumphed over sin, death, and hell, the Kinsman-Redeemer, on the ground of His finished work, entered heaven's highest glory to appear in the presence of the Father to make intercession for those whom He had left in a world of temptation, trial, and tribulation. Faithful to His promise, He sent His blessed Spirit to complete the canon of New Testament Scripture, to make intercession in His people, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and to perform the part of covenant Remembrancer in those who lament the treachery of their memories, and their forgetfulness in the things of God. Yes, the Holy Ghost was sent and the glorious Gospel of the blessed God was proclaimed to the ends of the earth for the ingathering of all the objects of His everlasting love. Elect ones must come and bow at the feet of their great King-Priest, and receive from His gracious hands those blessings designed for them in the everlasting covenant of grace.

"*They shall come*" is the testimony of the Spirit throughout the pages of inspiration, and a fact in the experience of every true-born child of God. Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God, while out of Egypt, at JEHOVAH'S call, His sons and daughters must come. Arabia's desert-ranger runs with eager delight to the fountain of living water, while captive souls hail with joy the approach of their great and glorious Deliverer. The elect Jew, weary of the vague mysterious symbols of a burdensome ritual, found sweet relief in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which made him free from the law of sin and of death. The schoolmen of Greece found their learning and philosophy tarnished before the advent of Him who is to His saved ones the Wisdom of God. "Strangers of Rome" carried the glad tidings of great joy, the wondrous story of an ascended Saviour's love to the imperial city; and in the land of the Forum, where laws were dispensed for the world's government, the arena where gladiators fought, and bled, and died amid the wild shouts of a Pagan populace — in Rome — -" Proud Rome," hearts were bowed beneath the gentle sway of Heaven's Anointed King, and acknowledged His sovereignty over all things to His Church. Wherever sinners have been brought into the rich enjoyment of God's love, through the Person, wounds, blood, and righteousness of Jesus Christ, all, with one heart and one voice, ascribed all the honour and glory of their salvation to Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever.

The Scriptures of truth have been given to the Church and people of God, bequeathed to the% as their peculiar legacy, and it is their blessed privilege to circulate them broadcast, that by the light of its truths God's hidden ones may be discovered. Yet, the purposes, promises, and performances of JEHOVAH are only for those to whom the Word is addressed, and whose characters are described therein. Now mark this question: Did Paul write this epistle to the Roman people or nation? I answer, No. Turn with me to chapter i. 7. "To all that be in Rome beloved of God, called saints." Notice the words "*to be*" are in italics, therefore the words should read as I have quoted them, "*called mints.*" Who called them saints? The

Father when He separated them to Himself in the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ owns them as saints, or sanctified ones, because He took them to His loved embrace as the gift of the Father. The Holy Ghost calls them saints when He witnesses in their hearts of the Father's love and of the Son's beauty and grace. The Church of the living God acknowledges them to be saints when the distinguishing grace of God separates them from the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now, as soon as this separation is manifest, the world looks on with reproachful eyes, and with a contemptuous spirit styles the children of God, "*Saints.*" Well, it is our high privilege, with the spirit of the despised Master, to heed them not. Blest with the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, separated to Himself, and to the enjoyment of covenant blessings made over to us in the Son of His love, we may well sing,

"If on my face, for Thy dear name.
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame!
If Thou remember me."

Let us now look at the design of the apostle in writing this matchless epistle to the beloved of God at Rome. Mark! not to the professors, but to the elect at Rome, to the redeemed at Rome, to the justified at Rome, to the called at Rome. He wrote to them to set forth the sovereign, uninfluenced, invincible, immutable grace of God to an innumerable company of Adam's posterity. An elect people loved with an everlasting love, embraced in the arms of a precious Christ, preserved in Him until called, and, after calling, preserved through all the sins, sorrows, and sufferings they are the subjects of, and kept in every temptation, trial, and tribulation to that eternal glory reserved in heaven for them. The apostle wrote that the Church might be taught by the Holy Ghost, through his writing, the total depravity and corruption of human nature, and the utter inability of man to perform a gracious action, to speak a gracious word, or produce a gracious desire. Read at your leisure the first chapter, where he describes the Gentile world when it was at its highest state

of civilization, refinement, and accomplishment. Such is his description that I would not read it in a mixed assembly; but you must remember that this epistle was written to those of whom he says, "Unto the pure all things are pure" (Titus i. 15). To those to whom God had given a pure mind and understanding, the reading of any portion of God's most Holy Word at which a carnal professor or worldlying would laugh, produces a feeling of solemn awe and reverence in the presence of a just and holy God. As I read this first chapter I see all that I can find in myself, every shade of iniquity and abomination lurking beneath this skin of mine, and were it not for the restraining and constraining grace of God keeping me in my proper place, these must break forth before the eyes of the Church and the world. The knowledge and experience of this cause my heart to ache and my head to bow in shame and sorrow before Him, while my almost constant cry is, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Come to the second chapter, which reveals the humbling truth that the Jew, with all his religion, ceremonies, ordinances, precepts, and commands, without the sovereign grace and power of God, is but a spangled hypocrite at the best. The apostle winds up the chapter with this sweeping declaration: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." An objector now starts up. Mark you, that tribe is not yet dead, for let a man stand up and declare unflinchingly the sovereign purposes of JEHOVAH in the salvation of a chosen people, whose nature is utterly corrupt, incorrigible, and full of enmity against God, and objectors will abound on every hand. It is certainly humiliating to poor proud nature to be told that universal man, educated or uneducated, rude or refined, plebeian or prince, religious or irreligious, *pious* or profane, without the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, has no power or will to perform any gracious act, or to produce anything but what deserves God's eternal wrath and condemnation. But it is a great mercy to be lifted up above all objectors and objections, as God sweetly whispers to

the heart of His taught and sent One: "Thou knowest thy testimony is My truth and what thou declarest are My words, and thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. If they will, let them object, but leave thou them with Me." At the commencement of chapter iii. we find an objector: "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?" The answer is to the point: "Much every way: chiefly, because, that unto them were committed the oracles of God.' At your leisure read on to the ninth verse, where you read, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." In the margin you see that word "*proved*" is rendered correctly "*charged*," for the apostle had not proved that all were under sin. He had laid the charge against them, and then, from verses 10 — 18 inclusive, in a string of quotations from the Psalms, Jeremiah, the Proverbs, and Isaiah, he fully proves his charge. Now to the law and to the testimony. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Through the whole range of humanity not one righteous person can be found. Amid all the multitudes of Adam's fallen race not an unsinning one can be seen. After proving that all are guilty before God and subject to His judgment, he says: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." How can I be justified before God by my attempting to obey that law which convinces me of sin? Mark you, sin in every thought of my mind, every desire of my heart, every look of my eye, every word of my lips, and every action of my body as a natural man. The law is God's measuring line which proves me in all things lacking, God's straight edge which proves me in all things crooked and perverse, God's balance which proves me in all things wanting and unjust. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." There are those who tell us we have nothing to do with the Old Testament, but, depend upon it, such persons have precious little to do with the New. See how Jesus put honour upon the Old Testament Scriptures as the witnesses to the truth of His love, blood, and salvation to His covenant people. Luke xxiv. 27: "And

beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." This is a glorious theme! the manifestation of the righteousness of God in the Person and work of Jesus. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ." Precious truth! Who believes it?" Not by the faith of man, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is unto all and upon all them that believe: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." All past transgressions for ever taken away, and the child of God appears justified and accepted, perfect and complete, in the pure and spotless righteousness of a precious Christ. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." What is that? Put out of doors. Boasting has no place or standing in the living Church of God, or in the Spirit wrought experience of His people. By what law is boasting excluded? "Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Is faith then a work to be performed, or produced in order to secure our justification? This fleshly, free-will conclusion is met and answered by the apostle in the fourth chapter. Those who will bring legal terms and incorporate them with free-grace phraseology, and make faith a work of the creature, or a condition of grace, are here anticipated, met, and confuted. Listen! The Holy Ghost by Paul says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." You see by this that faith is not a work or production of my own, but according to the declaration of Jesus in John vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." It is the work of the Holy Ghost in me, "the faith of the operation of God" (Col. ii. 12). But who are the ungodly mentioned here? They are those for whom Jesus lived and died, on the ground of which they are justified. See chap. v. 6: "Christ died for the ungodly." I do love the glorious grace of that expression, and I equally love that in chap. iii. 26: "The Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." A believer is one who sees all righteousness and godliness in Jesus, and nothing but unrighteousness and ungodliness in himself. David and Abraham are

brought forth as illustrations of justification by the free-grace of God. David's faith and experience as expressed in Psalm xxxii. 1,2:" Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." Abraham, not in his works which were evidences of his faith, but in Gen. xv. and xviii. when his spirit was resting upon the word and testimony of the living God, before a single promise was performed in his heart's experience. That was God-wrought faith, not the impatient presumption of the graceless free-wilier.

We now come to the fifth chapter, where a precious chain of Gospel truths is presented to our enlightened gaze. The apostle states that we are justified in the Person, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus, through whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. The parties Christ died for are described as ungodly (verse 6). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while

We were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (verse 8). Enemies are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and are saved from every sin and sorrow by His interceding life. The headship of Adam and the sin of his whole race, with the headship of Christ and the righteousness of all in Him, fill up the rest of the chapter. "For if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (verse 15). See! Mr. Objector is panting for an opportunity to deliver himself! Oh, then, if that be true, we may live as we like, and do as we like, for the more we sin and the more God is glorified! Don't you see this at the commencement of chapter vi.?" What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Look at the apostle who, by the grace and power of God within him, starts with horror at the propounding of such a question, and exclaims, "God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Throughout this chapter He gives living proof of the purity of Gods Gospel and its effects upon the lives of its recipients. In chapter vii. he opens up the experience peculiar to

these separated ones, points out the work of the law in a redeemed sinner's soul, and the conflict which is incessantly carried on between the law of God and the law of sin. The eighth chapter most sweetly reveals perfect deliverance in Christ Jesus from all sin, sorrow, death, and condemnation, and give a glorious description of those new covenant blessings which are secured to the Church and people of God in virtue of their eternal union to their ever-living and ever-loving Head. In the midst of all this, the precious words I have read to you by way of text appear: "*It is God that justifieth.*"

Let us for awhile notice this precious declaration, and may we be blest with the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and the indwelling of the Word of Christ. Col. iii. 16: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Were I a legalist or a free-will presumer I should read this to you as a precept, exhortation, or entreaty; but I find that sovereign power lies underneath the precious covenant command. If God the Holy Ghost speaks this command in your heart, it will be as certain a reality as was the existence of light when the creative decree went forth, "*Let there be light.*" Just for a moment notice that important expression, "*all wisdom,*" which alludes to the diversity of truth. It directs the mind not so much to the concentration of truth in the Person of Jesus, as to the diffusion of truth among the members of the mystical body. As we rummage with delight the blessed Word of God, and are savingly and intelligently interested in that sameness which makes God's truth and God's salvation insipid and uninteresting to the natural man, we behold that glorious variety and sweet harmony which "none but Zion's children know." Turn to 1 Cor. xii. 4 — 11, where we see the same Spirit, but diversities of gifts; the same Lord, but differences of administrations; the same God, but diversities of operations. "But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." I believe there are what the children of God look upon as regeneration portions, or portions peculiar to their experience of deliverance from sin and trouble. Let me explain what I mean. If it were possible for me to put you under a catechetical examination as to the portions of God's blessed Word with which He

first convinced you of sin, or brought pardon, peace, and liberty to your souls, I am almost bold to say that in this congregation we should scarcely find the same portion in two cases. One would say, "He met me with that blessed declaration, 'He loved me and gave Himself for me.'" Another might say with an old French pastor, "He broke into my heart with that precious truth, and the grace of God was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. *Not in me!* The moment I saw that faith and love were in Christ Jesus for me, my soul bounded into happy liberty." Others may say, "He set my soul at rest with that blessed truth, 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'" So portion after portion of the Word from living hearts might be produced, thus proving the glorious unity of truth, as well as its leased diversity. Divine truth is the revelation of Godhead, Three-in-One, and One-in-Three. Here we have a three-fold cord, which can never be broken, and which binds all the election of grace together in one glorious Head. But why expatiate upon this? Because of the diversity of truth, and the all wisdom of JEHOVAH which appear in the justification of His elect ones in Christ Jesus.

Now let us notice the words of the text in their connection: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth." Or, as it may be read without the italics: "What shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God that justifieth?" There we have a glorious challenge, and a very gracious question. Just you notice the construction of the passage according to the mind of the Holy Ghost. Shall God who justifies His own elect bring any charge against them? No! Look at the prodigal. Has the Father against whom he sinned, and from whose presence he wandered, He who loved him with an everlasting love, and clothed and justified him in His everlasting robe of righteousness, one accusing or upbraiding word for His wandering child? Not one. Let punctilious Pharisees bring a poor fallen sinner into the presence of her Lord and Saviour, saying, "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act." He writes upon the ground — He speaks — but not a word of accusation against the sinning one. His words and gestures of rebuke

were for the accusers of His poor stray one, before which they could not stand; but went out of His presence one by one. He stands — He speaks — "Woman, where are those 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." Look at the gracious communications of God the Spirit. No accusation there. He wrought conviction in my soul and brought me to see and feel that everything in me deserved God's wrath and condemnation; but He sweetly whispered words of love to my sorrowing heart and gave me to understand what that meaneth: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). *"It is God that justifieth."* What are we to understand by this justification? It is the very opposite to condemnation. It is an act of God implying and involving something infinitely more than mere acquittance from Satan's accusations. It is a perfect clearance of my person from all charges that hell, Satan, sin, law, conscience, the world or the Church may bring against me. If I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and am blest with the sweet witness of His Spirit in my heart, that I am born of God, bought by blood and justified from all things through the Person, love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, and am brought to acknowledge this before men, the lynx-eyed world and prating professors will combine to find out and enunciate to the people some flaw or other in my character, experience, or confession. Well, it is no small mercy in the midst of all this to be able to sing with confidence and true humility,

"Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich, almighty Friend,
Jesus the Saviour is His name,
He freely loves and without end."

He has not one charge to lay against me, though I can bring a thousand. Let men or devils speak a word against an elect vessel of mercy and JEHOVAH-JESUS will vindicate his character and cause his righteousness to shine as clear as the noon-day. But let us now

seek out how God's justification of His people is revealed in the pages of inspiration, and bless and praise Him that He has brought us to stand before Him, not as pardoned criminals, but as justified sons, with all sin put away, all accusers silenced, and enjoying the blessedness of that declaration, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Turn with me to a few portions of the Word, and may the blessed Spirit thereby throw a little light upon this glorious declaration of God's sovereign right to justify whom He will, when He will, where He will, how He will, and just because He will.

I. — BY HIMSELF — "It is God that justifieth" (Rom. viii. 33).

II. — BY HIS GRACE — "Being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. iii. 24; Titus iii. 7).

III. — BY CHRIST'S BLOOD — "Much more then, being now justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9).

IV. — BY HIS OBEDIENCE — "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19).

V. — BY HIS RESURRECTION — "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25).

VI. — BY HIS SPIRIT — "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11).

VII. — BY FAITH — "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

VIII. — BY WORKS — "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James ii. 24). Here we have eight different declarations of God in His most Holy Word concerning the justification, acquittance, and perfection of every child of His in the Son of His love. We will consider how we are,

I. — JUSTIFIED BY HIMSELF — "It is God that justifieth." Who else can justify? Who has the right or power to justify but that God against whom we all sinned originally in Adam, and against whom we transgress actually day by day and moment by moment. We confess, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm li. 5). The spiritual worshippers in the

Establishment of this country approach His sacred Majesty with this confession, "We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;" there is omission. "And we have done those things which we ought not to have done;" there is commission. Who can understand his errors? (Psalm xix. 12). Who can count up the number of his transgressions as he is brought into the presence of a just and holy God, and sees himself in the light of His glory? Turn with me to Psalm xix., where, after speaking of the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandment, the fear, and the judgments of the LORD in workings and effects, he says, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from my secret faults." Know ye anything of such an experience as this? Sins that the world sees not! Sins that I know not, but which are wrought in my very existence, working in quiescent obedience to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom. vii. 23). You may not imagine such a state, but look at Lev. v. 17: "And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; *though he wist it not*, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity." Now then, what about those who by an impression of their own power and will, and the means which they profess God has put into their hands, seek to justify themselves or to do anything in the matter of their justification before God? Surely we must say of them as Paul said of his brethren after the flesh: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3). Such cannot know what sin really is according to God's estimate of it, or according to Paul's experience and description of it: "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. vii. 13).

Now turn to Psalm xl. 12, where we see the Psalmist's judgment as to the number and extent of his iniquities: "For innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine

head: therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased O LORD to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to my help." With such an experience as this the convicted sinner renounces all hope of being justified and accepted of God on the ground of anything in himself or of himself. See how this is clearly shown in the case of Job, as recorded throughout the whole of his ninth chapter, where he declares God's judgment upon everything out of himself. Notice especially these three verses: "If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life" (verses 19 — 21). In this we see Job's mouth stopped, he is guilty before God, subject to His judgment, and fully proves that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. God, against whom we have sinned, alone can justify, and this He has eternally done in the Person of His Son Jesus. See Romans viii. 30: "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." For this to be experienced in the souls of His elect people, He has made ample and gracious provision in Christ Jesus, as you read in Isa. xlv. 25 and liii. 11. "In the LORD shall the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." Oh, how blessed it is to see, know, and feel that in the *purpose* of the Father, in the *person* of the Son, by the *power* of the Holy Ghost, the saints are everlastingly and irrevocably saved and justified.

Now let me ask you, *yon* who have tried, and tugged, and toiled in vain to work out your justification before God, *you* who have striven the most, and hoped the longest, and prayed the most earnestly in the presence of the Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts, *you* who have sought, amid the darkness and the gloom, Him whom your soul loveth, and have been blest with sweet glimpses of His beauty, bounty, and blessedness in reading God's most Holy Word, *you* who have sought and sighed for communion and

intercourse with Him in companionship with His tried and tempted people, tell me, what have all your doings availed you in the matter of your justification before God? Your answer is, Nothing.

"The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before Thy throne;
Hut faith can answer Thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done."

Have you not been brought to occupy in spirit the same spot with the publican? and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" A sinner in reading your Bible, a sinner in pleading before the mercy-seat, a sinner in company with the saints, a sinner surrounded with mercy, and crowned with lovingkindness. Oftentimes I feel myself not worthy of the notice of the weakest lamb in the fold, and not fit to speak to those from whose anointed lips words of gracious experience flow to humble me in the dust and cause me to feel my nothingness. I find death written upon the promises, instead of enjoying the performance of them, for me and in me, to raise me above myself. Though dead to the law by the body of Christ, yet "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" (Rom. vii. 4 and 18). In my flesh I find everything to condemn me. In my thoughts, foolishness; in my looks, covetousness; in my desires, selfishness; in my reading of God's Word, negligence; in His worship and service, indifference. In all things I find myself a sinner still. But O how blessed when He takes me by the hand, assures me that I shall be feelingly and experimentally justified, and counsels me by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost thus: — God, not means ; God, not works ; God, not gifts; God, not promises; God, not blessings; God, not communications. He cheers and comforts me with His own sweet words : — "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). It is then I can boldly and confidently say, "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us

stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the LORD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isa. 1. 8, 9).

"It is God that justifieth." Amen.

The time is gone. We'll ask Him to let us look at the rest of the subject to-night.

XXVIII. JUSTIFICATION.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Evening,
Feb. 18th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"It is God that justifieth."
— Rom. viii. 33.

I WAS led this morning to meditate upon the construction and design of this epistle, which was written under the inspiration of God the ever-blessed' Spirit by the pen of the apostle Paul. We saw in chapter i. the utter corruption and depravity of human nature, even when possessing all the advantages of education, philosophy, and refinement. Chapter ii. reveals the same, though a God-given religion accompanied it. Some may be ready to say, Is not a religion from God sufficient? I answer, unhesitatingly, No. Not even the religion which God has revealed through Christ, the Substance, before whom all the shadows flee away, is sufficient. It must be applied by the sovereign power and gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and thus made life and power, to be of any avail or advantage to me. We also looked at other parts of this precious epistle, in which is fully demonstrated that the justification of the child of God cannot be of man, wholly or in part, nor on the ground of works, merit, or desert, but wholly of the free grace of God, through the Person, love, blood, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. I also endeavoured to speak a few words from the text, proving that

God is the Author of our justification, and that He alone can justify. We saw this from the necessity of our sinful case, our perfectly helpless and undone condition, innumerable evils compassing us about, and our sins more in number than the hairs of our heads. Ay, and still further, we are so perplexed with the frequency of them, and our inability to count or confess them, that the cry is heard from our exercised hearts, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from my secret faults."

"It is God that justifieth." He is the Author of my justification, the Assertor of my right, the Maintainer of my cause, and the Pronouncer of my sentence of perfect acquittance from all charges and accusations brought against me by Satan, law, or men, therefore I stand before Him eternally justified in the Person of the Son of His love. This brings us to notice,

II. — Justified By His Grace — "Being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. iii. 24; Titus iii. 7). The language is expressive. It is not simply "justified by His grace;" but "justified *freely* by His grace." What is grace? It is unmerited, uninfluenced favour to the undeserving and hell-deserving. In it there is nothing of human power, will, or merit to influence it, nor can any want of these obstruct or hinder it. To suppose either, would be to alter and destroy the very property of grace altogether. See! God of His mere love and sneer favour justifies me for nothing. The very thought of that glorious truth, the uninfluenced grace of God to us in the Son of His love, is so hateful to proud human nature; but human hatred and enmity can never effect a change in it. What is there in me to influence Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, to bless and justify me? As I know my true position before Him by the teaching of His Spirit, I see that every attempt to work out a righteousness of my own deserves hell, and instead of forgiveness, His wrath; instead of justification, condemnation; instead of salvation, damnation; instead of His smile, His frown; instead of the love of His heart, the fury of His arm. As I understand spiritually the truth of that declaration, "There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come

short of the glory of God," I know that death, everlasting death, is my only due. But here is the mercy! God, in the riches of His grace before the worlds were framed, gave His elect ones to Jesus, their Husband, Head, and Surety; wrote down their names in His book of life, blessed them with all spiritual blessings, and as He beheld them in the glass of His decrees, in all the glorious perfections of His Son, He pronounced them free from all sin, and everlastingly justified. Blessed be His holy name, He sees them as He sees His Son, and will thus acknowledge them before assembled worlds when the Responsible One stands before Him, saying, "Here am I and the children which Thou hast given Me, and of all that Thou hast given Me I have lost none.' In the perfections of the glorious Head the members all shine. In the beauty of the loving Husband the bride appears. In the spotlessness of Jesus' righteousness His saved ones shall stand in the presence of the Father to all eternity.

This justification is wholly irrespective of anything in the persons or acts of the justified, for the decree went forth before any of the members of the mystical body of Christ were born. See Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16: "My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." But to understand our justification aright, we must be taught in our daily experience by the Spirit of God. We may endeavour to gain God's favour by our obedience to the law; but the greater our endeavours the greater the disappointment and experience of condemnation. It was only when I saw that my endeavours and doings were sin, when my mouth was stopped, and I was struck down a guilty sinner before God, at my wits' ends, that the Lord appeared, and made the sweet discovery to my heart that He justified me freely by His grace. That is the way that God has respect to His own, who in themselves are unworthy, hell-deserving sinners. As "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE" He seeks, finds, saves them; asks them for nothing, and gives them everything. He justifies them in the same manner in which Jesus was hated and

condemned. Look at that quotation of His from Psalm xxxv. 19, which you read in John xv. 25 — “They hated Me without a cause.” The hatred of the world to our Lord Jesus Christ was without cause, so far as He was concerned, for what was there in Him that was unjust, crooked, or perverse to call forth the hatred or enmity of any mortal? Nothing whatever. So, as we stand before Him in the light of His glory, we see, and know, and feel that God could see nothing in us to cause Him to justify us, yet, that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, He justifies us “without money and without price.”

This must appear so when we consider what God's elect are by nature and by practice — sinners, ungodly, enemies. Then look at them after He has revealed to them His pardoning, justifying love in regeneration and restoration, for it matters not how rich may be the grace He has bestowed upon them, or the heights of privilege to which He may have brought them, the very moment they see themselves in the light of His glory they are constrained, like Peter in the fishing boat, to confess their sinfulness, or, like John in the Isle of Patmos, to acknowledge their deadness, or, like Daniel in the presence of His glory, to cry, “My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.” A child of God all through his wilderness wanderings, though saved from sin, is a sinner still, and when his departure to the realms of glory arrives, the confession of his heart will be with that of Paul, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. i. 15). Chief of sinners, yet, blessed be God, in the ranks of the saved ones. Again, I ask, what is grace? It is favour, rich, full, and free. See Rom. iv. 4: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Look again at chapter xi. verses 5 and 6, where the apostle writes still more explicit: “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” You see then that our justification is received from the hands of God, not because of anything we have done, are doing, or

have to do, but purely because of what He has provided for us in the covenant of His grace, and what He has made Himself to us in the Son of His love. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9). Marvellous mercy! He hath so revealed Himself to us who know Him, that we cannot for a moment look out of Himself for any cause, motive, or reason why He should notice or have respect to such ungodly, rebellious wretches as we find ourselves to be. All that we have which is acceptable to Him is but the expression of His grace to us. It is wholly of His rich, full, free, and sovereign grace that we stand justified and approved before Him. But I must pass on to notice,

III. — Justified By Christ's Blood — "Much more then being now justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9). The blood of Christ speaks of the forfeited life of the sinless Surety, and brings to mind a profitable though painful experience. "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," or, as we read in the margin, "subject to the judgment of God" (Rom. iii. 19). What is the judgment of God? Under the law. Mouths stopped. Guilty before God. It is one thing to read or repeat these things, and another thing altogether to have them laid by Divine power upon our trembling souls before His judgment throne. Yes, it is one thing for me to recite with fluency the sentence of death pronounced against sinners, but quite different to experience the sickening and crushing anguish of self-despair as the voice of the righteous Judge is heard declaring, "The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth it shall die." Not only this, but look at Gal. iii. 10: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Such is the experience of every quickened and convicted sinner as he is brought into the presence of his Judge. How can God be just, and at the same time the Justifier of those whom His law

curses, condemns, and consigns to death? How can I stand before Him, cleared from all charges brought against me by law, Satan, and the Holy Ghost? See! By precious God-wrought faith I look my Judge in the face and behold in Him the person of my Surety. I see in the Lawgiver, my Law-fulfiller. Instead of frowns and signs of wrath, I see smiles of love and sweet compassion as He opens up to my wondering view the glorious fact that, as my Surety, "He redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Look at Deut. xxi. 23: "He that is hanged is accursed of God," or, as we read in the margin, "*The curse of God.*" Think of this! God's Christ, my Kinsman-Redeemer, my Brother and Saviour in Gethsemane's gloomy vale and on Calvary's bloody tree, made the curse of God for me. Well might He cry out in bitterest anguish, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Well might He groan amid the darkness and convulsions of nature, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Ah! the God-Man bowed His head to meet the wages of His people's sin. He bowed His head to receive the consequences of my transgressions. He bowed His head to drink to the dregs that bitter cup of suffering, which otherwise would have been my bitter lot to all eternity. He cried, "It is finished, and gave up the ghost." Every drop of His precious blood was shed for me and for the whole election of grace, for the whole of His chosen flock, for every member of His mystical body, for the whole company of His eternally-loved brethren. For all these He travailed in soul, and, blessed be His name, He will see to it that, "He'll not be in glory and leave them behind." He in whom no sin was, who knew no sin, was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. By His own blood He entered in once into heaven itself, where, on the ground of His perfect atonement and precious blood shedding, He stands before the face of the Father, who sees in Him the everlasting acquittance and eternal justification of all the elect family. With the rich experience of this, we can confidently sing,

"If Thou hast my discharge procured,

And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath Divine;
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

We now come to consider,

IV. — JUSTIFIED BY HIS OBEDIENCE — "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). That is, As all in Adam were made sinners, so all in Christ are made righteous. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Who are made alive? AH in Christ. That 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is a marvellous piece of Divine logic, and such logic can only come from the Divine Logos by the power of the Holy Ghost. Many mistakes are made in reference to this chapter. What is the subject? Not what is called the general resurrection; but the resurrection to life and glory of "Christ the First-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." It is the resurrection of Christ the Head from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, and *that* the pledge and assurance of eternal life and glory to all the elect and redeemed members in eternal union with Him. Hence you may understand that mysterious verse which has puzzled thousands from the time it was written until now, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" (verse 29). Heretics in primitive times and in the present day would have us believe that it refers to an order of baptism by proxy. You are ready to ask, Whoever believes in such a delusion? I answer, That filthy and pestilential sect, the Mormons, or Latter Day Saints. I am sometimes tempted to say, Latter Day devils. The teaching of this sect in connection with this portion is, If a person dies unbaptized, he is sent to limbo, and must remain there until one of his surviving relatives, as proxy, is baptized for him, when he is immediately admitted to glory. But let us pass away from such pernicious nonsense, and seek for the true interpretation of the text.

What is meant by the word "dead?" "*Baptized for the dead?*" False teachers in the Church at Corinth had declared that there was no such thing as the resurrection and that Christ was not risen from the dead. The apostle is proving throughout this chapter that the Christ he trusted in and preached was a risen, living, and reigning Christ, not a dead Christ; but a Christ who represented him in the heavens, and sympathized with him on the earth. Paul contended that he was a baptized member of the mystical body of the Christ of God who ever liveth to make intercession for him. Yes, he was baptized for Him who lived, and died, and rose again, that every member of His body, by the power of His Spirit, should rise with Him to the heights of glory. See! "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (verse 14). "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept "(verse 20). Christ is risen! Christ ever lives for all who are baptized by one Spirit into the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God and rejoice in the sweet assurance of His love.

But to the subject. All who were in Adam when he sinned died to God. All who were in Christ when He obeyed shall live with Him. Such is the teaching set forth in 1 Cor. xv. and Rom. v. In the latter the two headships are revealed Look at verse 19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." I speak advisedly when I say there are heretics abounding who glory in an open Bible and with great plausibility deny in toto the obedience or imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ — that glorious truth on which the Church of the living God stands justified, accepted, and perfect before the face of the Father. It is our mercy to know that by the blood-shedding of our Surety the gates of glory were thrown wide open to all the election of grace and the gates of hell were for ever barred against them. But where is my right and my title to stand without fear or amazement in the presence of my Father and my God? It is in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in the obedience of the One for the many. It is in the right doing of the One

Mediator, the One Saviour, the One Husband, the One responsible to present the many sons whom He represented perfect and without spot before the throne of His glory. Impudent heretics and brazen-faced professors will taunt by saying: "You cannot find a passage in all the Word where the imputed righteousness of Christ appears." Now turn with me to 2 Peter i. 1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us *through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" Now read that last sentence as it is rendered in the margin of your Bibles: "*through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" Now look at Phil. ii. 8: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." No mere man of Adam's race could do that, "*humble himself,*" but that mighty Him. Mark well the language of the Holy Ghost, "obedient unto death" — not simply obedient *in* death- Why is it *unto* death? That it might be a perfect righteousness in which I might stand everlastingly justified in the presence of my God. "Obedient unto death." Righteous and perfect all the way through His earthly pilgrimage to "make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24).

Some few months ago my heart was made truly glad in the sweet and precious revelation made thereto by the blessed Spirit as I contemplated the obedience of the Holy Child, the sinless Man Christ Jesus. I was once a child, a sinful child; but He was a Child, a Holy Child for me, and the righteousness of His childhood is the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Sometimes memory takes rapid flights and conscience is scared and burdened when the cry ascends, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness sake, O LORD *" (Psalm xxv. 7). This is as much as to say, "Remember the obedience of the Youth of Nazareth for me." I look still further and behold the sins of my manhood, my manifold transgressions, and groan beneath the load of my sins which is intolerable; but, Oh, He tells me that they were all put away from before His face by the

precious blood-shedding of Jesus, and that the righteousness of Jesus is mine. Every good thought, holy aspiration, kind look, gracious word, and righteous act of Jesus, all the way from the poor manger at Bethlehem to the cruel cross at Calvary, combined to form that glorious robe of righteousness in which the seed royal of heaven stand righteous before God.

Sometimes it is called "*the righteousness of God,*" because God demanded, planned, and provided it in the Person and work of Jesus. It is also called "*the righteousness of the law,*" because the law required it. It is also called "*the righteousness of faith,*" because God-wrought faith apprehends, embraces, and glories in it and renounces all other. The question may arise in the heart, "How am I to see this righteousness in the walk and conversation of my Surety and Saviour?" Search the Scriptures, and may God the ever-blessed Spirit bless you with a gracious sight of the same. The Lord of life and glory came into our world with a body like ours, sin excepted. See! "Who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 2t3). "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter ii. 22). "In Him is no sin" (1 John iii. 5). "Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John ii. 1). He came to do His Father's will, to obey His Father's law, not for Himself but for His people; and was the only one that ever appeared upon this earth able to perform such a work. Satan labored hard to find a weak place in Jesus, but was foiled. Listen to the words of Jesus, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone; *for I do always those things that please Him*" (John viii. 28, 29). Again, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). None could ever say that but Jesus, and, blessed be God, He could, and did. When we look at ourselves we are filled with shame and confusion of face, but one glimpse of the purity, spotlessness, and innocency of Jesus chases away all sense of doubt, and fear, and shame. Look at the testimony of foes and friends! The devil was a liar from the beginning, but in the sovereign purpose of

JEHOVAH he was bound, contrary to his nature and will, to speak well of God's Christ. Mark i. 24: "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Judas, concerning whom Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 70). was forced to confess, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt, xxvii. 4). Look at the testimony of His unjust judge, Pilate: "He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, *I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.*" He asks, "Why, what evil hath He done" (Matt, xxvii. 24)? His wife gives her testimony in the counsel she sent to him, "saying, Have thou nothing to do with *that just Man*: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him" (Matt, xxvii. 19). The centurion who had the charge of His crucifixion "glorified God, saying, *Certainly this was a righteous Man*" (Luke xxiii. 47). All nature speaks! the rocks were rent, the earth shook, the heavens gathered blackness, and the sun hid itself when spotless innocency bled and died for lost and ruined sinners like yon and me. "It is finished," was the dying cry of Jesus, and the law received what it never had before, *a perfect obedience from a perfect Man, who was as well perfect God.* In Jesus' life, in Jesus' death, as revealed in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, we have a glorious righteousness, a spotless righteousness, in which the whole election of grace stand perfect and complete before God, and look forward to meeting Him with boldness and confidence when He shall come again.

Look at this righteousness as it is opened up in the joyful and sorrowful experiences of the family. David's joy in the possession of it was such that he cried out, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalm lxxi. 15, 16). Here the sinner is stripped of the filthy rags of his own righteousness, and stands clothed in the righteousness of Emmanuel, God with us, who magnified the law and made it honourable, and God is well pleased for His righteousness sake (Isaiah xlii. 21). Look at the joy of the Church as its righteousness in the

righteousness in Jesus is experienced (Isaiah lxi. 10). "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." What a mercy to know that if all the goodness of the saints were set down to my account, I should be filled with shame and sorrow before God; but the righteousness of Jesus my Lord gives me a confidence before Him, and a place in His heart which angels cannot know. But, while we remain in the wilderness, changes and sorrows will attend us; yet, whatever be our lot, this righteousness will prove a prevailing plea. It was so with David. See!

Was he filled with doubt and uncertainty? He cries, "*Lead me, O LORD, in Thy righteousness because of mine enemies*" (Psalm v. 8).

Was he bowed down beneath the burden of the flesh? He pleads, "*Deliver me in Thy righteousness*" (Psalm xxxi. 1).

Was he harassed with Satan's accusations and the world's reproaches? He supplicates, "*Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Thy righteousness*" (Psalm xxxv. 24).

Was he oppressed with a sense of his unfeeling state? He groans, "*Quicken me in Thy righteousness*" (Psalm cxix. 40).

Was he waiting and urging his suit at Mercy's door? He sighs, "*Answer me in Thy righteousness*" (Psalm cxliii. 1).

Was he overwhelmed with ever-accumulating cares and anxieties? He beseeches, "For Thy righteousness sake *bring my soul out of trouble*" (Psalm cxliii. 11).

Was he burdened with a sense of guilt and condemnation? He prays, "*Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence; let*

Thine eyes behold the things that are equal" (Psalm xvii. 2). Where are the things that are equal? Not in me, but in the spotless obedience and perfect righteousness of Jesus for me. Thus I find that the righteousness of my God and Saviour is the all-prevailing plea of the child of grace before the mercy-seat. Ah! And that is not all. The child of God will not be satisfied with small things. In fact, it will be satisfied with nothing short of God Himself. You may tell me what Christ has done for me, and that may cheer and comfort me; but I want to know what Christ is in Himself for me, to me, with me, and in me. What is the cry of my heart? Is it "Lord give me Thy righteousness?" Oh, no ! It is, Lord, come Thyself, and be Thou my righteousness and my all. See! Jesus in the perfection of His obedience has become the righteousness of God to His people. He is made unto them Righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30). "They are made the Righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). Will that do for you \ It will for me and everything short of it is uncertainty and dissatisfaction. We will now notice,

V. — JUSTIFIED BY HIS RESURRECTION — "Who was delivered for our offences, *and was raised again for our justification*" (Rom. iv. 25). Resurrection life will alone satisfy those who mourn over their deadness, and have been brought to know Christ, as their law-fulfilling righteousness, and the power of His resurrection, (Phil. iii. 10). Jesus suffering put all their sins away, Jesus obeying gave them a title to glory, and Jesus risen is JEHOVAH'S pledge for the performance of every promise that infinite wisdom gave to them. The resurrection of the Head of the body is the evidence of the Father's approval of His atoning work, perfect obedience, and everlasting salvation, and that on the ground of these, all those whom He represented were accepted in Him. In His resurrection power and life He entered into the presence of God, where He ceaseth not to plead His work once and for ever done for His people, through which every accusation which Satan brings against them falls to the ground. It was not possible for the bands of death to hold Him, and now, as the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ of God, God in my nature, He stands before God for me, and in virtue of

this, the whole company of His chosen and redeemed ones shall pass from death unto life, and at last enter into the glory and kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The atoning work of Jesus appeared as the fine gold of God's providing, but the resurrection stamped it with His image and superscription, by which it appears as the current coin of Emmanuel's kingdom.

Our Kinsman-Redeemer having removed every hindrance out of His people's way to God and to glory, now brings them in His own Person, with all their wants and anxieties, within the veil, where they glory before God in the blessed assurance that in His resurrection, ascension, and intercession, their justification is complete. Isn't it glorious for us to know that Jesus our Redeemer and Righteousness, our Surety and Saviour, our Deliverer and Defender, is the universal King, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him?" (1 Peter iii. 22). As God-Man, the Brother once born to adversity, He reigns, He rules, and orders all things well. "He rose again for our justification."

VI. — JUSTIFIED BY HIS SPIRIT — "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). Only a word or two upon this all-important subject. What should we know of Jesus but for His blessed Spirit? See how Jesus speaks of Him: "He shall testify of Me" (John xv. 26). "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. 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; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. 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 show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 7 — 14). The Spirit of God

convincing of sin without which there can be no knowledge of the necessity for, or appreciation of, Jesus' righteousness. He reveals to our hearts this righteousness in which we are presented to, and accepted by the Father "holy, unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (Col. i. 22).

VII. — JUSTIFIED BY FAITH — "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). Faith is not a volition of the natural mind, nor an act of the human understanding, nor a spiritual act of my own performing. Free-willers make faith a condition of our justification, but this can never be. Mark! I am not justified because of my faith, and yet, without the faith of God's own giving and working, I shall never be experimentally justified. Just turn with me to Acts xiii. 38, 39: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Now, at first sight it appears that we are justified because of our faith; but mark the language well: "*By Him* all that believe are justified." I cannot be justified by anything out of Him. I believe, yet not I, but Christ that believeth in me. Look at that precious Scripture (Gal. ii. 20): "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 *live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Christ is my Sacrifice, my Righteousness, my Responsible One, who has promised and who performs all things for me. He once trusted, now I trust because we are one spirit. The faith which I possess in union with Him revels and reposes in the glorious truths of His Gospel. My faith is not a part of the righteousness in which I am justified any more than my mouth is a part of the food which sustains my body. Faith is God's gift (Eph. ii. 8). It is the fruit of the Spirit in me, whereby I see, feed upon, and glory in Christ as He is revealed to me and in me. Faith is not a work performed *by* us in order to be justified; but it is a work of God *in* us by which we apprehend and glory in our justification. See John vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him

whom He hath sent." Rom. iv. 5, 6, 16: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly;" and, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith and works find no agreement here. Faith is of the operation of God (Col. ii. 12). It is the faith of God's elect (Titus I. 1). It is *the* faith of Christ (Gal. ii. 16). Christ said, "I will put My trust in Him" (Heb. ii. 13). He trusted as the Head, and that trust is communicated to each member by the same Spirit. It glories in His righteousness," Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe' (Rom. iii. 22). Look again at Phil. iii. 9: "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." By this faith we walk in Christ Jesus our Lord, we live in Him, we fight in Him, we conquer in Him. Where Jesus is, there those who have obtained this precious faith are found. They are washed in His precious blood, clothed in His perfect righteousness, sheltered in the Rock of Ages, feed on heavenly provision, look on things invisible, wait amid the darkness for His appearing, and fly to the throne to commune with Him there. Jesus is the one Object upon which faith rests. When the Holy Ghost speaks of faith, its Object, JESUS, is included.

VIII. — JUSTIFIED BY WORKS — "Ye see then how that by works-a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James ii. 24). Ah! cries the Papist and merit-monger, didn't we tell you that we are justified by works? Many haters and despisers of God's sovereignty process to be fond of James, but their dark minds understand him not. James wrote of the fruits which appeared at God's command. He contended for a living faith being demonstrated by living works. But what were these works? According to the world's judgment, one was the act of a madman; the other, the acts of a lying traitress. Yes, and one committed a breach of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, while the other a breach of the ninth. Abraham killed in intention. Rahab lied in fact. What can human reason do for you in these things? It can lead you into a labyrinth of doubt and despair, ay, into

downright infidelity. The Holy Ghost alone can lead and guide into the knowledge and enjoyment of these truths. By them He glorifies Christ in the experience of His people, and produces those good works of which God Himself is the infallible Judge. Let us look at the points where Paul and James appear to disagree.

Paul treats of our justification as pronounced by God on the ground of what Jesus has done; James treats of our justification before men, because of the good works which God ordained that we should walk in.

Paul writes of faith which glories in what God has done; James writes of the works which gives evidence of the possession of living, God-wrought faith.

Paul contends for living upon a living Christ; James contends for the fruits which ever accompany it.

Paul looks at Christ in the heart; James expects to see Him in the walk.

Paul looks well to the root; James guards well the fruit.

Paul sees the fire in the house; James knows there is a fire in the house by the smoke emitted from the chimney.

Mark! God justified Abraham years before Isaac was born. In Abraham taking Isaac to sacrifice him at God's command, God in this act calls upon all His people to witness the evidence of his justification. Good works there are none apart from union to Jesus, and when these appear they witness to the justifying grace of our God revealed through the Person, blood, obedience, resurrection, and Spirit of Jesus. Yes, as I spoke of the smoke emitted from the chimney, I thought of the lire of God's love in the heart showing itself in desires and longings for larger communion with the Covenant-Three, and in tears of God's own giving, which speak

more eloquently of the life of God within than all the beautiful and pretty religious sayings which may greet your ears.

Thanks be to God for the glorious revelation of His precious truth —

"It is God that justifieth." By His grace (Rom. iii. 24), by Christ's blood (Rom. v. it), by Christ's obedience (Rom. v. 19), by Christ's resurrection (Rom. iv. 25), by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. vi. 11), by the faith of Christ (Gal. ii. 16), and evidenced by the fruits and works of His own producing (James ii. 24).

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

XXIX. JESUS CHRIST – EVER THE SAME.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
July 8th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”
— Heb. xiii. 8.

THE epistle commences with this declaration: "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; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

As the apostle commenced, so he continued to prove throughout the whole of this wonderful epistle, the striking contrast existing between the Lord Jesus Christ and all those counterfeits set up by Satan in opposition to Him. Also pointing out the marvellous superiority of the Saviour over everything else of JEHOVAH'S

ordaining, however good and excellent such might be in themselves. Angels, men, ordinances, covenants, sacrifices, and saints, coming from His all-wise hands, all fall short in showing forth the glory of God, and His relationship to His Church and people.

Look at each chapter; there we behold the superiority of Him whom we acknowledge as our Prophet to teach us, our Priest to bless us, and our King to guide and govern us. In the first and second chapters we read of the angels; but we see Jesus for a little while lower, yet all the time infinitely higher than they. The God-Man Mediator of the everlasting covenant hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than angels could ever possess. They do His bidding for a time, and when their commission expires they pass away. We see this in the various experiences of the children of God, as recorded in His most Holy Word, They are commanded to attend the saints, one in the furnace, another in the flood; when then- work is done they retire at His command, who is ever with His tried and tempted ones, and is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for-ever."

The third chapter brings Moses to view. He verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, yet, with all his faithfulness, weakness, temper, and irritability marred his service; but Jesus as a Son learned obedience by the things that He suffered. From Bethlehem to Calvary He was the perfect One, rendering a perfect obedience to His Father's law, and unswerving submission to the Divine will. Before the perfect Son the imperfect servant must of necessity pass away.

The fourth chapter introduces Joshua to our notice. "For if Jesus (*Joshua* — margin) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day" (ver. 8). Moses must -bring the people out of Egypt, but, through infirmity, could not bring them into the Promised Land. Joshua must bring them into Canaan, but, through inability, could not give them rest, for there were the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites in the land. Joshua could not give

them rest; but Jesus, the Captain of the Lord's host, having fought the battles of His people, triumphed over their enemies, and brought about an eternal and uninterrupted peace between His Father and them, is worthy of more honour than Joshua, and when He appears, Joshua willingly retires.

We come to the fifth chapter, where another character appears on the scene. Aaron, the high priest, who was called of God. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." But look at the contrast: Aaron must of necessity first atone for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; but in the Person and work of Jesus, the antitypical Aaron, no sin or imperfection could be found. When Jesus is revealed, Aaron is cast into the shade.

In the sixth chapter Abraham, the father of the faithful, is revealed. Abraham, with all his faith, was unbelieving; Jesus doubted never. Melchisedec appears, but only for a brief space of time. A greater than he is seen, even the King, whose kingdom can never be moved, whose glory can never fade away; the Priest, whose priesthood is intransmissible, whose righteousness can never be abolished, whose peace can never be broken, no, not for a single moment. When He appears in His glory, Abraham and Melchisedec are lost from view amid the adoring throng.

In the seventh chapter, priesthood, service, and law all depart before the bright beams of that glory which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. In the eighth chapter the old covenant of works, which was clogged with conditions, decayeth and waxeth old, and vanishes away before the face of Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises, even the unconditional promises which are all Yea and Amen in Him.

Come to the ninth chapter. Ordinances are presented to our view, and, mark you, ordinances of Divine appointment too. You will find a remarkable declaration concerning them in the 10th verse: "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances (*rites or ceremonies* — margin) imposed on them until the time of reformation." Until the time of the appearance of the great Reformer, the Fulfiller of every precept, the Antitype of every type, the Substance of every shadow, the Performer of every promise, even Jesus. So every true-born child of God finds it to be so now, as Christ is revealed to him in all that He is, all that He has, and in the perfection of His law-fulfilling righteousness, symbols, and shadows, and ordinances pass away.

Now look at the tenth chapter, where sacrifices all disappear before the One all-sufficient, all-atoning sacrifice of Christ's sinless humanity. Just notice the peculiar language of Psalm li. 17: "The sacrifices of God" — not the sacrifices of men — "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." What is it to possess a broken heart and a contrite spirit before Him? It is to know, and feel, and see sin and self in the light of the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus. Look at the sufferings of the sinless One. The Father sacrificing His own Son, who spent a life of privation, and at last yielded up the ghost, not against His will, nor from any violence received from the hands of men or devils. These could never take away the life of our most glorious Christ. See! "Reproach hath broken my heart" (Psa. fix. 20). Dear West of Winchelsea ofttimes said, "A broken-hearted Saviour well suits a broken-hearted sinner." If I am in possession of a broken heart this morning it is wholly of Jehovah's grace, given to me because of my eternal, unchanging union to Him who suffered and sorrowed for me. Blessed be God, all sacrifices must disappear before the one great sacrifice of Christ's adorable self.

Mark well the eleventh chapter, a favorite one with many, who try to imitate the various persons whose names are recorded there. In it we have a host of believers, though let me tell you I am not fond of the

term *believers*, because of the unscriptural use that is made of it in all Arminian synagogues. When we hear the truth of God mangled under the sound of this expression, it causes the heart and mind to be on the alert. You can only find the word twice in the whole Bible, and then not addressed to the parties spoken of. Others are profuse in the use of the term *Christian*. Who are meant by the term Christian? The whole of the people of this country are looked upon as Christians, and would be mightily indignant if they were called heathens, as, God knows, the majority of them are. What is a Christian? Let the name be thoroughly explained, and we make no objection to its use; but when whole congregations are addressed as believers or Christians, then the children of the living God object, and are on their guard. You see in John ii. 23 — 25, a lot of believers in Jesus, whom Jesus did not believe in. You see in James ii. 19, "The devils believe and tremble." But let us look at these believers, or heroes in faith, as set before us in this 11th chapter. They believed through grace, their faith was of the operation of God, and is Divinely styled "the faith of God's elect." This faith worketh by the love of God, which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. See! By it the worthies "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." This faith of God filled the very devils with confusion, and the heart of God with joy, in the presence of the angels above. Yet, with all this faith, the possessors thereof were full of weakness, want, necessity, and sin.

This brings us to the twelfth chapter: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses' — that is, martyrs or sufferers for the truth's sake — "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." What is this besetting sin? Some say it is the drunkenness of the drunkard, the indolence of the sluggard, or the dishonesty of the thief. My dear friends, I believe it is nothing of the kind. The besetting sin which tries and worries every child of God is that of *unbelief*. It matters not

how firm and unflinching the faith of God's elect may appear, the same under peculiar circumstances will be tried, and will stand, while the child of God will experience his want and weakness, as did Abraham. "And let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus.*" The full sense of these words, "*Looking unto Jesus,*" is not given in our admirable translation. Here you have it — "*Looking off unto Jesus.*" Have you learned what it is in the school of suffering fellowship with Jesus to look away from everything to Him? Looking away from angels who never sinned, and, therefore, cannot sympathize with sinners. Looking away from Moses, from Aaron, from Joshua, from Melchisedec, from Abraham, from ordinances, from sacrifices, and from saints, because in each and every one of these imperfection, want, and weakness are found, and in them can never be found that which alone can fill that aching void which your poor hearts experience daily, through the convicting power of God the ever-blessed Spirit. Looking away from all men and things for full salvation and true sympathy to Jesus, and Jesus alone.

This is the design of the writer and of the Holy Ghost all through the epistle. It is to lead the minds of the people of God from fleeting, perishing, and shaken things which must cease with the using, and have recourse alone to an immutable Saviour. You will see this toward the close of the chapter: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirit of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Who is that? It is Jesus, the only effectual Speaker to tried and troubled souls. "For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven. Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." What! The

residence of Deity? The third heaven where He unveils His glory through the Person of the glorified Redeemer? No! His home, His kingdom, His throne, remain unshaken and unmoved. What is the meaning of that word heaven? Simply the means through which and by which the truth and mind of God are shadowed forth here below. It means every ecclesiastical system, religious association, church, denomination, or cause, it matters not how pure they may appear to the eyes or understanding of men, all these shall be shaken, pass away, and perish. Let me here ask you a question — Where is your home? Some one will say. My home is. in the Church of England. I look on the Church of England, at this moment, harassed with traitors within her pale, and corruption and error abounding in the majority of her pulpits, as a poor home for a tempted and tried child of God. Then when I look upon Dissent with its varied forms and phases, free-will and self-assertion on every hand, may I ask you, Is your home found there? I tell you mine is not. I look on the one and on the other, and I see everything shaking and shaken. When I see the truth of God maintained by a godly clergyman in the Establishment or by a servant of Christ out of it, I know not how many days, weeks, or months may pass away before the candlestick may be removed from its place; therefore, with such a changing state of things around us, it is our blessed privilege, as taught by God's eternal Spirit through the truths of this "*grand anti-ritualistic epistle,*" to look away from men and things, forms and ceremonies, ordinances and sacrifices, to the great and unchanging Head of the Church and Saviour of the body, as revealed in the precious words of the text, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*"

Jesus Christ is set before us in this passage in striking contrast with its immediate context preceding and succeeding. But according to the way in which the words are given here, we should be led to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was the end of the conversation of the persons mentioned ; but such is really not the case. Read ver. 7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end

of their conversation." Here is a dead stop. Then, like a beam of glory from the throne of JEHOVAH, the words of the text appear: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The seventh verse directs our attention for a little while to the end of the conversation of those who had been the guides of the flock, of those who had spoken the Word of God, of those who had finished their course and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus, and were taken from the evil. Not the evil to come, for with that they had nothing to do, but from the evil that beset them. What was the end of their conversation? Look at the end of Stephen: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 55 — 60). Under a murderous shower of stones he breathed his soul into the hands of his God, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace" (Psalm xxxvii. 37). But here is One whose kingdom, righteousness, peace, grace, and glory know no end. Sin could not deceive Him. Satan could not defeat Him. Death could not destroy Him. He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

We will consider,

- I. — The Saviour — "Jesus."
- II. — The Anointed — "Christ."
- III. — The Immutable — "The same."
- IV. — The Past — "Yesterday."
- V. — The Present — "And to-day."
- VI. — The Future: — "And for ever."

I. — The Saviour — "Jesus." Does the question arise in your heart, Is He my Saviour? It is all very well for you to hear these precious words from my lips, for me to sound out a little of its sweetness and

blessedness; all very well to declare this glorious truth for the purpose of confronting and confounding those Christ-despisers of the present day, Arminians, Socinians, and Unitarians; but this is the point for our individual consideration, Have I a heart-felt interest in Him whom the Father delights to reveal in the hearts of His people as JESUS? What is the meaning of this Name? It is Saviour. See Matt. i. 21: "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." A Saviour not only from the penal consequences of my sins, from eternal damnation and destruction, from the frown and fury of JEHOVAH, which all out of Him must experience when they pass away from this stage of existence; but from the plague and power of them as felt in my daily walk. O the blessedness of knowing that He has pardoned every transgression, and that through the all-atoning blood-shedding of Jesus I enter into the enjoyment of spiritual freedom, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. As a hind let loose upon the high mountains of covenant favour, or as a wild ass set free, I scorn the whip of the free-will driver, and flee from the murky atmosphere of the city of Legality. Thus blessed, I enter into the Holiest with boldness, not with impudence or presumption, but with true humility, to hold fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

O Jesus, what a love is Thine! See! In the riches of His grace and the boundlessness of His compassion, He came to the very spot of condemnation which His people deserved, to the very depths of misery, and to the doom which must have been their lot in a burning hell for ever and ever. In the fulness of the time He identified Himself with His people in true, proper, and real humanity, in a real human body, and with a real human soul. Mark that. In one of the creeds of England's Church we find this blessed declaration, "Perfect God and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." In Christ we see a real human being, not with a body and His divinity acting in the stead of a soul. That was a grievous heresy in primitive times, but the true God was also a real Man. A Man to perfectly obey His Father's law. A Man to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. A Man to suffer the punishment due

to His people's sins. Why? Because all those whom He represented were human. He identified Himself with them in every respect but one, and that was sin. Blessed be God, that is the only exception. It is a truth which fills the heart with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It thrills the heart with thankfulness and adoring gratitude to know that as a Man He was tempted in all points like as we are. Not in some points, but in all points.

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

"In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa. lxiii. 9). All their deserts He bore. All their temptations He endured. All their griefs and sorrows He carried, and is thus presented by the Holy Ghost to the eyes of God-wrought faith and fond affection as a perfect Saviour and Sympathizer with all His poor, weak brethren in all their troubles and temptations which they are called to endure.

He shall save, not half save. If one of His loved ones should fall short of His glory, He would cease to be JESUS. Ah, say some of you, He has given me again and again a blessed realization of His saving power, but here I am this morning as dull, as dry, as dead as ever I was. My heart is cold and unrelenting. My nature is corrupt, lustful, hateful, and, according to experience, worse than ever. Well, my friend, it is no small mercy for you to know this, for "the dead know not anything" (Eccles. ix. 5). And, mark, these are the temptations and tribulations He saves His people from. He hath saved, He doth save, in whom we trust that He will yet save, or deliver. The experience of the bitterness of sin is but the harbinger of the sweets of His salvation. Groaning under temptation is but the prelude to triumphing in His delivering grace. Mourning His absence is but the pledge of His presence which is salvation (Psa. xlii. 5 — margin).

II. — The Anointed — "Christ. What is this? It reveals to us an appointed, authorized, and duly-qualified Saviour. A Saviour of the Father's sending and sealing. He was chosen and appointed by the Father before the worlds were framed. Look at the confession of the worshippers in Acts iv. 27: "Whom Thou hast anointed" — a direct allusion to Psalm ii. 1 — 6, which concludes with this declaration of the Father, "Yet have I anointed My King upon Zion the hill of My holiness" (margin). In the fulness of time, at the banks of the Jordan, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure (Matt. iii. 16; John iii. 34). Isaiah prophecies, and He declares, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18). Peter announced to the house of Cornelius: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts x. 38). In this we see Divine appointment and qualification for every office undertaken by Him in the covenant of grace before all worlds. Not only appointed, but sealed. What are we to understand by that? That which is sealed is sacred to the owner, and precious. See! A precious Christ. His salvation, righteousness, intercession, and sympathy are hidden from all the wise and prudent, according to His own declaration in Matt. xi. 27 : "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." Jehovah's ineffable delight is in His own Christ, and blessed be His Name, as Peter testifies to his elect brethren, ; ; Unto you therefore which believe He is precious" (1 Peter ii. 7). On all precious things God puts His seal. God's impress is detected by His own children upon the Person and work of Christ. They see in Him the Saviour and the Friend of sinners, the Delight of the Father's heart, and the Sent of God. But to whom was He sent? See Acts xiii. 26: "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the Word of this salvation sent." Has He been sent to this pulpit and to this heart? Has He been sent to those pews and to those hearts? Well, as assuredly as He is to us the Anointed and the Sent, so will He be sealed upon our hearts, and we shall be sealed upon His arm and heart, and shall sweetly know the

preciousness of the truth of the text: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

III. — The Immutable — "The same." He is the same in His nature, disposition, determination, and dealings with His people. The SAME, the Unchangeable, the Immutable is evidently a name of JEHOVAH. Heb. i. 12: "Thou art the SAME." As you are enabled by the eye of faith to look through the past to the heights of the everlasting covenant and see the Responsible One taking upon Himself the everlasting salvation and safety of His elect brethren, your heart must rejoice in the assurance that He then knew all their sins, follies, and infirmities. Yet, in marvellous love He took them to His loved embrace. He knew full well what that would cost Him. He foresaw the sorrows and sufferings of His pilgrim life from lowly Bethlehem, down to dark Gethsemane, and up to the wild heights of Calvary to that dread moment when He would cry, "It is finished." He knew the indignities He would receive from those who knew Him not. He knew each dark and trying spot that every one of His own within these walls this morning would experience. His love was such as to cause Him to surmount all this and take His people to Himself with all that they would cost Him. O how glorious does Christ the Antitype appear as seen in Adam the type. Adam stood in all the perfection of unfallen human nature without a stain of sin upon him. He saw his wife, his Eve, fallen and lost. Such was his love that, before he would be separated from her, he would sin with her, and go down to the depths of her death, degradation, and damnation. But our most glorious Christ could not sin, but He took His Church into eternal union with Himself; and when she fell, would He be parted from her? Never! He took her sins and bore them in His own body to the tree. He took her sorrows and experienced them. Look at Him — a poor, weak Child upon His virgin mother's breast. Look at Him — "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men." Look at Him — the Curse of God on Calvary's bloody tree. There no approving smile from the face of His Father met His anxious gaze. He was betrayed by one friend, denied by another, and forsaken by all.

Hated by the world, tormented by devils, and distressed in spirit, and all because of the sins of His loved ones, yet He loves them. He forgets not a single soul that He owned in the eternal counsels. He was the same on Calvary as He was in covenant, and the same now in glory for them.

"*This same Jesus*" is the everlasting salvation of His people. Mark you, it is not Jesus doing something to save; but Jesus in all that He is, and in all that He has done, the salvation of His people. A free salvation, a full salvation, an unchanging salvation, without money and without price. A salvation perfect, as quaintly described in the words of a poor Lancashire woman, "*reet (right) and square at both ends.*" The same salvation that Adam, and Abel, and all God's elect have, and ever will glory in.

"*This same Jesus*" is the everlasting righteousness of His saved ones. He brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. ix. 24). "His righteousness endureth for ever" (Psa. cxi. 3). He says, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isa. li. G). In this same righteousness Abraham was covered and justified. This same righteousness covered that devil of a man Manasseh, and in it the once blaspheming thief on Calvary's tree was justified and accepted. The same righteousness that Paul the chief of sinners delighted in, and in which the whole election of grace shall stand when the world is in a blaze.

"*This same Jesus,*" by His precious blood, cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7). O marvellous truth! After cleansing poor, polluted David from all his sins, after cleansing our old friend Rahab from all her lies and deceit, after cleansing dear old Jonah from his peevishness and ill-temper, after cleansing cursing, lying Peter, this precious blood is just as efficacious this morning to cleanse Thomas Bradbury from all these sins which centre in him.

"Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

"*This same Jesus*" in His love. "Perfect love casteth out fear." This is as true to-day as it was yesterday, and will be as true to-morrow as it is to-day. See! As assuredly as we experience fear to-day — "fightings without and fears within" — perfect love which is unchanging, unwearied, and incapable of variation, is sure to cast it out. Yes, and it will be true when our eyes are glazed in death, when flesh and heart may fail through Satan's assaults and temptations, then He who changes not, will be near to cheer us with the precious fact that His perfect love casteth out fear. The assurance of this makes the heart to swell with gratitude, and the tongue to shout with praise —

"O Love, how high Thy glories swell,
How great, immutable, and free;
Ten thousand sins, as black as hell,
Are swallow'd up, O Love, in Thee."

Jesus is no fickle, capricious Lover. He is the great I AM, the unchanging and unchangeable. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). To the end of what? Here we have something for the comfort of all those who, through the revelation of Jesus' love to them, have all the conceit taken out of them, He loves them to the end of all their sins, sorrows, and sufferings.

"Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the Same.

My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

"*This same Jesus*" in His truth'. His Gospel cannot be altered. See how jealous Paul was in this matter (2 Cor. xi. 3, 4): "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received,^ or another Gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with me." Look again at Gal. i. 6 — 8: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Look again, and may God seal it home to your hearts (Eph. iv. 3 — 6): "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Oneness! Sameness! Where is it to be enjoyed? Only in the Person of a precious Christ.

IV. — The Past — "Yesterday." In covenant. In crucifixion. In communication. "Yesterday" — through all the waywardness and wanderings of our unregeneracy, and through all the weakness and weariness of our pilgrim path, Jesus has been ever the same. Earthly friends are at the best but frail and fickle, uncertain and unstable; but Jesus Christ declares Himself: "I AM JEHOVAH; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). "*Yesterday.*" From everlasting in His purposes of love. "*Yesterday.*" All through His painful pilgrimage for us. "*Yesterday.*" In His unwearied kindness to us up to this moment of time, though we have tried His patience to the uttermost.

V. — The Present — "And to-day." Have we any here this morning who are willing and satisfied, in the face of the world's taunts, the insinuations of *gentlemanly* professors, and the base revilings of hypocrites and *religious* worldlings, to walk arm-in-arm with halting Jacob, lying Rahab, wretched Manasseh? peevish Jonah, and cursing, swearing Peter? Ah, responds the tried and tempted, My sins are so many and great, that were they to appear before the world, all the sins of those you have mentioned would be cast into the shade. To sinners such as you, Jesus is the same to-day. Look at that poor thief expiring by His side. He prays, "Lord, remember me *when* Thou comest in Thy kingdom." The prayer had respect to the future. Mark the promise: "*To-day* shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." In the midst of fickle friends, changing circumstances, and varying experiences, we see One who is with us through evil report and good report, and will never leave us until He has done all that He promised to us in covenant before all time.

VI. — The Future — "And for ever." Blessed be His dear Name, He is the same kind, loving Saviour and Companion as He was in eternity past, and to His saints in days of old, when He cared for them in all their cares, saved them from all their sins, carried them through all their temptations, and landed them safe in glory. What He was, He is, and He ever will be to His own. He will rest in His love. He will not forsake them who cost Him so much. In all their pains and perplexities, headaches and heartaches, He will prove Himself ever the same.

Elect, ransomed and regenerate sinner! Jesus the Immutable, Jesus the Unchangeable, will be with thee in the moment of dissolution to uphold thee and to His glory to conduct thee. May it ever be thy lot and mine to trust Him here, and rejoice with Him in the presence of His Father up yonder. Amen.

XXX. JEHOVAH-JESUS, THE
CONSTANT COMPANION AND
FAITHFUL FRIEND OF ELECT
SINNERS.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
February 21st, 1875, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"I the LORD, the First, and with the last; I am He."
— Isaiah xli. 4.

VERY blessed and precious are the truths set before us by JEHOVAH the Spirit in the chapter which I have read this morning for our instruction and edification. These truths appear all the more glorious through being stated by way of contrast. Here we have the weakness and littleness of Israel, there we see the omnipotence and greatness of Israel's God. The people of God, seen as they are in themselves, at whatever point of privilege they may be brought, however rich and varied the experience may be with which they are blessed, however high they may soar in the covenant verities of Israel's THREE-ONE JEHOVAH, or however deep they may dive into the profound mysteries of Divine truth, though blest with covenant relationship to the ever-blessed God, yet, in themselves, they are but weak, wayward, and worthless; in fact, nothing in His

sight only as He beholds them in that covenant relationship put upon them before all worlds, and wrought in them by the power, grace, and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. As He beholds them in His everlasting covenant of grace, sees them in the varied and rare perfections of their glorious Head, they appear beautiful, fair, and comely in His sight. The sigh from the anxious heart of the bride is oftentimes wafted homeward, but the voice of the Beloved is sure to whisper: — "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psalm xlv. 13). We have very much of this relationship revealed in the chapter before us. Covenant ties are spoken of in the eighth verse: — "But thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen." Why not Israel My chosen and Jacob my servant? Simply because of the reason given in 1 Cor. i. 27 : — "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, an J things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." Jacob, the supplanter, is loved, while Esau is hated and rejected.

Let us now look at the preceding context. The chapter begins: — "Keep silence before Me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength." These "lets" are exceedingly precious when viewed in the light of JEHOVAH'S sovereignty. "Let there be light, and there was light." "Let the people renew their strength; ' the power of Christ must rest upon them. "Let them come near;" Christ by the power of His Spirit brings them near. "Then let them speak;" as the Holy Ghost sweetly testifies of the love, blood, and beauty of our most glorious Christ our hearts "bubble up," and we must speak to and of the King. "Let us come near to judgment." Who but a covenant God in Christ can judge truly of His people's necessities and sorrows? "Who raised up the righteous man?" Abraham was a representative man raised up by God to shew forth the riches of His grace, the glory of His righteousness, and the power of His faith. So the question is asked, "Who raised up the righteous man from the East,

called him to His feet," to receive his commission and to hear words of counsel which JEHOVAH alone can give?" Gave the nations before him." Do not the nations exist for the sake of God's elect, the spiritual seed of Abraham? This next is gloriously true!" And made him rule over kings." The children of God sometimes begrudge the great ones of the earth their luxuries, and graceless politicians cry out for their rights. What is my right? So far as this wretched world is concerned, about six feet of earth which I suppose will be mine when God takes His own life out of this poor body, and as to any earthly rights He will see to them that they are mine. But if the child of God is left to strive with the potsherds of the earth in respect to place, position, or power, he, as a pilgrim, will pay bitterly as far as his peace and comfort are concerned. Ah! this *is* a glorious testimony! "Made him rule over kings." Look at the solitary monk who caused all Christendom to quake, that magnanimous star of the Reformation, Martin Luther; before his glance, and under his faithful testimony, earthly potentates were seen to blush and quail. And have you not heard of the unflinching John Knox, whose prayers the besotted Papist Mary dreaded more than an army of soldiers? Ah! the tried and tempted children of the living God bowing lowly at His mercy-seat are a power in the earth, though unknown to earth's great ones. "He gave them as the dust to His sword, and as driven stubble to His bow." Glorious truth!" He pursued them and passed safely," or, as you see in the margin, *in peace.*" "In the world ye shall have tribulation, in Me, *peace.*" God's children in their shortsightedness look for peace where He has never promised it, and where they can never find it. "This Man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Micah v. 5). When enemies abound on every hand, when doubts and fears prevailing rise, when the devil appears to have everything his own way with us, then,

"Christ is our Peace in the presence of God,"

and will be our only Peace abounding in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. "He passed in peace by the way He had not gone

with His feet." You and I, by feet, hands, fingers, and brains, endeavour to bring things about according to our liking, but we find trouble and anxiety, disappointment and dissatisfaction; "without are fightings ; within, fears." The way to glory is spoken of in that glorious description of the Good Shepherd in chap. xl. 11: — "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." That is not going by the way of their feet! Look here! "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. xliii. 9). A carrying God is the glory of the Gospel; a carrying, upholding, sustaining God is He who well suits those who, in weakness and weariness, cannot take a single step alone. "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the nations from the beginning?" JEHOVAH Himself! Before the world was, when a precious Christ was set up in covenant as the Head and Representative of grace; from the creation of the world, through the various dispensations of grace, working all things well according to the counsel of His own will. This brings us to notice the glorious description He gives of Himself in the words of the text: — "I the LORD, the First, and with the last; I am He."

I — The Speaker — JEHOVAH-JESUS — "I the LORD."

II. — His Pre-eminence — "The First."

III. — The Constant Companion — "And with the last."

IV. — The Faithful Friend — "I am He."

I. — The Speaker — "I the LORD." Who is this? None but the Christ of God in covenant relationship to His people, meeting them in all their wants and necessities throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. He speaks of Himself again and again as JEHOVAH. It is truly astonishing to me how any person with ordinary intelligence can read the Bible and remain amid the errors of Socinianism or Unitarianism. But there are thousands who profess to believe in the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and possess a Trinitarian creed, who are not one whit better,

nay, not so honest, their profession is but a poisonous vapour at the best. Turn with me to Isa. xlvi. at the twelfth verse a Person speaks: He says, "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the First; I also am the Last." Notice the difference of expression between this and our text: here it is, "I also am the Last;" there it is, "I am *with* the last." "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand up together." Now go on to the sixteenth verse : — "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now the LORD GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me." Mark you well! this Person who says, "Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens," also declares, "And now the LORD GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me." Who can this be but the God-Man Christ Jesus? If the Three Persons of the glorious and undivided Godhead are not set forth here, who are? If the Trinity is not here, where will you find it? But the Christ of God is here! He, who in the days of His flesh declared: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Luke iv. 18; Isa. lxi. 1). When reading a portion of that blessed fifty-third of Isaiah, the Ethiopian eunuch enquired of Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts viii. 34, 35). So in the passage before us I know the same Jesus, and none other. I JEHOVAH, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, through the continued ages of eternity; I JEHOVAH, Jesus Himself, manifesting His true, proper, and eternal Godhead in the midst of weakness, weariness, and woe. We see this when, as a thirsty and wayworn pilgrim, He rests on the old well at Sychar. A poor harlot woman comes to draw water. He despises not nor discards the stray one, but requests a draught of water from her pitcher. In holy familiarity He confers rich grace upon her, causing her to drink deeply of the water of eternal life, from the springing well of the everlasting covenant. See! If you leave out the italics

"*he*" in John iv. 26, you have the weary Man revealing Himself as I AM.

Again we see Him after a day's hard toiling, asleep in the sides of the ship on the sea of Tiberias,

"Tossed with rough winds and faint with fear,"

His disciples, at their wits' end, awake Him, crying, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" He stands! He speaks! He drops His word, His own omnipotent "Peace, be still" into the troubled elements, "the voice of JEHOVAH is upon the waters," "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." As man He sleeps, as God He works wondrously.

Just notice that marvellous scene recorded in John xviii., when Judas, with the mob at his back, came to Gethsemane, to betray the Lord of life and glory, and deliver Him to death and to judgment: "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth:" there we have a plain and unmistakable statement of His Divine omniscience: "And said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I AM." Mark! the personal pronoun "*he*" is in italics, therefore supplied, and thus marring the fair beauty of Divine truth. "And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I AM, they went backward and fell to the ground." What a glorious and awful display of His Godhead this must have been, when the wicked, even His enemies, and His foes came upon Him to eat up His flesh they stumbled and fell. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and at this time the rays of indwelling Deity overawed and confounded His most determined adversaries. "Who can stand when He appeareth f" Only those whom the Father hath committed to His trust, whom He hath saved with an everlasting salvation, whom the blessed Spirit sweetly and experimentally unites to Him, as living members to one living Head, and for whom He will say to law, death, hell, and judgment, whensoever they may

accuse in the, court of conscience, "I have told you that I AM; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way. That the saying might be fulfilled which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

See how richly His Godhead breaks forth from that most precious of all names, JESUS — the simple meaning of the word w JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR — the Saviour of the elect: He who saves His people from their sins is JEHOVAH. This brings me to dwell upon

II. — His Pre-eminence — "The First." The Person who speaks in this precious portion declares Himself not only I AM JEHOVAH, God over all blessed for ever, but also "I AM, the First." Let us meditate upon this in the light of that pre^e eminent position He maintains before His Father, and before and in the hearts of His people. It has a deeper, higher, and more experimental bearing than the same word has in Isa. lxviii. and Rev. i. "I JEHOVAH, the First and *with* the last." The whole beauty of the passage hangs upon the word "*with*." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God" (John i. 1). Christ, the Word of God, the Saviour and Friend of His elect people, is the First or Chief in all the ways and works of JEHOVAH — He is the Man of His counsel, the Glory of His covenant, the Beginning of His creation. Before the worlds were framed, when the delight of Christ was with the elect sons of men as He saw them all-glorious in the glass of His Father's decrees; then He was by the Father, as one brought up with Him, and declares, "I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (Prov. viii. 30, 31). Paul, by gracious inspiration, reveals Him as the "image of the invisible God, the Firstborn or Chief of every creature; for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 15 — 18). In the salvation,

experience, and glorification of His people He is the First. With adoring gratitude the whole regenerate family of God accord to Him the pre-eminence in everything. He is the chief delight of our hearts, and when His presence, preciousness, and power are experienced within, in the spirit, if not in the words, of Asaph, we cry, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). Who works like Him in providence? and if we look history through where do we find one to be compared to Him?

Let us notice the righteous man, Abraham, the father of the faithful, and as he is called in this very chapter, the friend of God. A man remarkable for his faith, yet as weak as water when his faith was tested. See! he goes down to Egypt, and tells his wife that she must pass as his sister. Here we see evasion, hesitancy, vacillation, something like wavering in the father of the faithful. Left to himself, where is his faith? Now let me direct you to Heb. xii. 1: "Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author, or Beginner, and Finisher of our faith." There is a besetting sin spoken of, what is it? Some say the besetting sin of one is drunkenness; of another, covetousness. Ah! my dear friends, the apostle is not writing about *sins*, but concerning the besetting *sin* of the whole Church of the living God down here, the accursed sin of unbelief. It is mine, and who can say it plagues them not? In this we find the necessity for the exhortation, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. iii. 12). Because of this accursed sin, all God's children groan more or less. But Paul directs our minds to the great cloud of witnesses. Why? That we may be wholly taken up with the object thereof, Jesus Christ the Beginner and Finisher of the faith of every saint whose name appears in the cloud. Here we see Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Samson, and David. Are we to look to these? No! but to the all-perfect One upon whom their faith rested. "Looking off," from the cloud, "to Jesus." If Abraham is to be our pattern, then we

must tell lies. But what shall I more say? Samson is strong, but where is his strength when in the lap of Delilah? Moses is meek, but his meekness disappears at the waters of strife. Rabbah, upon whom mighty and magnanimous grace was thrust, told lies when she received and hid the spies. Are these examples whom we can fully follow? No!" Looking off unto Jesus." He is the perfect pattern. In the ranks of the elect none can compare with Him. "He is chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Look at Him as He displays the perfection of righteousness from Bethlehem's lowly manger to Calvary's bitter cross! Unwavering rectitude is manifested throughout His life of love and suffering obedience. He was the dependent, faithful, trusting Man, and we find no trust manifested to perfection but His, and no faith worth possessing but the faith of the Head which is communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost to each and every one of the members of His mystical body. Paul gives an account of himself, and the faith he possessed, thus: "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 Abraham? My own faith? No such thing! But) of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). This is not like the wretched, deluded Arminian who professes to live by His own faith, and by his taking God at His word. Oh, no! I cannot do this, neither can any honest child of promise. As we look at these things by the light which God the Holy Ghost throws upon them, we see that the faith of the Son of God was unvarying, undeviating, perfect; a faith which earth and hell combined could never move.

"By such deadly foes assaulted,
By such strong temptations tried,
Still His footsteps never halted,
On from strength to strength He hied;
What could move Him,
With JEHOVAH at His side!"

Talk about Sampson! Jesus proves in the experience of His people that a greater than Samson is here, even Omnipotence Himself.

Christ is my Samson, my Strength, without Samson's weakness. Solomon was wondrously wise, but in Christ are secured for me all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is my Solomon, my wisdom, without Solomon's folly. Christ is the First in everything to me! Where is He in your estimation this morning? There are thousands to whom the name of Jesus is but a supplement to their own, and His work a kind of makeweight to their own wretched and vain endeavours. How can a precious Christ be First in the estimation of such? But none can tell the joy, the unspeakable joy, of those who are blest in His love, live by His faith, are guided by His wisdom, and kept by His power. This gives us to see the whole election of grace saved for nothing in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Abraham's faithlessness, Moses' rashness, David's treachery and bloodshed, with poor Rahab's lies, all drowned in the ocean of atoning blood. Thus surveying JEHOVAH'S matchless grace, and the chosen jewels which sparkle in His coronet, dear old Kent could sing, —

"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.

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."

Blessed be God! Jesus is First in love, First in faith, First in strength, First in wisdom, First in beauty, First in excellence, and those who realize this may oftentimes be in much perplexity, like poor Asaph, but, as the perplexities of the path are theirs, so will be the perfections, and their adoring hearts must "bubble up" with, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

He who leads the van, who is the First and the Chief in the experience of His people, and the All in all of Holy Writ, says, "I am JEHOVAH, the First, and *with* the last." This leads us to consider —

III. — The Constant Companion — "And *with* the last." "*With the last*" say you? Yes! Perhaps God may bless our waiting hearts, visit us with His salvation, and graciously pick some of you up as we contemplate His marvellous grace and condescension as couched in these precious words, "*and with the last.*" May He grant it to be so. This is a blessed and glorious truth! He took the first martyr home to glory, so will He take the last. His elect are His special treasure, jewels in His crown, and He will see to it that every one of them are safely brought home to glory. It is a blessed privilege to be led by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation into an experimental acquaintance with the Brother born for adversity, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. In the days of His flesh He was pre-eminently the lowly, dependent Man. He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, with none but angels to minister unto Him. Behold Him in communion with His Father! Is He not the First in this respect?" And in the morning rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 12,13, and 35). Ah! but this is not all! He is First in communion in the morning. He is Last in loving toil and patient grace in the evening. He constrained His disciples to get into a ship and cross over to Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. "And when He had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them." At this unseasonable hour, and in the moment of their deepest need and dire necessity, He carries to their troubled hearts His tranquilizing love-message: "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid" (Mark vi. 45, 51). If we would survey the scenes of wildest desolation which His sorrowing soul experienced we must enter in spirit the dark and gloomy vale of Gethsemane. He takes with Him His three privileged disciples; but at a certain point He stops, the winepress of

JEHOVAH'S anger must be "trodden alone" (Isaiah lxiii. 3). He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Then said He to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' He returns to the three, they are asleep! No smile from His Father, no sympathy from His friends! Well does Hart describe this scene of intense loneliness thus: —

"Backwards and forwards thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man."

He is alone! But soon, loneliness must be still more lonely: "Then all His disciples forsook Him and fled." Yet still more desolate is the feeling of His heart. when, from the wild isolation of Calvary, He cries, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why was all this?" Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered, and being made perfect!" What an astounding truth! Made *perfect!* He who was perfect God, and perfect Man, learns in the school of human suffering how to perfectly sympathize with His poor, weak, despised brethren in all their temptations and tribulations.

Now let us notice particularly that word of the text" *with*" — "And *with* the last." This has reference to the glorious covenant engagements of our Surety on the behalf of His elect people, and His identification with them in all their afflictions and disappointments during their sojourn in this wilderness world. The exigencies and extremities of the flock of slaughter are the opportunities of the loving Shepherd. See! There is a man who could stand before all Israel and confront and confound the whole host of Israel's internal enemies. In a moment his strength is gone. Alone in the wilderness of Beersheba he longs to die; but there the ANGEL JEHOVAH, the First, and *with* the last, sustained Him. He arose and went to Horeb, and in the cave poured out his soul in bitterness and loneliness: "I

have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children

of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." Now was this the case? Not really; but fearfully so in his soul's experience. He was alone, desolate, forsaken — "*the last!*" The experience of the Psalmist was his: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm clxii. 4). But the constant Companion was by his side ready to save and nigh at hand to bless. "What saith the answer of God to him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom. xi. 4). Ay! and JEHOVAH the covenant God of Israel will be with His own though they may come to the conclusion that true religion is dying out of the land; though they may "wander in the wilderness in a solitary way;" though

"----gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few,
On Him I lean who not in rain
Experienced every human pain:
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears."

Paul knew something of this, as he describes in 2 Timothy iv. 16 — -18: "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." There we see isolation, desolation, yet blessed support in and deliverance therefrom. The constant Companion was true to His promise, and by the gracious encouragement Paul received from His presence and counsel, he was enabled in the riches of assurance to say, "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."

Desolation and desertion are oftentimes experienced by the tried pilgrims of Zion. The Psalmist could say, from a feeling heart, "My spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate." Not a soul to commune with, not one to whom he could speak in his sadness and sorrow. Do you know what it is to feel alone in a crowd?

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

Here the soul knows what it is to be "*the last*," and also the blessedness of His companionship and counsel who is ever true to His word — "*with the last*."

John, with his brother James, ask the Lord — or rather, with a stroke of wisdom much to be admired, they, knowing the power of a woman's tongue, get their mother to ask — that they might sit one on the right and the other on the left hand of our Lord in His kingdom. It is very remarkable that James was the *first* apostle who was taken to glory, being slain by the sword of Herod Agrippa, and John was the *last* to enter the halls of the glorified. Does not that look like sitting on the right hand and on the left of the King? Requests are sometimes strangely granted. But John is not only the last of the apostles, he is banished to the lonely, rocky isle of Patmos, simply for the testimony he gave to the love, blood, and beauty of his gracious Lord. He is the *last* in order of time, he is the *last* in his soul's experience. But is he left? No! He "is in the Spirit on the Lord's-day ;" he hears a voice; he turns: the constant Companion is *with* him, blessing him with glorious and gracious revelations of present grace and future glory. Yes! the blessed One of our text

forsook not His persecuted disciple. He was there, "the First and *with* the last."

Let us look at this in another light. Can we not each ask the question, How is it that the Lord saves me? Why me! the chief, the most wretched sinner out of hell? I have rebelled against His authority, discarded His love, and would have posted headlong to hell but for His gracious interposition. Even now, in the face of affection, and love unailing, I am oft forgetful of Him; therefore, the *last* for a precious Christ to notice, yet, He gives me to know that I am dear to Him as the apple of His eye; He reveals Himself to me and in me as my friend and Fellow; He refreshes my soul with the sweet music of His Name, and with a blessed foretaste of the glorious home He has provided for me up yonder. But see! He hangs upon the accursed and bloody tree, in compassion He beholds His own who in sorrow are witnessing the tragic event of that dreadful moment. Who shall be the first to enter glory with Him? His mother? No! though the wretched old Pope would have had it so, no doubt. His beloved John, who leaned on His bosom and drank in so much of His spirit? No! But the very *last* that poor nature would pitch upon, the *last* that we should imagine! This magnanimous grace suits a wretched rebel like me. He looks! and His look darts life, light, love, and liberty, down to the very heart's necessities of the most abandoned wretch in creation. The thief, the reviler, the blasphemer, is the favoured one; he cries, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be *with* Me in paradise." From the curse, and death, and sin, the Friend of sinners wings His flight with the dying thief to the realms of eternal blessing and life and glory. Was He not true to His nature, His Name and His promise? "I JEHOVAH, the First, and with the last; I am He."

You and I who know something of these glorious things, are sensible of the ebb and flow in our soul's enjoyments. Sometimes the Divine life is at a very low ebb, and we almost come to the conclusion that we have no part or lot in the matter of JEHOVAH'S

grace, the presence of the loved One of our hearts is not experienced, pardon not enjoyed, nor the sweets and consolations of the Gospel brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost. That sweet verse, by Miss Steele, is applicable to such a state : —

"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."

See! That is the smoking flax! Not a spark seen, no warmth experienced, Satan, sin and the flesh appear to hold everything their own way, and the enemy of souls is about to drag the soul to destruction, when JEHOVAH-JESUS, "the First, and *with* the last," sweetly reveals Himself. Ay, He is *with*, what appeared to be, the *last* dying gasp for life, the *last* spark of love, and with His soft South wind, the gentle breathings of His Spirit, He fans the soul into a flame of desire and longing, and away it soars upon wings of meditation and the thoughts of love to the land of life and endless joy where Jesus is supreme.

But the tents of Kedar and the sojourning in Meshech must be known and felt, and the dark valley of the shadow of spiritual death must be trodden, still His Word holds good, and the experience of the child is, "Thou art *with me*, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psa. xxiii. 4). O glorious rod of sovereign purpose and grace, brilliant with jewels, glistening with exceeding great and precious promises!

IV. — The Faithful Friend — "*I am He*" Thy faithful covenant-keeping God. I am with thee throughout all thy wanderings and waywardness. None shall triumph over thee, and all that I have purposed concerning thee, that will I accomplish. Through every temptation, trial and tribulation, I will safely conduct thee, and prove to thee that thou hast been "borne by Me from the belly and carried from the womb," and that "even to your old age I am He; and even

to your hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isa. xlvii. 3, 4). Yes, blessed be His holy name, through life even to the *last* breath, sigh or groan; through death, to His glory home, He will be with His own.

"Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame:
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

May the Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

XXXI. "SON, THOU ART EVER WITH ME."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
April 2nd, 1876, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

— Luke xv. 31.

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

SO sang good old John Kent, and so sings my adoring heart before the gracious Majesty of heaven. Free-will and human merit are excluded from the songs of those who sing "with grace in their hearts to the Lord." Humility is the genuine characteristic of the true-born child of God, and as to pride — that thing of hell — there is no room for this in the family to which all grace abounds, all the fulness of JEHOVAH'S love is manifested, and shall be manifested until every elect son and daughter are shut in with Him in glory.

The whole of this precious chapter is a glorious revelation of the truth of "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding." Over what sin? Sin, not according to our weak conceptions, but over all sin that has abounded and which shall abound in the experience of all God's children. Yes, over every kind of sin as we see it revealed in the various phases and features of this glorious parable. Mark! I speak advisedly when I say *parable*, not parables. Some look upon this chapter as containing three parables; but no, there is but one parable which shows forth the rich and wondrous grace of the covenant Three to sinners of every shade and grade. Let us look at the chapter: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." This reminds one of that precious hymn of Hart's, —

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save *you*."

To save whom? Not you who *think* you are sinners. Not you who *fancy* you have sinned now and again, but those of us who find ourselves swallowed up in sin and convinced of our utter unworthiness in the sight of Infinite Excellency. To all such we can say, —

"Jesus ready stands to save *you*.
Full of pity, joined with power;
He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more."

"*Doubt no more!*" This sounds like a command, and when covenant commands are made life and power in the hearts of God's children, doubts disappear, and joy and peace are experienced in believing. "Then drew near unto *Him*." To Him who came into the world to save sinners. Mark! God's Word does not say He came to save believers, or those who can pray, repent, produce a deep experience,

or take flights into rapturous regions of religious joy; but, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so.
New life from Him we must receive
Before for sin we rightly grieve."

Sinners who approach unto Jesus are those who have nothing of their own but sin and defilement, wretchedness and ruin. "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*" What a glorious truth from lying lips! Here God has made the wrath of men to praise Him. Jesus, the Friend of sinners, not only receives sinners to Himself, but He sits down with them, attends to their necessities, feeds them with Himself, the Bread of life, clothes them with raiment of His own providing, and shelters them in Himself, the Strong Habitation to which they may continually resort (Psa. lxxi. 2). Precious Provider! Gracious Saviour! Glorious Security!

"*And He spake this parable unto them*" Mark!" *this parable,*" not, these parables. You find no repetition of these words in any portion of the chapter. It is not. He spake this parable of the lost sheep, and this parable of the lost piece of silver, and this parable of the lost son; but "He spake *this parable* unto them." The three parts form one precious parable, yet we, with our weak conceptions and carnal conclusions, think the parables are three. Now, if you will look for a moment or two at Gen. xli. you will see an account of Pharaoh's dreams, the meaning of which he comprehended not. Look at ver. 14: "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, *I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to*

interpret *it*." Now mark Joseph's answer: "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*" Pharaoh then related his dream. Notice particularly this twenty-fifth verse: "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, *The dream of Pharaoh is one; God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.*" It is not, the dreams of Pharaoh are two, but "*the dream of Pharaoh is one.*" The varied phases and features of the Divine procedure were revealed in that dream. Here we see unity in diversity, and diversity in unity. So we find in this fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, the parable is one. And why one? Because the oneness, and yet the plurality of persons in the Godhead are displayed throughout. Truth is one, but there are diversified manifestations of it. There is one JEHOVAH, but there are three Divine persons in JEHOVAH. See! The love, care, and concern which the covenant Three have for elect vessels of mercy are here described. The description commences with the action of that blessed One whom the Spirit loves to glorify, the Good Shepherd seeking His lost sheep. The second part reveals His work and operation of whom the Saviour testified: "He shall not speak of Himself" (John xvi. 13); therefore, under the figure of a woman, God's living Church, the Spirit is seen seeking those loved ones who are dead in trespasses and sins. In the third part the Father is seen in His gracious activities on the behalf of His sons. Blessed be God, whatever be the natural dispositions or determinations of His children in the face of the world, in the face of sin, in the face of hell, He must and will have His own at home with Him.

"*This parable.*" What is a parable? I do not know that we can get a better meaning than that given by a Sunday school girl, who said, "a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." We get a little hint of this in John iii. 12, where Christ, in His conversation with Nicodemus, said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" That is, if I have condescended to metaphor and earthly illustration to explain to you My mind and will, and you understand not, how is it possible for you to understand if I state them in their purity and spirituality? He was a perfect and a patient Teacher. Why then teach in parables?

For the *comfort* of His own, and for the *confusion* of His enemies. Now turn to Matt. xiii. 10: "And the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Strange expression! "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear 'with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (see Isa. vi. 9, 10). To some it was given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom, and these should follow on to know; to others it was not given, and the spurious knowledge they had should be unmasked and taken away from them. To some was given life, and these shall have it more abundantly (John x. 10), while those who only have a name to live and are dead shall be confounded, but not converted. God never had such a gracious intention toward them. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and before He returned to His Father He could say, "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).

I want you to turn to Psa. lxxviii., for it has a wonderful bearing upon the chapter which I read for our instruction this morning. You cannot look into your Bibles too often, though in this matter you are not to think that, like a wretched Arminian taskmaster, I shall try to flog you to *your duty*. In rummaging my Bible I enjoy a gracious privilege — to me *a privilege, not a duty* — and oftentimes a heart-comforting privilege it is. But let us to the Psalm: "Give ear, O My

people, to My law; incline your ears to the words of My mouth. *I will open My mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.*" Now turn to Matt, xiii. 34, 35: "All these things spake Jesus unto them in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Jesus was a parabolic Teacher and Expounder, and as such we find Him in the precious parable of Luke xv. Look! the parable is *one* and reveals *one* God. It has three divisions, showing forth the glorious grace of the *Three* Persons of the Godhead. It also describes three stages of sinnership. In the first part we see the Lord Jesus Christ seeking *the lost sheep* amid the wilds of sin and corruption. What a glorious sight! *A wandering sinner and a seeking Savior*. Look at the sheep — lost. Look at the Seeker — He knows where to find His lost one. He seeks! He finds! He saves! Failure attends Him not. How long does He seek? Mark well those words of marvellous grace: "*until He find it!*" Precious Christ! Gracious Saviour! Blessed Bridegroom! seeking, saving, succoring His own, those that are lost.

In the second part, commencing with the eighth verse, we see a woman seeking a lost piece of silver: "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Here we see the Spirit of the living God in the Church. It is a remarkable fact that in the calling of God's people He uses human instrumentality. This you will see is the teaching of the Holy Ghost throughout the whole of Holy Scripture. But some may be ready to produce the case of the apostle Paul as an exception, and a wonderful instance of Divine interposition in the calling and bringing of a sinner to the light and liberty of God's Gospel. You wait a moment! God did not go out of His usual path even in this instance. A precious Christ met Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, arrested him in his course of enmity and sin, hurled him

to the ground, when, blind and helpless, he was led into the city, and remained there three days. Then God sent *a man*, Ananias, to him, who was the means of communicating the Divine mind and will to his understanding. You see the same in the case of Cornelius: there was *the man*, Peter, who must preach to him and to his household words whereby they must be saved. So it was in the case of the eunuch, *the man*, Philip, must preach to him Jesus from Isa. liii. 7, 8. God has so ordained that from the lips of His own sent ministers the incorruptible seed of the Word shall be sown, and by their testimony lost sinners shall be sought and found. How many lost ones have we here this morning? But where is the Spirit's power such as was manifested in ancient days? But here is a woman, the Church seeking by Divine inspiration; she seeks until she finds. The object of her search is a piece of silver, dead, yet of intrinsic value. Dear and precious to God are all His elect children though dead amid the darkness and dreariness of unregeneracy. He will see to it that they are all sought out, found, and saved with an everlasting salvation.

Now to the last portion, or third part of the parable, which illustrates that precious statement of Paul in Eph. ii. 18: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Anything short of the Father's home and heart will never satisfy the longing desires of His living children. "And He said, A certain man had two sons." How many sons had he? Two! Mark, it does not say he had *one* son and questioned the parentage or legitimacy of the other; but, "A certain man had two sons," truly begotten sons, living in his house, sitting at his table, partaking of his bounty, enjoying his smile, and walking under his guidance. Yet these two sons had wills and dispositions of their own, and these diametrically opposed to their father's, and while they were opposed to him they were unlike each other. One was as *profligate* as the devil could make him, the other was as *pious* as the devil could make him. It is our mercy to know that all kinds of sinners are embraced in the arms of everlasting love, and are drawn by God the ever-blessed Spirit to experience and enjoy the grace and compassion of an unchanging Father. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father,

give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. *And he divided unto them his living.*" This teaches us that the children of the living God oftentimes ask Him for the possession of that which, when they have, they know not how to manage or to keep. And mark, the very things they pray for, and which He gives, often prove to be thorns, and briers, and stumbling-stones in their path. Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn from his flesh; but this was denied him, while he was blest with the revelation that the grace of Christ was sufficient for him. Well, it is far better to experience the thorn in the flesh than to miss the raptures of the third heaven; far better to groan under the bufferings of Satan than to be destitute of Christ's all-sufficient grace. Such experiences as these cause us to cry for His gracious presence and the rich realization of His love. We hear much in this day of profession of "*The power of prayer.*" I saw these very words chalked up on London Bridge the other day, and my heart sickened with the sight. Religious people vainly imagine that because they ask according to their finite conceptions, God is bound to bestow upon them their heart's desire. We hear of prayer meetings in profusion, some with a definite, others with an indefinite object in view; but in almost every one of them *the power of prayer* is extolled, while the power of the Holy Ghost and the power of Christ's resurrection are ignored. Do notice the request of the younger son: "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He did not know what he was asking for. Well might Paul say in Rom. viii. 26, which we read and enjoyed at our prayer meeting last Friday evening: "Likewise the Spirit also 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." Well may the children of God seek counsel from Him thus: "Lord, teach us how to pray! Lord, teach us for what to pray!" They sometimes have a vague idea that God will deal out a stock of grace to them; but the blessing in the promise is, "As thy days so shall thy strength be." If God leaves me in sole charge of His gifts, all that I can do is to squander them. Now notice the benevolence, grace, and liberality of our God.

"*And he divided unto them his living.*" What did he divide? All that he possessed — "his living." He did not give to the younger *so much*, and to the elder *nothing*; nor to the younger an *abundance*, and to the elder a *little* of his favour. He gave to one just as much as he gave to the other. They were both his sons, "And he divided unto them his living." Now what has God given to His people? He gave Himself in covenant! He gave His Son in incarnation! He gives His Spirit in regeneration! And, blessed be His holy name, "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). What more could He give? If the father gave as much to the one as to the other, surely the one was as dear to him as the other. Neither the *profligacy* of the one nor the stinking *piety* of the other could never estrange the love of the father's heart from either. In possession of his portion, the younger son doesn't know what to do with himself. Exalted above measure, away he starts from his father's house, and away goes the experimental possession of his portion. Some of you may think you would have managed your affairs better than that. Well, perhaps you might, and have been very proud of your attainment. The younger son wasted his substance in riotous living. I have met with many such in my time. I remember on one occasion a man came up to me near the Victoria Railway Station and said, "*I* have heard you preach many times, and the Word has been greatly blest to *me*. I remember thirty or forty years ago — !" In an incredibly short space of time the man had dealt out an amount of his history and experience which completely staggered me. There was a profligacy and extravagance of expression and display that surprised me. It was what I should call experimental prodigality. I looked! I wondered! Where is the man going to? Where will he stop? *I*, *my*, and *me* figured very largely. The grace of the Father, the love of the Son, and the condescension of the Spirit were acknowledged, but it was for the glorification of the great experimental, and deeply-taught. There he was, throwing his experience about in willful extravagance. Many men when put into possession of grace go about amongst their acquaintances and others, and with an air of superiority appear to insinuate, "What a

highly favoured son am I!" Such, in admiration of self, lose sight of the portion, which feelingly is spent and gone when days of famine ensue.

"And he began to be in want." Have you experienced the pangs of spiritual want and hunger? I have. This reminds me of Hosea vi. 4: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth way." Ephraim, God's dear son and pleasant child, and yet his goodness, mercy or kindness given to him of the Lord, for he had none naturally, all spent in riotous living. That precious book of Hosea seems to me to be an inspired commentary upon this latter portion of Luke xv. Far from his father's home the prodigal joins himself to a citizen of that country, he tries his hand at swine feeding. I know what that means, and have tried to satisfy myself with Arminian and worldly pig meat. But blessed be God, He would not have it so. His children, in spite of their fleshly desires, can feed alone upon clean provision. It is amazing to notice how in the Church of God there is so much seeking, not the Father's glory, the Son's exultation, or the Spirit's honour, but personal comfort, self-ease, and indulgence. To the true-born children these are very little prized. Now notice: *"And when he came to himself."* This shows he had been astray in his mind and judgment. Departure from God in thought, purpose, or will, betrays not merely a weak mind, but positive madness. "He said, How many hired servants of my father 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 — ." This language does not belong to the first throes of regeneration, when the Holy Ghost convicts of sin by the application of the law of God to the conscience. The child in such a case cannot, does not, address God as *"My Father."* It is the language of one intimately acquainted with God, not that of a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, or of one newly awakened to a sense of his sinfulness; but it is the breathing of one who had experienced the witness of the Spirit that he was a child of God, who had been brought to the enjoyment of a Saviour's love, and the bounty of the Father's board. *"My Father!"* This is the

language of pure predestination, gracious adoption, and spiritual regeneration.

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

This only can my fears control,
And bid my sorrows fly;
What harm can ever reach the soul
Beneath my Father's eye?"

Yes, this is the language of assurance in the midst of sorrow, anxiety and perplexity. "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." O what would not the child be who has experienced the love of the father's heart and the bounty of the father's board, who has lived under the father's smile and rejoiced together with the children in the father's house; but is now far away from the experience of a father's love and care? He would bow at the old man's feet, look into his face, and confess his waywardness, his wickedness, and his wrong. When the Spirit of adoption sweetly whispers, "*ABBA, FATHER,*" the son longs for the comforts of home, would take the place of a hired servant, and bend to perform the most menial service for the Father's children.

"JEHOVAH, sovereign, tender, true,
Whom grace and goodness move,
Why such a worthless worm pursue
With gifts of fondest love f

One wish have I, and only one,
Arising day by day —
To serve the children of Thy Son.
As He shall point the way."

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). The everlasting, unchanging love of the Father must be manifested to His own, and no sin or device of Satan can hinder Him or obstruct His way. Do notice this! "But when he was yet a great way off." Are there any fathers here who have wayward, wandering sons a great way off from the home of their birth, but never away from your, heart's affections? Amid the busy haunts of men, and in dreams and visions of the night, the incorrigible one, the offspring of your own body, and the fruit of his mother's sorrow, flits across your path. Tell me! Is he not deeper down in your heart's affections than all the others who sit at your board, and who may boast of their consistency and respect for you? See! The activities are all on the father's part.

His father *saw him!*

His father *had compassion!*

His father *ran!*

His father *fell on his neck!*

His father *kissed him!*

O precious, heart-melting, will-subduing kiss of everlasting love! As my old friend Parks, of Openshaw, said, "The father stopped his blubbering lips with a kiss." No legality here! Not even the first letter of "*make me as one of thy hired servants.*" He was not a servant, but a son and an heir of God through Christ (Gal. iv. 7). So it is now with us who are one with a precious Christ. In Him we have access! In Him we have acceptance! In Him we are caressed in the arms of everlasting Love!

Thus blessed, the son looked up with confidence into his father's face, saw love beaming in his eyes, and bounty flowing from his gracious commands: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Not one word concerning his profligacy! No word in the imperative mood ordering him to robe himself; but, "*put it on him.*" None can express the calm and tranquil rejoicing of the soul that realises its acceptance with the Father through the blood and obedience of the

Son. See Isaiah lxi. 10: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." *"And put a ring on his hand."* This reveals that which knows no end. It shows forth the everlasting love of the Father to His child, as we sing in the sweet language of good old John Kent: —

"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."

"And shoes on his feet." What are these?" And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15). *"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry."* O what a glorious view we get here of a covenant God, and elect sinners feeding upon the fulness of grace and glory which ever dwells in a precious Christ. See how the Holy Ghost reveals this in the law of the peace-offering in Lev. vii. 28 — 34. The fat and the inward parts were the LORD'S, because He has a secret and deeper appreciation of the Person and work of His own Son, that finite minds can never grasp. Yet He has made gracious provision for His people in communion with Himself. *The breast*, denoting God's unchanging love, being the seat of the affections. The shoulder, denoting God's sovereign power. What a feast!

"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."

"Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. *And they began to be merry.*" O what a glorious revelation! A merry-making God! Do you believe it? It is a marvellous fact that at this very moment the angels who do His pleasure and who hang

upon the anointed lips of His heralds of redeeming love, are looking on, and in wonder beholding the ineffable joy of a covenant God as He sees the *sheep*, the *silver*, and the *son* brought to His home and to His heart. Luke xv. 13: "Likewise, I say unto you, *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God* over one sinner that repenteth." And who of us can forget that precious testimony in Zeph. iii. 17: "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.*"

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him *safe and sound.*" What a blessed testimony! Though he had wandered from his father's home, though the devil appeared to have him securely in his clutches, though he joined himself to a citizen of the far country, yet there he sat in the presence of his father without a scratch. He was received with open arms *safe and sound*. A redeemed sinner's person may be troubled; but his life can never be touched by sin or Satan. (See Job ii. 6; Col. iii. 3.) But see now how the elder brother received the news: "And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out and entreated him." Some would have us believe this elder son represents the elect angels who have never sinned, while others contend that he represents a proud professor or Pharisee. With neither of these do I agree. Can it be said that elect angels are angry in beholding the restoration of lost sons? Or, can we believe that we should witness so great a display of Divine affection to proud professors as that revealed in the words, "therefore came his father out, and intreated him!" I answer unhesitatingly, No. Who is he, then? He is a son taken up with himself, his consistency and circumspection. You will find many of this type \a the living family of God; so upright, so consistent, so circumspect, that a poor, halting, tailing or fallen child of God cannot be tolerated in their company. Elder brethren, experienced brethren, consistent brethren

refuse to sit down even at the father's table with the prodigal and wayward even when he is restored. "And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." Those who pride themselves in the consistency of their walk are very often inconsistent in their talk. I asked you to notice that marvellous Psalm lxxviii. Look at ver. 35, 36: "And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their mouth, and lied unto Him with their tongues." Perhaps some of you are too good, too highly favoured, too circumspect to act so; well, let me tell you, whatever favourable views you may have of yourselves, God sees you, and His judgment of you, though seemingly severe to your religious natures, is just and true. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20). The fleshly bitterness which characterizes the discipline of the Churches fully illustrates the case of the elder son. Now the question may arise in your mind, Why direct our attention to that marvellous declaration contained in the words of our text? Simply because I desire to explain to you a little of that truth which dawned upon my mind long years ago. Mark each sentence! (1) "*Son,*" (2) "*thou art ever with me,*" (3) "*and all that I have is thine.*"

1. "*Son.*" Not angel, not servant, not bastard, not hypocrite; but "*Son.*" Predestinated (Eph. i. 5), begotten (James i. 18), born again (John i. 12, 13), called (1 John iii. 1). Has God a son in Egypt? He will call and bring him out of it. Has He a wayward, wandering, rebellious Ephraim? He cannot discard or cast him off. See!" 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).

2. "*Thou art ever with me.*" Was the son proud and angry? In the face of all that, he was ever near and ever dear to his father's heart.

"*Ever with me.*" This leads the mind to that precious portion, "*a people near unto Him*" (Psa. cxlviii. 14).

"So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son
I am as near as He."

JEHOVAH'S promise to Abraham and to his seed for ever was, "I am with thee, I will keep thee, I will not leave thee!" He is faithful that promised, to the truth of which in all seasons His children abundantly testify. In the valley of the shadow of death "*Thou art with me*" (Psa. xxiii. 4). Though foolish and a beast, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 22, 13). Blessed be God, He knows no change; His sons are with Him in election, with Him in redemption, with Him in regeneration, with Him in restoration, with Him in grace, and with Him in glory. "*Son, thou art ever with me.*" Can the Father say this to angels, or to reprobates? Never! But He does say this to proud and to profligate sons. Marvellous grace!

"*And all that I have is thine.*" What could God say more? "*All that I have.*" My home to shelter thee, My heart to love thee, My robe of righteousness to cover thee, My ring of affection to own thee, My Lamb to redeem, feed, and strengthen thee, My servants to wait upon thee, My counsel to guide thee, My company to encourage and delight thee. "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). Glorious truth! A son once, a son for ever. May our own God and Father grant unto us grace that we may have no faith in our own consistency, but learn from this precious parable what *that* means, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1).

And to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost we ascribe, as is most due, all honour and glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

XXXII. "SO THE SPIRIT TOOK ME UP."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Evening,
July 28th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"So the Spirit took me up."
— Ezekiel xliiii. 5.

CONCERNING God in revelation as well as in providence the words of Cowper are strikingly true, —

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Without God's Spirit, God's Book is a perfect blank; without God's power, God's revelation of Himself is a perfect paradox. With the anointing, witness, and sealing of His blessed Spirit, all is plain and clear; and blessed with His presence and power, we may well sing, ay, and sing intelligently too, the last verse of that precious hymn which has thrilled through many hearts since first it appeared in our new hymn book, —

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast,

What love can Thine transcend?
Since Thou Thy lot with me has cast,
Indwelling God and Friend."

It was not only necessary for God to give a gracious revelation of Himself in His own Book, the sacred Scriptures, but these writings must be breathed upon. See!

"The Spirit breathes upon the Word,
And brings the truth to sight."

This is according to the testimony given by Him through Paul to Timothy, " All Scripture God-breathed is profitable." No Scripture but that which is God-breathed to thee and to me, in thee and in me, is truly profitable. This leads to the person of Jesus, exalts Him in our affections, and gives us a sense of our own helplessness and ignorance — therefore the necessity of a Teacher, a Teacher sent from God, a Teacher who is God, God the ever-blessed Spirit. Blessed with such a Teacher, we are led into a precious knowledge of Jesus our Husband, Head, and Saviour, and into experimental relationship with His Father and ours. We honour, adore, and praise the Eternal Spirit for His marvellous condescension in not only taking notice of poor, weak worms of the earth such as we feel ourselves to be, but in making these bodies of ours — which are styled in Phil. iii. 21, "*vile*" — or, as it might be rendered; "this body of humiliation" — His abode. O, it is wonderful to think that God the Father in His design of love and mercy should choose to Himself an innumerable company of Adam's lost race on whom He would lavish all the love of His heart, and all the glories and honours of His kingdom. It is wonderful that God the Son should come to these lower scenes of night, and identify Himself with rebellious worms — bear their sins in His own body to the tree, all their sins — past, present, and to come; this is love indeed. But when we come to contemplate that grand, vast, and glorious new covenant design, that God the Holy Ghost, who hates and abhors the very mention of sin, should come and make our sinful bodies His abode, that in them He

should prepare Himself a habitation in which to testify of Jesus' love, magnify the Father's grace, and abide until the last sigh escapes the quivering lips, and the ransomed spirit soars aloft to its native home, and to the bosom of its God.

The love of the Spirit is marvellous indeed. And yet it is wonderful to think that in this so-called Christian country — a country teeming with Bibles from John O'Groats to Land's End, a country abounding with so-called Christian temples — there is very little known of the person, power, and preciousness of the Holy Ghost. We can see lots of temples, but where is the glory? We can hear of many preachers, but where is the power? We have plenty of form, but where is the Spirit? We hear much of God, but where is His sovereignty? Let me ask you — *you* who have been brought by the Holy Ghost to experience something of what you are in yourselves — wretched, corrupt, vile, and hell-deserving; *you* who have been sickened with the world through the revelation of Jesus' beauty, blessedness, and bounty; *you* who have wept in spirit with your suffering Lord in the depths of Gethsemane; *you* who have ascended the heights of Calvary and beheld Incarnate Love bleeding and dying for you; *you* who have been brought by Him into His banqueting house, to look up and see the banner of everlasting love; as you pass on from place to place, hoping to meet with those who love and fear Him, what meets your gaze? ICHABOD in the pulpit, ICHABOD in the pew, ICHABOD upon almost everything bearing the name of religion. Why is this? In tracing matters up to their original source, we can sing with the redeemed Atheist,

“Up to the Father's high decree
Each act in time I trace;
Up to the glorious Sovereign Three,
Almighty Fount of grace.”

We bow our heads, and our hearts are melted in true worship and adoration before the revelation of His glorious sovereignty. He does as He will with thee and with me; as we see in 1 Cor. iv. 7, "Who

maketh thee to differ?" or, as you read in the margin, "*Who distinguisheth thee?*" O what distinguishing grace is experienced when God the ever-blessed Spirit testifies to our hearts of the love, blood, beauty, and bounty of Jesus, the blessings of our Father's house and kingdom, and the glorious prospect before us, when, divested of the burden of the flesh, and for ever done with sins, doubts, fears, anxieties, cares, and tears, we shall see Him in His own glory-home, and love Him and adore Him with unsinning hearts for ever.

Look for a moment at that glorious doxology which is chanted or read in every place of worship in connection with the Establishment: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." "Glory be to the Father." What for? Well, we can answer. For His pure electing love. To whom? To the elect? Wait a moment, my friend. This is it: "Glory be to the Father" for His electing love *to me*. "Glory be to the Son." What for? For His redeeming love. To whom? Everybody? Lay that on one side. To the elect? Come a little closer home. Christ's redemption is not only particular, but personal, for which every child of God blesses and praises Him in His glorious sanctuary. "Glory be to the Holy Ghost." Why? Because of His regenerating, comforting, confirming, and sealing favour. "As it was in the beginning;" before the world was; "is now, and ever shall be." What shall ever be? Glory to the Eternal Three. Not glory to One at the expense of the other. Not glory to Two and One forgotten, but glory be to the covenant Three-in-One-JEHOVAH, who has secured the everlasting salvation and glorification of that innumerable company whom He in the riches of His grace styles "His own elect;" "My redeemed;" "The living in Jerusalem." It is our mercy in Grove Chapel to worship the covenant Three, and to hold, maintain, and confess in the spirit, if not in the words of one of the creeds of England's Church: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who, with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified." It is ours to worship Him; it is ours to glorify Him, for He

glorifies not Himself; He speaks not of Himself, but He speaks of God's Christ; and as He glorifies God's Christ in our heart's experience, we cannot help but praise and adore Him for the rich revelation of God's everlasting covenant of grace, and also to pray to Him to make to our waiting hearts further discoveries of the Three-in-One-JEHOVAH as all our salvation and all our desire. These preliminary remarks have been called forth through my seeing and enjoying the glorious harmony of Godhead as set forth in the precious verse in which our text appears. Now, in humble and pure dependence upon the guidance, grace, and goodness of God the Holy Ghost, let us seek a Father's blessing in meditating thereon. We notice:

I. — The Spirit's Personality And Work — "The Spirit."

II. — Ezekiel's Character And Privilege — "So the Spirit took me up."

I. — The Spirit's Personality And Work — "The Spirit." Turn with me to Gen. i. 1, 2, where you find the personality of the Spirit of God and His work in creation. But first of all, mark well the language of inspiration in this record of creation's work, and see if you cannot notice some analogy between it and the new creation in your own experience. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Mark! God is the Creator. "And the earth was without form and void." God created chaos, (rod created confusion. "And darkness was upon the face of the deep." Look at yourselves in the first throes and anxieties of regeneration. What do you experience? "Without form and void." Where are you? In darkness and the deep. What deep? Is it not the deep of Divine mystery opened by the Holy Ghost to your wondering and astonished gaze? You see yourselves sinners in the sight of a just and holy God. Sinners in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire, and wonder what must be the issue of it all. Will it be death? See!" And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He is a life-breathing, light-giving, and love-inspiring Spirit. In the new creation there are feelings, hopes, anxieties, cares, and doubts which were never experienced before.

Before the Holy Ghost brooded over you and in you, you had no thoughts after God, no desire for His company, no longing for fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, no wish to be reckoned one with His despised yet highly-honoured people, no inclination to be found in His courts seeking His face in the midst of His worshipping children. Such is the case of all by nature. But where are you now? Ready to say to any favoured sinner who will deign to speak to you,

"Tell Him when you see His face,
I long to see Him too."

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." This really means, "And the Spirit of God brooded over chaos." Why? For the formation of that which was formless. For the perfecting of that which was unperfect. For the production of order out of disorder. You see something of this in Isaiah xliii. 1: "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel." He does not say, *that created thee, O Israel*; but, "that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel." That word *formed* may be very well rendered "*fashioned, or perfected.*" Brought from ugliness to beauty, from confusion to order, from darkness to light, from the experience of death to the enjoyment of life. Look through the Scriptures and there you see the Holy Ghost revealed as a true, proper, and real Person, and not as you may oftentimes hear Him spoken of from the pulpit and in prayer meetings from the lips of those from whom we might expect something better and clearer, as a mere influence. I hear sometimes persons praying for the influence of the Holy Ghost. I recollect the time when I used these words, but I knew not for what I asked. Such a prayer expressed not the depths of my need, nor the height of blessing which God reveals in the hearts of His children. What is the desire of the living in Jerusalem? That which is expressed in the last line of the verse before quoted,

"Indwelling God and Friend."

It is the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, not His influence, that living souls desire. Influences will never satisfy the regenerate children of God.

Throughout the sacred Scriptures we have His personality set before us. Not only in creation, but in communication and communion. Every communication of grace from JEHOVAH, the Fountain Head of all blessing, is by the adorable Spirit. Look at Matt, xxviii. 19. Here we find the baptizing of the nations was to be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Here we have a question : If the Lord Jesus Christ commanded the ordinance of baptism to be administered in the name of the Divine Three, how is it that we have not a solitary instance recorded in "The Acts of the Apostles" of their so doing, but always in the name of the Lord Jesus? There is a reason; may God enable you to seek it out. See! Whatever others may in their honest convictions maintain, I believe that this refers to the teaching, making disciples, or Christians, of all the nations of the saved (Rev. xxi. 24, xxii. 2), and the baptism of them by the Holy Ghost into the Father's electing love, the Son's redeeming grace, and the Spirit's regenerating favour. Look again at the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14): "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Again (Col. ii. 2): "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." It does not say, "The mystery of the Father, and of Christ, and of God," but "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Paul, by Divine inspiration, names the Holy Ghost first, and does not style Him the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, or the Comforter, but God. To Paul the Holy Ghost was God; God, as much as the Father; God, as much as the Son; God, in His eternal oneness with the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is God.

I wish you to notice another portion of God's Word. See Isaiah xlviii. 16. Who is the speaker? The prophet? No. The Father? No. The Spirit? No. It is the Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the speaker. At ver. 12 and 13, He says, "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last. My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together." Who can this be but JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Creator and Upholder of all things. He speaks in ver. 16: "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me." JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Creator and Upholder of all things, positively declares that the Father and the Spirit sent Him, commissioned Him, qualified Him to the accomplishment of salvation, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, and the safe conduct to eternal glory of all those who in the covenant of grace were committed to His care and keeping. Passages might be multiplied which clearly reveal the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, and yet His undivided, co-equal, and co-eternal oneness with the Father and the Son, but time forbids.

Mark this well. No act in creation, no act in redemption, no act in regeneration, no act in providence, can be performed without Him. Not one. None in creation? No. If you will turn to Psalm xxxiii. 6, you will see how the glorious Trinity is revealed in the work of creation: "By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth." You may legitimately read this, "by the Spirit of His mouth." Now come to the New Testament. In John iii. 8, we read: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The same word is given all through the New Testament for *wind* and *Spirit*. If you will look into the Popish version of the Bible, you will see this verse rendered, as the Papists do not believe: "The Spirit breatheth where He will." There is no figure of speech in the Popish rendering of this passage, but a plain, unmistakable

declaration of the Spirit's sovereignty. "*The Spirit breatheth where He will.*" He adorns one part of creation with beauty, and leaves another part in dreariness and desolation. In the manifestation of the new creation, He breathes and communicates eternal life to whom He will. Not to one pew, but to one person in the pew, while the others are left in a dead profession. He enters an establishment, workshop, office, or house, where two are working or waiting; He takes one and reveals to him the wonders of electing and redeeming love; He leaves the other in the darkness of ignorance, to the silence of eternal despair. He enters a chamber where husband and wife are in one bed ; one, by the Spirit's sovereign grace and power, is lifted out of self into Christ, and rises to life and joys eternal, while the other — Oh! painful and piercing declaration, but marvellous truth — the other sinks down into everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. Friend! thou who art sitting at ease in that pew, in reference to these things, where art thou? In regard to the Spirit's indwelling and teaching, where art thou? In respect to His communications, and to thy standing as a poor lost son or daughter of Adam, where art thou? As to the Spirit's manifestation of Jesus' salvation, Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' intercession, and Jesus' glory in prospect, where art thou? These are solemn questions; may the blessed Spirit graciously answer them for thee and in thee.

It is a rich and precious privilege for me to know the Holy Ghost as a distinct Person and a glorious Sovereign. Creation, redemption, and providence without Him are blanks indeed. Now look at that portion which I quoted before (Isaiah xlvi. 16): "And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent Me." Just couple this with Isaiah lxi. 1, the portion read by our Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek," &c. Now look at this portion as our Lord read it, and as the Spirit records it in Luke iv. 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor," &c. Not only anointed by the Father with the Holy Ghost, but anointed by the Holy Ghost. This is

revealed in the Person and work of Jesus from the virgin's womb to the virgin tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, in which never man lay. Come with me to Luke i. 35, where we find the record of that which is stated in the chaste and guarded language of England's *Te Deum*: "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." Just think, that the Spirit of purity, the Spirit of holiness should descend to such a marvellous depth as this. Read the communication of the angel to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." By the direct operation of God the Holy Ghost, the sinless, spotless, immaculate, and impeccable humanity of our blessed Lord and Saviour was produced. See!" And the Child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit" (Luke ii. 40).

Turn to Matt, iii., where we behold Him ascending the banks of the Jordan after His baptism, and receiving His commission openly before all the people. The voice from the excellent glory declares, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Not "*with,*" but "in whom I am well pleased." And, blessed be His holy name, He is well pleased with all those whom He sees in Him. With the voice there was the Holy Ghost descending upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts x. 38). Look at the commencement of His doing good publicly. "Then," at the very moment of His anointing; "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1). He was led *up*, not down. All the way through His humiliation and temptation was upward, not downward, though Satan would have us believe it was so. Excelsior was the inscription upon the banner of Incarnate Love, the true meaning of which is, *the highest*. The Spirit led Jesus *up into the wilderness*. Is that a fact? Yes, for no act in redemption or in the accomplishment of the glorious righteousness for His people was performed independently of the

Spirit of the living God. O wonderful leading! O marvellous grace of the Holy Ghost to lead a precious Christ into all the wilderness wanderings and temptations of His people, knowing that they would be brought to experience the perplexities of many a wilderness down here. "To be tempted of the devil." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. iv. 15, ii. 18).

Did He cast out devils and heal sinners who were oppressed by them? Read for yourselves Matt, xii., Mark iii., and Luke xi., and you will see that by the Spirit of God He cast them out. Do you glory in the fact that by Christ's one offering you are perfected for ever? Turn with me to Heb. ix. 14, where you read that this was all through the eternal Spirit: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who *through the eternal Spirit* offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The blood of Christ was shed and the sacred humanity of Jesus was offered up to His Father for His people through the grace and power of His co-equal, God the Holy Ghost. Was Jesus raised from the dead? It was by the quickening power of the Spirit. See Rom. i. 4: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." When He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, His first bestowal of them was when He poured out the Holy Ghost upon three thousand on the day of Pentecost. Blessed be His holy name, the Holy Ghost is seen and acknowledged by elect, redeemed, and regenerate souls in every point and in every particular of the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now notice how He is revealed in the work of regeneration. It is necessary for our peace and confidence that we should have right views and conceptions upon this matter. What is regeneration? Not the remodeling of the old nature. Not the beautifying of the old man.

Not the adorning of religious human nature. Not the rectifying or renovation of the flesh. Oh, no! But an eternal, irreversible act of JEHOVAH, never to be repeated or abolished. It is the bestowal of a new heart, the communication of a new life, the imparting of a new nature. It is the implantation of something mysterious to those who possess the same. Peter speaks of the saints being "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Eph. i. 4). Paul writes of it thus: "Christ in you the Hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). This reminds me of the saying of a poor creature once to me, and I believe there is more pure, Scriptural, and spiritual Divinity in what some poor, illiterate creatures say than there is in what many so-called free-grace preachers can declare in a twelvemonth. She said, "The new birth to me is nothing more and nothing less than the bringing forth of a precious Christ in my heart's affections." Do you want anything more than that? Will anything short of it satisfy the cravings of that spiritual appetite created within you by God the everblessed Spirit? You answer unhesitatingly, No! You may depend upon, if Christ is formed and brought forth in you the Hope of glory, it will be accompanied with many pangs, much wrestling and struggling, and fierce opposition from the flesh, caused by the intense hatred of Satan to the Christ of God.

Mark! In the work of regeneration the Holy Ghost is the active Person and gracious Performer. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John vi. 63). "The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things" (John xiv. 26). "He shall testify of Me" (John xv. 26). See how the Lord Jesus describes His work in John xvi. 7 — 15. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come He will reprove (margin — *convince*) the world of sin." What world? That which the Father loves and the Son saves (chap. iii. 16, iv. 42). "He will convince the world of sin." That is *chaos* in the new creation. "And of righteousness, and of judgment." Is this the judgment to come? No, not at all, though I have often heard this portion misquoted, especially in prayer meetings. Even at these meetings I have been astonished to hear so

much unscriptural language. Persons pray thus, O send thy Spirit to convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment *to come*. I do not desire to be convinced of the judgment to come, for such is not according to the teaching of our blessed Lord and Master. He said, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." In the atoning death of the Surety of the everlasting covenant and the Representative of God's elect, Satan was judged, and his designs against the Church rendered ineffectual. In the righteousness of Christ, or in Christ our Righteousness, all elect sinners are judged, and JEHOVAH'S judgment is, Everlasting acquittance and clearance from sin and from all Satan's accusations. With the knowledge of this, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the darkness is past and the True Light now shineth.

What know we of the blessed Spirit as the Convincer of sin, the Convincer of righteousness, and the Convincer of judgment? "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." God's living children oft times mourn over the accursed sin of unbelief. Here is 'a Bible full of promises, the Bible full of blessings, the Bible full of consolations; yet, left to ourselves, what are we? Weak and helpless, not able to claim a single promise, blessing, or consolation. Ah, my dear friend, thou who art in darkness, distress, and doubt through manifold temptations; thou who through the fear of God in thee, the honesty of thy new nature, and the teaching of the blessed Spirit, cannot appropriate a single promise and say it is thine, remember this: "He shall convince of sin, because they believe not on Me. Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Because He completed His work of obedience and sacrifice, being faithful to Him that appointed Him. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." All the sins of all God's people put away for ever, an end made of them — thrown into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion — cast behind God's back — God's children do not want to see His back, and He is determined they shall see His face. See! Clouds and darkness are round about Him, and if we enter into His sacred presence to partake of the blessings of covenant grace and mercy, we must pass through the cloud. Do you not

remember Luke ix. 34, when the three favoured disciples on Tabor's mount saw the glory of Jesus? But, "while He thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered the cloud." So do I, and I am not the only one within these walls to-night who fears on entering any dark or gloomy spot in the pathway of tribulation. It would be an awful sign if we knew nothing of the fear peculiar to the experiences of God's living children. Yet this is their security and confidence — regeneration by the Spirit, restoration by the Spirit, confirmation by the Spirit, and sealing by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. O what mercy to poor, lost, and ruined sinners! Is it not astonishing that so much ignorance prevails in reference to the personality and work of God the Holy Ghost? Passage after passage of God's Word come crowding into my mind which would still further prove His person, power, and preciousness as displayed and experienced throughout the whole scheme of redeeming love and favour. Let us now notice,

II. — Ezekiel's Character And Privilege — "So the Spirit took me up." Turn to chap. i. 3. The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest. Ezekiel was a legally qualified priest and prophet of the LORD to communicate the LORD'S mind and will; yet, though so highly honoured, he felt his daily need of the Spirit's restoring and reviving power. "The Spirit took me up." This language is proof positive that he was down. Are you always up, rejoicing on the mount of covenant favour, and feeding amid the fat pastures of God's Israel? Are you always rejoicing in the assurance of His love? You know very well you are not, neither do you want a minister in the pulpit who professes such high favors. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psalm lv. 19). But with the godly it is not so. As in creation and providence, so in grace; He sends darkness and it is night wherein the beasts of the forest do prowl for their prey. He sends His stormy wind from His fists and the spiritual mariners in the deep sea of vital experience "mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end" (Psalm evil. 26, 27).

Then look at the creeping things in this deep sea. Pride, deceit, conceit, selfishness, hatred, malice, uncharitableness. When left without the special grace and favour of God the ever-blessed Spirit, pride, self-will, and self-assertion are sure to abound. Ezekiel was down in a great deep when the Spirit of God first moved over the deep of conviction and soul trouble, the deep discovered by the revelation of JEHOVAH'S fiery law to his heart. David speaks of this in Psalm xl. 2: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Look again at Psalm lxi. 2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

"*So the Spirit took me up.*" He gave Ezekiel a clean lift out of himself, out of his rebelliousness, out of his hot anger, out of his self-will, and commissioned him to go forth and prophesy to the children of the captivity. Look at chapter iii. 14, how the Spirit deals so graciously with His ill-tempered prophet! "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit (margin — *hot anger*), but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me." Ezekiel was determined not to go, God was determined that Ezekiel should go. A Stronger than the strong was found with and in him, and He must do His bidding. When the Spirit comes with His gracious communications to the heart of one of God's children, rise (that child must and enter into the experimental possession of the bounties and blessings which He graciously gives. And does not the Spirit favour us with many a gracious lift? Sometimes our hearts are as heavy as lead, our spirits are sad and sorrowful, but ere we are aware, the blessed Spirit, without a word from the pulpit, gives us a heart-melting view of our best Friend. Then our spirits glow with gratitude, our eyes overflow with tears, and we find it

"Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

Yes, and as we have listened to the outpouring of the burdened heart from the pulpit, declaring the grace and glory of Jesus, tracing out the footsteps of the flock, and describing that very experience wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, we have been lifted up out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, out of condemnation into justification, out of wretched self into a glorious Christ. "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. v. 4). "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 6). Blessed Spirit! Gracious lift! Glorious ascent!

Yet the morrow with its cares and anxieties will be dreaded, the temptations of the path experienced, and tribulations of the journey homeward encountered ; but God knows all about them, and faithful to His promise, will remain our God and Guide for ever and ever. Your time is gone. It is past eight.

May God the Holy Ghost seal us and bless us, for Christ's sake.
Amen.

HYMN.

O Gracious Spirit, led by Thee,
How truly safe and blest are we:
Hasting this dreary desert through,
With our eternal home in view.

For ever. Lord, Thou dost abide
Our Teacher, Comforter, and Guide;
And while we hearken to Thy voice,
We wonder, worship, and rejoice.

Oh, teach us all the Savior's grace,
Reveal to us the Father's face,
And to our willing hearts declare
The glory it is ours to share.

Jesus, the Father's only Son,
Jesus, His own beloved One.
Jesus, now seated at His side,
Hath claimed us for His own, His bride.

The wilderness be then forgot,
This desert-way we heed it not;
Thou art our Comforter, and we,
His bride, are on our way with Thee.
Bornar.

XXXIII. INTRODUCTION INTO THE INNER COURT.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Evening,
August 5th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court."
— Ezek. xliii. 5.

IT was our privilege on Sunday evening last, from the first clause of this very precious portion of God's most Holy Word, to dwell upon the Person and work of God the ever-blessed Spirit — that glorious Being without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, and who is revealed to the souls of God's regenerated ones in every portion of Divine inspiration, in each part of God's creation, in each particular of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in each point of the work of regeneration, in every desire, longing, and thought of the new man, and in every phase and feature of that never-failing providence in which JEHOVAH irrevocably fixed before all worlds the lot of those whom grace has made His own.

In dwelling upon this portion we are astonished to think how little is known of this all-important subject, and how little is preached concerning Him, without whose gracious work and indwelling we should have been left amid the ruins of the fall, in the pit of

corruption, far away, from God, manifesting the waywardness of our natural disposition to manage our own affairs without Him, and display our enmity against Him. The very desire to approach God is by the gracious power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who was given and sent to the people of the living God as their Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. He was the first of all spiritual donations after the glorious resurrection and ascension of our Prophet, Priest, and King into heaven to appear for "His own," and to receive from His Father's hands those blessings which He not only scatters in gracious profusion amongst them, but brings home to their hearts, giving them the experimental apprehension and sweet enjoyment of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Mark this! every operation of the Spirit, and every manifestation of the Father's love to me and to the election of grace, has an ascending tendency and power. This is an irresistible power, an invincible power which can never be hindered, frustrated, or overcome. For as assuredly as God the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in us, so assuredly will He "perform (margin — *finish*) it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). Whatever He begins He finishes. "His work is perfect" and can never be marred, soiled, or spoiled. If He as to will and to do in me, He will perfect that which concerns me. If I am spiritually the work of His hands, then He, having a desire to the work of His hands, will never forsake me, according to the theology or experience of tempted, tried, and troubled Job — "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (chap, xxiii. 13). Does He desire to carry on His gracious work in thee and me? It must be done. Does He desire to give us a gracious lift out of ourselves and our carnal surroundings? He will raise us "up together and make us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"(Eph. ii. 6). Now see! This is not a fleshly, carnal elation, but a glorious spiritual elevation. It is the demonstration of my standing as "a man in Christ." The grace and glory, majesty and sovereignty of JEHOVAH freely bestowed upon me a poor, sinful worm of the earth.

Is not that almost too good to be true? Who believes in so glorious a Gospel? It is one thing for me to stand up here to preach as the pastor of this place; but do I stand as a God-given and Spirit-taught one? Am I preaching here for a piece of bread, or that the Church of God may be fed? Am I preaching to be something, or that Christ may be the All-in-all of your experience and mine? Depend upon it, he who is sent of God to deal out a full-weight Gospel to hungry souls will encounter much soul trouble, and feel many sharp exercises in reference to his call, commission, and qualification. See! As a minister of Christ, Thomas Bradbury cares not one rush for churches and chapels, bricks and mortar, paint and plaster, and those who are wedded to them are heartily welcome to them. I tell you what is his care and concern — God's grace, God's Gospel, and God's glory. As to his testimony from the pulpit, he cares for the weaklings, for the babes in the family of the Father, for the lambs in the flock of Jesus. He has respect to God's own gracious work in living souls, and longs to see a precious Christ formed again in those, who, through Satan's assaults and temptations, and their own weakness, have lost the blessed apprehension of their oneness with Him. He travails in birth that Christ's own elect ones who are scattered abroad in Camberwell, and wherever His voice is heard, may "be begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," quickened by the ever-blessed Spirit, and "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" wherever it is deposited.

But how blessed it is for us to experience this work of spiritual ascension, this rising up of the children of God to the heights of the covenant; for though they know their true position as mere worms of the earth, they shall be brought to enjoy their oneness with Him in the glory of the Father, and know what that means,

“Joint-heirs with Christ, and heirs of God,
We rank with those above;

We perfect stand before the throne,
And sing redeeming love."

The resurrection power and ascension glory of Christ are not only revealed as truths' in God's blessed Word, but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost are living realities in the hearts of His children. See how we have this set before us in that precious portion, Eph. ii. 4 — 6: "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 ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." As we know, feel, and delight in this, as contrasted with our natural state described in the first three verses, we can grasp and comprehend the true meaning of Ezekiel's confession, "*So the Spirit took me up.*" Has He taken us up out of the cold regions of legality and brought us into the warm, sunny land of Gospel liberty, as set before us in the blessed Ephesian epistle? Has He broken our chains and led us into the gracious experience of Rom. viii. 2: "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death?" This is the enjoyment of regeneration, that gracious work of God the Holy Ghost, once done never to be repeated. By it He gives the elect and redeemed sinner a clean lift out of nature into grace, out of the flesh into the Spirit, out of self into Christ, out of death into life. O how blessed to be lifted out of sin, the element in which by nature we love to live and abide, into Christ our Salvation. Lifted out of death into the risen life of our ascended Surety, to understand what that means, "Who hath abolished death." How can this be when we feel it and groan under it day by day? War proclaims its existence. The passing bell declares it near. Dissolution demonstrates it to be a reality. We live in the midst of it. We are surrounded by it, yet here is the puzzling and perplexing declaration to carnal reason — "Who hath abolished death." Where is it abolished? In the spiritual experience of every child of God, as the salvation, calling, purpose, and grace of God are made manifest by the appearing of Jesus Christ, "who brings life and immortality to light by the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 9,10). Knowing this,

we have heard the voice of our great King-Priest borne upon the wings of the heavenly wind, and carried right home to our heart, saying, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). Here we find death abolished, oneness with Jesus in resurrection life, and walking with Him in newness of life. It is that which Paul by the Holy Ghost declares in Col. iii. 1 — 4. Risen with Christ, seeking things above, with Christ at God's right hand, affections set not on the earth: "For ye are dead." What to? To death, to law, to sin, to the world by the body of Christ, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." This is a remarkable expression ; true as it is recorded here, but not true in the experience of every living child of God. To some this life is not hidden, but clearly revealed. Paul wrote to Timothy: "Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." But the Colossian Christians to whom He wrote were taken up with perishing religious externals, behind which rubbish their life was hidden, yet, blessed be God, it was safely and securely hidden for them in Christ. See! "When Christ, our Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." As a precious Christ appears in the faithful ministry of the Word, as He appears by the witnessing of the Holy Ghost, as He is glorified in our hearts, we embrace Him in the arms of faith and love as our own gracious Saviour, blessed Brother, and loving Bridegroom, who has saved us, succoured us, and loved us with an everlasting love. These are joys to which poor worldlings are strangers, and proud professors are utterly destitute of, but sweetly experienced by all those favoured and eternally loved sinners who are taken up by the Spirit into experimental oneness with Jesus and into fellowship with the Divine Three, as expressed in the second clause of the verse before us, which will form the subject matter for our meditation this evening — *"And brought me into the inner court."*

We will consider this according to that arrangement in which the blessed Spirit is pleased to set it before us. "He brought me." Who brought me? The Spirit. He who quickened me. He who convinced me of my sin and enmity against God. He who taught me to pray. He who revealed God's Christ in me as my salvation. He who

witnesses with my spirit that I am a son of God. He who brought me to know my place in the family, and who is the Earnest of my inheritance which is reserved for me in heaven. Of Him, Ezekiel says, "The Spirit brought me into the inner court." What a gracious, kind, and gentle Conductor and Guide! It is not the Spirit beginning His work, and putting me into possession of grace to go out on a warfare according to my own wit, wisdom, or ability; but it is the Spirit beginning, carrying on, and perfecting His own work — revealing a three-fold cord in my salvation, which is, God the Father in His electing love, God the Son in His redeeming grace, God the Holy Ghost in His regenerating and restoring favour. All the grace that I can enjoy is in the knowledge of what God in His Trinity of Persons is to me. See! *God the Father for me*. When? Every moment. Where? In everyplace and in all circumstances. How? According to the riches of His grace. Why? Just because He will, and He can give no other reason. *God the Son with me*. In real human flesh, according to the testimony of Isaiah vii. 14, quoted in Matt. i. 23: "Emmanuel, God with us." He is God in the nature of His people. Deity wrapped in humanity standing in the presence of God for us. *God the Holy Ghost in us*. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). So wherever we go, we carry God along with us in our affections and in our understandings. Mark you! Not in the understanding to the ignoring of the affections, for then we should be cold, formal, and stoical professors; nor in our affections to the ignoring of the understanding, for then we should be wild, enthusiastic, fanatical speculators. But it is God in our affections, warming, cheering, and comforting. God in our understanding, confirming, edifying, establishing.

May God graciously teach us to look at and estimate things as He states and reveals them, and not according to our poor, weak stretch of mind, or our miserable groveling feelings. Notice well what this means, "Fools hate knowledge" (Prov. i. 22). Take it home and think about it. I do not mean to insinuate that you are fools, or that any

such are here, but with the Spirit of the Master I warn you. Yes, "Fools hate knowledge;" but those who are made wise unto salvation, and are blessed with true simplicity, love to be found at the feet of the great Teacher, to follow on to know the Lord, and will manifest their heaven-born desires and longings to obtain brighter and clearer apprehensions of His mind and will. Gracious Master, do Thou condescend to teach Thy people here, and expound unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Thyself. Having this mind, I say unto you, "Search the Scriptures." O what a blessed privilege it is for a preacher to be surrounded with a Bible rummaging and Scripture-searching people. Jesus could say to the Pharisees of His day, "Ye do search the Scriptures." That saying is not in the imperative mood at all, but a simple declaration of what these hypocrites and enemies did. They did search the Scriptures, but not by the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit. They were well acquainted with the written Word, but they hated and despised the Incarnate Word. They took away the key of knowledge, and sought only for that which inflated them with pride, and filled them with conceit. They despised that spiritual knowledge and understanding which builds up and establishes in the faith and fear of the Lord JEHOVAH. Look, then, at this precious testimony of the written and Incarnate Word — God *for* us, the Father; God *with* us, the Son; God *in* us, the Holy Ghost. Gracious Testifier of Jesus, glorify Him in our soul's salvation, and cause our heart to burn with love and our spirits to bow down before Him with solemn awe and adoration, praising and adoring Him for all that He has done and for all that He has promised to do.

"So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court." Here we have a revelation of new covenant worship and privileges in a figure taken from old covenant ceremony and service. We will roam awhile amid the shadows of the bygone dispensation, and seek for those types, figures, illustrations, and metaphors, by which the Holy Ghost is pleased to set forth the glory of Christ and of the Christian dispensation. Each Bible student (when I use the word student, I do not mean those who search the Scriptures for mere

head knowledge, or for an intellectual apprehension of the letter of the Word, but those who are spiritually taught of God), those concerning whom the Lord Jesus Christ says (John vi. 45), "It is written in the prophets, *And they shall be all taught of God*" — a quotation from Isa. liv. 13 ; "And all Thy children shall be taught of the LORD." "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" for further teaching. And a patient Teacher Jesus is, as some of us have proved Him to be, and as He is revealed in Mark x. 1, "and as He was wont, He taught them again." Well now, according to His teaching, guidance, and grace, we who are spiritual students of God's blessed Word know well the position and structure of the tabernacle in the wilderness, also of Solomon's temple, which two, God ordained as lively types of Christ and His Church throughout all time. Let us look at the tabernacle in the wilderness. In the centre of the assembled tribes of Israel we see a structure reared, and that according to Divine appointment and Divine command. Look from Exodus xxv. 1 to the end of the book, also Hebrews viii. and ix., in which you read a description of the tabernacle in which JEHOVAH was worshipped, and where He delighted to reveal Himself as the God of all grace. Mark well Heb. viii. 5: "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." According to that pattern in every point and particular Moses wrought. Have you ever noticed the number of times these words are repeated in the two last chapters of what I was about to call the Gospel of Exodus? "*As the LORD commanded Moses.*" Note well the two last verses of chap. xxxix.:'; According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it, and Moses blessed them."

As we survey this Divinely-planned structure, we observe three distinct portions —

I. — THE OUTER COURT.

II. — THE HOLY PLACE.

III. — THE HOLIEST OF ALL; or, THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

May the blessed Spirit teach us to approach each portion spiritually and profitably. Turn with me to Psalm lxxv. 4: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that *he may dwell in Thy courts*; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple." Notice the privileges of God's blessed elect. He is caused to approach God, he dwells in His courts, he is satisfied with the goodness of His house. But what right has any fallen son or daughter of Adam to enter into the courts of the Lord? By the teaching of God the Holy Ghost. In the first pains and pangs of regeneration, the child of God finds that he has lost all right to approach God, and that distance from Him is his just due. He hears a voice like unto that which Moses heard at the backside of the desert when he looked upon the bush burning but not consumed. He saw in this a marvellous type of Christ and His Church, who, so far as Satan and the world are concerned, are ever surrounded by the fierce fires of temptation, trial, and tribulation, yet, blessed be God, never consumed. Like the three in Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace, the people of God lose nothing but their bands, though the furnace may be seven times hotter than usual. O, is it not a marvellous mercy for us to know, by the teaching of the Spirit and the Word, that all our losses, crosses, temptations, and trials, which rush upon us in astounding profusion, have only been sent by an all-wise hand to sunder the cords which bind our spirits to the earth. Glorious truth! In affliction's furnace nothing lost but rubbish. But Moses heard the voice of JEHOVAH from the midst of the burning bush. Listen, and profit. "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Do you like to stand with your shoes from off your feet? Shoes! What is meant by them? Walking in something prepared by man. Standing in something of human preparation. But when God in regenerating mercy speaks, when the Holy Ghost in His quickening power commands, everything of man's producing is stripped off. All human works, services, ceremonies, and sacrifices are laid aside.

Yes, the very religion in which we have been nurtured and brought up, the convictions, hopes, and expectations we have drunk in simply from a patient mother's teaching, or from a faithful pastor's testimony, all must be cast off, and we must stand, divested of everything coming from the helping hand of mortals, naked before our God, to be dealt with by Him according to His 'infinite love and sovereign favour. In our approach unto God and our introduction to His courts, we will first notice,

“WITHOUT THE CAMP.”

A fire, consuming to ashes a whole bullock with the exception of the fat, the kidneys, and the caul, meets our gaze. Of what does this speak to the spiritual understanding? It speaks of sins committed against a just and holy God. This is just the spot where the sinner would begin with God, and in fact it is where God begins with the sinner. But in the revelation of "the beginning of His way," He shows that He cannot go out of, or away from Himself, for a reason why He should bring sinful worms near to Himself. According to the order of the offerings as given in the book of Leviticus, He begins in the first chapter with the burnt offering. This was *all for Himself*, none for the priest, none for the worshippers. Here we obtain a view of the Servant of the covenant, which none can truly appreciate but the Father. Here He dwells alone in unspeakable and ineffable delight upon the person and work of His Son. He views His own production, the Sacrifice of His own providing, His own Christ, with unbounded approbation. In the revelation of the beginning of the redeemed sinners way with God, sin must be felt, known, dealt with, and put away. Blessed be God, we have all this in the sin-offering and its lessons. When the blessed Spirit takes us in hand, cleaves our heart in twain, and gives us to see and feel the enormity of sin, the depravity of our nature, and the deceitfulness of our heart — that the heart is a nest of unclean vipers, a fountain of impurity, and a spring of enmity and rebellion against God — I ask you, Where are we? The Spirit in the new nature draws me to God, while Satan — working upon my old nature — would drive me far

away from Him. I am in a strait betwixt two — -God and the devil, the Church and the world, the flesh and the Spirit, nature and grace. Like Rebekah (Gen. xxv. 22), "And the children struggled within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? and she went to inquire of the LORD." There is no other place for a convicted sinner to go but to inquire of the LORD. This is the leading of the Spirit: "*The Spirit brought me.*"

The Holy Ghost, my Teacher, my "Indwelling God and Friend," brings me to behold in the person of a precious Christ, my Sin-Offering, and to know that the Father made Him SIN FOR ME. That is a marvellous expression, "CHRIST MADE SIN." We cannot fathom its depths, scale its heights, or discover the glories of its lengths and breadths. Human language is poverty-stricken, and as Kelly says concerning the love of Christ, —

"Human thought is here confounded,
"Tis too vast to comprehend."

Human language can never describe the mystery of His Incarnation, neither can it set forth fully the mystery of Divine Suretyship. "He hath made Him sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21). That is. He hath accounted Him, reckoned Him, looked upon Him, and dealt with Him as sin? As what? SIN. See Lev. iv. 4, 15, 24, 29, and 33. As the sins of the offerers were confessed upon the head of the offering, and, in God's account and view, all their sins were transferred from them to it, and it conveyed as an accursed thing, and burned without the camp; so we see in God's One Offering, "CHRIST MADE SIN," suffering as the curse of God without the gate. Watch Him, by the teaching of the Spirit, from the spot of imputation — "THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITIES OF US ALL" (Isa. liii. 6) — to the spot of sacrifice — "CHRIST WAS ONCE OFFERED TO BEAR THE SINS OF MANY" (Heb. ix. 27), and you behold the conveyance of all your transgressions, sins, and iniquities to the accursed spot of condemnation and judgment; and every one of them — past, present, and to come — burnt up before your eyes. O

God ! can this be true? Yes, blessedly true! O, what matchless mercy for me to know that in the person of my sinless Surety, on sin-accursed Calvary, all my sins were burnt up, put away, made an end of, when the righteous wrath, anger, indignation, and fury of JEHOVAH were spent upon the head of Him who was thus made a curse for me! 2 Cor. v. 21: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Gal. iii. 13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." 1 Peter iii. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Blessed with such teaching and guidance, we enter with boldness and confidence

THE OUTER COURT.

As I stand enjoying my freedom from the plague and power of sin, and my liberty in Christ Jesus, I cannot help but ask myself a question or two. How many of you with me can "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, being thankful unto Him, and blessing His name?" (Psalm c. 4). How many can approach by the rich, free, and uninfluenced grace of God in Christ Jesus to feast upon the bounties of a covenant God, and enjoy sweet communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? How many? Ah, my dear friends, with all the charity, love, and liberality bestowed upon me, it is my lot as a faithful preacher and teacher of God's Gospel to this congregation to separate between the precious and the vile, to look you in the face and describe, as the Spirit gives me utterance, the true state of professor and possessor. There are many in the outer court who never enter the holy places, many who have a name to live but are dead, many who have the form of godliness ,but deny the power. How many are there here this evening who can enter, or desire to do so, with humbled and chastened spirits to hold sweet communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ? How many? May that question ring with Divine power through your souls while you are brought by the sweetness of Divine love to experience and "comprehend with all

saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. in. 18, 19). As we stand in the outer court, objects of spiritual and eternal interest meet our gaze, the first of which is

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING. This reveals the truth spoken by our Lord to Thomas, "I am the Way . . . No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John xiv. 6). It speaks of the One accepted for the many, and the many accepted in the One; of the perfect love and obedience of an ever-willing heart; of un murmuring acquiescence to the Divine mind and will; of indignant reproaches patiently experienced and meekly borne in the judgment-hall; of His agony and bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and His terrible sufferings on Calvary. It declares that through the offering of the Perfect One, the sanctified, or elect ones, are for ever perfected. Here we have liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, "by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews x. 19, 20). In the perfect work of Jesus, and in the experience of God's perfect love in Him, I enter with child-like confidence. But, desirous to know Him in the perfection of His truth, I linger as I view

THE LAVER OF BRASS in which, says the Holy Ghost, "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not" (Exodus xxx. 17 — 21). This speaks of JEHOVAH'S holiness and the worshipper's want; but each met and provided for in the person of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Ghost. As the altar of burnt offering, speaks of our right and title in Jesus, so the laver speaks of our qualification and capacity in the Spirit. O, what gracious provision our God has made for His people in Christ Jesus. Though saved from sin, each day we sin; yet, blessed be His name, the water of life, salvation, cleansing, and purification never fails. It flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ever cleansing the separated worshippers from all sin. Here we see the Spirit of the living God testifying to our waiting souls of the love, blood, and obedience of Jesus, and glorifying Him in our heart's experience as

the One by whom alone we come to God. Thus blessed with a living and loving interest in the person and work of Jesus and with the person and work of God the Holy Ghost, we enter

THE HOLY PLACE with boldness — not with impudence or presumption — and the first thing that meets our gaze is

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK, which speaks of "Christ the true and only Light" of His people. From it He appears to issue His gracious proclamation and new covenant command: "Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (Isa. lxi. 1). "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. v. 8). Mark! "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" (1 John i. 7). , Thus blessed we are still further blessed. Led by the Spirit we behold new beauties, and the bounteous provision of our God meeting our need. The next object we see is,

THE GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE. Without the presence and Spirit of Christ where and what are we? Barren, cold, dark, and dumb. But see! That altar of sweet incense speaks of the unceasing intercession of that blessed One who opens His mouth for the dumb, pleads the cause of the poor, and maintains the right of His afflicted ones. "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). From seeking and service we are led into sweet communion and fellowship at

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD. Here we sit in spiritual oneness with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and feed together upon the same glorious realities which rejoice the heart of JEHOVAH, fill all heaven with praise and hell with confusion, and cause the heart of all true spiritual worshippers to bound with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus blessed with oneness and equality with a covenant God in Christ Jesus, revealed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost,

we behold the veil, not drawn aside, but rent in twain and done away in Christ. The way into

THE HOLIEST OF ALL is now made manifest. "So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into The Inner Court." What meets my gaze?

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT and the glory of my God. See how this was revealed to Moses: "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee, and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat" (Exodus xxv. 21, 22). The mercyseat and ark of the covenant are glorious types of the sinless humanity and unquestionable divinity of our blessed Lord. "Through Jesus, *by* one Spirit we have access to the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). Here, in the person of our Surety, we enjoy oneness with the covenant Three. See Heb. ix. 3 — 5: "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all, which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, of which I cannot now speak particularly." Neither can I. We can only glance at the ark which was JEHOVAH'S sign of His covenant relationship to Israel. "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Exodus xxix. 45). It was the symbol of His presence. With the ark, His glory appeared. Was the ark removed, Ichabod was stamped upon everything — "the glory was departed" (1 Sam. iv. 21). O, what a mercy to be brought by the Holy Ghost in the inner court to know what that means: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and His covenant to make them know it" (Psalm xxv. 14). What know you of covenant love, covenant blood, covenant righteousness, covenant salvation? None other will do for me. What is it that distinguishes the testimony in Grove Chapel from that in the multitude of churches and chapels surrounding us? The answer is given in the words of those who hate the place because of the testimony, and who have no part with us in the sovereign, discriminating grace of God: O, say

they, that fellow soars too high! That man is too particular! That Bradbury goes too far! Yes, he does go too far for free-will meddlers and muddlers to follow him. But if I am taken up by the Spirit and brought into the inner court I must declare the covenant verities revealed to me therein, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Let me ask you, where are you in your heart's experience at this moment? Are you in the inner court or mourning at Mercy's door? Are you rejoicing in the sweet assurance of His love, or lamenting His absence? Well, each of these spots is one of blessed privilege, and by-and-bye, when school time is over, when our spiritual education is finished, when all our headaches and heartaches have ceased for ever, then we shall enter into the inner court up yonder, and sit at the Father's table with our great King-Priest, participating in those blessings and glories which are now held in undisturbed security by Him for us. Glorious eternity! Joy without interruption! Peace without cessation! Service without sin! Glory without end! May this be your blessed lot and mine. Amen and Amen.

HYMN.

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies;
Accepted at Thy throne of grace
Let this petition rise:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of Thy grace impart,
And let me live to Thee.

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end. Steele.

XXXIV. "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT."

A Sermon

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

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
— Matt. v. 3.

THIS chapter commences with a description of the gentleness, goodness, and grace of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Multitudes were oftentimes seen following our Lord and Master, and multitudes are sometimes seen now following the proclaimer of glad tidings. As we notice the plain speaking of Him who spake as never man spake, we discover the cause of their following Him. Some followed from carnal curiosity, others from what they could get. (See John vi. 26.) After the multitude had been fed by His bounty, whose power caused the bread and fish to multiply in the eater's hands, He "answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." But His knowledge of their carnal motives altered not the

compassion of His heart, nor caused Him to swerve for a moment from the even tenor of His way. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He came to reveal the Father's grace. He came to declare discriminating truth. While grace flowed from His lips, the multitudes were delighted. When truth, penetrating truth, pungent truth, discriminating truth, was declared, the multitudes were filled with wrath. God's living truth will ever separate between the precious and the vile, the living and the dead, and will search and sift the child of God, bringing him at length to the assurance of his standing and acceptance on the right hand of the Father, while it will annoy the reprobate with a fearful realisation of his place on the left hand, without any part or lot in JEHOVAH'S electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace. The effect of faithful dealing is seen in Luke iv. 16 — 30. While gracious words fell from the Savior's lips the people wondered with delight; but the moment plain truth concerning God's election was stated, they were filled with wrath and sought to murder Him. You see the same at the close of John vi. Jesus declares God's sovereignty and human inability. "No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that *time*" — or rather, From that declaration — "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." These are truths, gracious from the lips of the great Prophet of the Church to the spiritual understandings of those who are brought under the power of His grace; but hateful to all those who are destitute of His grace and of His gracious teaching.

"He went up into a mountain." We read of many mountains in God's blessed Word. There was Mount Sinai, that mountain of darkness, despair, and death. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal from which respectively blessings and curses were pronounced. We read of Carmel, the Mount of Vindication, upon which Elijah, the prophet of fire, confronted and confounded the prophets of Baal. We see Tabor, the Mount of Transfiguration, where the glory of Christ was seen by the three favoured disciples, who afterwards learned a solemn and salutary lesson, that when raptures and seasons of joy have ceased, "*Jesus only*" can meet the deep necessities of the children of God.

We read, no we don't, of Mount Calvary, for in no part of God's Word is Calvary called a mount, and according to its position it is not a mount at all. On this dread spot the suffering Saviour settled for ever every question that sin and Satan had raised against the elect of God. We read of Mount Zion. I beg of you to read at your leisure that precious portion in Heb. xii. 18 — 24, where Sinai and Zion are placed in striking contrast to each other: — Sinai, blackness; Zion, clearness. Sinai, cursing; Zion, blessing. Sinai, condemnation; Zion, justification. See what the Lord says concerning Zion in Psalm cxxxiii. 3: "For there the LORD promised His blessing, even life for evermore."

Now, just notice the contrast existing between Sinai and the Mount of Beatitudes. Sinai proclaims, through sin, distance from God. See Heb. xii. 20: "For they could endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." Do notice the contrast: "And when He was set, His disciples came unto Him." Here you see nearness, "*His disciples came unto Him.*" Yonder you see distance, darkness, and death. Here we have not only nearness to Jesus, but to the Father, according to 1 John i. 3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." At Sinai we hear the thunders of wrath; but here we listen to the still small voice of unchanging, unceasing, uninterrupted love. At Sinai the sinner is condemned for the slightest deviation from that strict law of rectitude which JEHOVAH promulgated thereon; but here is proclaimed blessings and spiritual riches to every sinner that is brought into the experience of his true state and condition before God. See! At Sinai the sinner is guilty, with his mouth stopped, condemned, and cursed. All his morality, amiability, righteousness, and creature confidences burnt up, and he left naked and trembling in the presence of Infinite Excellency. As he looks at himself in the light of God's glory he sees that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17). The scene on the Mount of Beatitudes reveals blessings abounding in the

Person of Jesus to the poor in spirit, to the mourners in Zion, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and are hated by the world and persecuted for righteousness' sake by Satan and his *religious* brood.

"He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, *His disciples came unto Him.*" A glorious truth is opened up here, and brings to mind that very precious hymn of Cowper: —

“Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

For Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come,
And going, take Thee to their home.”

You see with the mind's eye the King of preachers, not in the precincts of a consecrated temple, or under the roof of a prayer-dedicated synagogue, but under the open canopy of heaven, under that glorious ceiling which His own power and wisdom had framed, fashioned, and beautified. There He sat, a patient Teacher, receiving to Himself those who could justly expect nothing from His hands but wrath and condemnation, and from His lips those words of terrible import, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). From His grace-filled lips all spiritual blessings flowed, and the poor and needy were refreshed and comforted. "*And He opened His mouth.*" What does this mean? Poor, proud, prating human nature would ask, Why the necessity for such a statement as this? How could He teach without opening His month? A precious Christ silences such presumptuous questionings, for He oftentimes taught by the very silence He maintained. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,

and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23). Let me ask you, you who have long tongues, and who can prate and prattle over your graces and grievances for hours together at the corner of every street — those, if there be any here now, who can flatter the minister before his face, but behind his back, ay, the moment you leave the house of prayer, murmur and complain, defame and degrade him as much as you dare — let me ask you, Are you like Him? He taught by His silence. Have you His Spirit? He taught by His meekness. Have you His manner? Are you blessed with His gracious disposition? Here we may all ask ourselves, "Are we one with Jesus by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost according to that new covenant command given in Phil. ii. 5 — 8?" "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." O, my dear friends, it is one thing to profess love to God's truth, but it is quite another thing when that truth with God-sent power is fixed in the understanding and affections. It is thus we are brought into experimental possession of a broken heart and contrite spirit, in union with Him who pleased not Himself, and concerning whom the apostle writes as an incentive to true humility and self-denial: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*" (2 Cor. x. 1). When it was necessary He could open His mouth to teach, or He could keep His lips sealed, and thus convey His never-to-be-forgotten lessons of grace and truth. He opened His mouth to proclaim the hidden mysteries of the Gospel, the spirituality of the law, the inexorable justice and consummate holiness of God, and the privileges and immunities of His kingdom.

"He opened His mouth *and taught them.*" Who did He teach? Those who are blessed with a disposition and desire to be taught. Not those who fancy they know everything, and who would have us believe that they are acquainted with the whole of God's Word. No, but those who experience their ignorance and mourn over it. Some will say, Did He not teach the multitudes? No, certainly not. See! "When He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth *and taught them.*" What is the meaning of that word, *disciples*? Scholars, learners. Those who sat at His feet to learn His will, who looked up into His face to receive from His lips precious lessons of pure, rich, sovereign, uninfluenced grace. "He opened His mouth and taught them." What did He teach them? He opens His discourse by describing the parties for whom His hidden treasures of -wisdom and knowledge were designed. He says they are poor in spirit, mourners, meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; who, through abundant mercy received, are merciful; who, through peace revealed, are peacemakers ; who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, who are taught to rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because of the reward that is laid up for them in heaven. What is that Reward? Say, rather, who is it? That which the eternal Word spake to Abram (Gen. xv. 1): "I am thy Shield and thy exceeding Great Reward." JEHOVAH alone is the Reward of His people — and is He not a glorious Reward? For me to experience His presence in the midst of the toils, trials, temptations, and tribulations that I am called to endure is a Reward, an Inheritance, a Treasure too vast to be expressed.

"*He taught them, saying.*" After describing the characters whom He taught, He proceeds to expound the perfection and spirituality of God's law. Yes, here you have an exposition of the law, and in it we find vastly more than we are either able or willing to do. Now, if you will look through the whole of the Savior's teaching you will find very few plain and clear declarations of Gospel truth. Why is this? The Arminian professor and religious worldling would have everything spoken plainly, so that all mankind could understand. But turn with me to Matt. xiii. 10, 11, and 34 — 36: "And the disciples

came and said unto Him, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house, and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." Mark! the multitude is sent away; but the disciples are taught in secret. Have you ever noticed the preciousness of that statement by Mark? "And *when they were alone*, He expounded all things to His disciples" (iv. 34). None can tell but those who enjoy it, what it is to have a little communion with Jesus when shut out from the world, and the heart glowing with the sweet communications of His love. Now, then, having endeavoured to set before you the hidden meaning of the context of the precious portion I have read to you by way of text, let us, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, seek to extract some little instruction and consolation from these words of Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I. — The Persons — "The poor."

II. — Their Peculiarity — "Poor in spirit."

III. — Their Privilege — "Blessed."

IV. — Their Portion And Prospect — "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I. — The Persons — "The poor." What do we mean by poor? It is to be destitute of property, and lacking in strength. To be naturally poor is to want the good things of this life which others possess in marvellous profusion. To be poor is to experience emptiness concerning those things of which others are full. We read of the poor in many portions of this blessed Book, and of the care and concern JEHOVAH has over them, See how Gods in His law makes

provision for them. In the Sabbatical year the land should rest, as He says, "that the poor, of thy people may eat" (Exodus xxiii. 11). See how blessedly He, lays down His law for them: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land" (Deut. xv. 11). Here God commands that the poor who live with those who have a profusion of the good things of His providence shall not be neglected by them. We see again and again many made poor in times of war and tumults, who, by the ravages of the foe, experience the spoiling of their goods, are cast out of house and home, and are stripped of every earthly comfort. Look at those described by Paul who were poor in purse and possessions for Christ's sake: "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. xi. 37, 38). Little food to nourish, and scant clothing to warm them. God, in the mysteries of His providence, has ordained it, and in the display of His glorious sovereignty has declared, "The LORD maketh poor" (1 Sam. ii. 7). Turn with me to James ii. 5, and read: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him!" You will notice almost from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation that God's people, with some very blessed and precious exceptions, were poor. Abraham was rich in goods — cattle, gold, silver, and slaves. Isaac was the same, while Jacob grew rich through the sweat of his brow and the sorrows of his heart. David and Solomon had riches in abundance. Job "was the greatest of all the men of the East." In the New Testament we see Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and others. We come to, 1 Cor. L 26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. You know what Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, said concerning that letter "m," how she thanked God for it; that God's Word should not say not *any* mighty, not *any* noble. JEHOVAH calls, and confers upon whom He will His spiritual blessings and unsearchable riches.

"The rich and the poor meet together, the LORD is the Maker of them all" (Prov. xxii. 2).

There is something sweetly interesting in the account given in 1 Kings xviii 8 — 16, of the LORD sending Elijah to be sustained by a poor widow woman. Elijah asked her for a morsel of bread, "And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and not die." See! The blessing of the Lord made that poor woman rich, and He added no sorrow with it. Sorrow she no doubt experienced with death in prospect for her and her son, but the blessing was in the faithfulness of JEHOVAH, who had decreed that "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD by Elijah." The Lord's care for, and interest in the poor, is seen in the identification of Jesus in the Jays of His flesh with the poor and the lowly. See! He passes by the great and the mighty, those who lived in affluence and splendor, to associate with the poor and the needy. Look at 2 Cor. viii. 9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich." In poverty and obscurity He spent His youthful days. He passed the whole of His time down here with poor fishermen for His work-fellows and companions, and "the common people heard Him gladly." Notice too the poverty of the apostle Paul. Up to the time when the Lord Jesus first met with him, he was evidently a rich man; but the moment God's work of grace was begun in, him, and he received his commission from the Lord to preach His Gospel and declare the mysteries of the kingdom, from that moment he was a poor man. Look at the description he gives of himself and his companions in tribulation in 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, vi. 4 — 10, xi. 23 — 27. Read these portions at your leisure and see if you would like to be in the same position. Troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, afflicted, distressed, poor, having nothing. Would you like that? O, how my poor wretched nature would kick and rebel against such a lot. Some of you may be ready to say I

ought to be ashamed to say such a thing, to whom I answer, I am more ashamed to know and feel it, but I cannot profess to be what I am not. I have been found fault with because I have not polished my old man with the application of precept and admonition, because I have not nursed and brought Up a brood of *pious* pretenders and presumptuous praters. A pretty article I should be to have such a lot round me. Let me be surrounded by true Adullamites, in distress, in debt, and discontented, who are truly "sick of self and fond of Him." Ah, when want and necessity in the things of this world are experienced, and we feel the lack of the very things we think we ought to have, we are oftentimes filled with self-assertion, the very thought of which makes me truly ashamed of myself. But blessed be God, here is His own declaration concerning all such: "Poor, yet making many rich. Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Do you know what this means? Suffering the loss of all things, and yet blessed with all spiritual blessings. Experiencing spiritual destitution, and yet possessing the unsearchable riches of Christ. A beggar, and yet an heir of a kingdom which cannot be moved. Are you destitute, afflicted, tormented?" All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." But look now,

II. — Their Peculiarity — "*Poor in spirit.*" What is it to be poor in spirit? It is to be spiritually poor. Are you here this morning with a profusion of faith, an exuberance of hope, and an overflowing of love? I tell you honestly and candidly you have no such a person in the pulpit. I do thank God that He has given me a faith that trusts nothing out of Himself, that He inspires me with a hope that maketh not ashamed, and that He warms my heart with the fire of His own everlasting love. But it is not for me with a spirit of intense prodigality to boast and swagger concerning the spiritual riches I possess, lest in doing so I might hurt any of His little ones. God has taught me from His blessed Word, from the experience of His wanting and trusting people, and in the experience of my own heart, that as long as I am in the flesh, that whatever blessing He may have conferred upon me, whatever comfort He may have brought to me, whatever grace He has wrought in me, I wake up every morning and

retire to rest every night, just as poor in myself as I was the first moment He met with me. Here I am a poor dependent upon His bounty — a weakling leaning upon His powerful arm, an unworthy one seeking a warm spot in His loving bosom.

Now mark! The faith that He gives is faith for the circumstances in the midst of which He places me, and will never be lacking in any moment of my spiritual necessity. The hope which He inspires in my heart is in accordance with the bondage or captivity I may be undergoing for the time being. For if I am in full experimental possession of all the blessings, bounties, benefits He has conferred upon me in the Son of His love, where is there room for faith to have full swing? Faith is the birthright of the captive who is longing for liberty, of the wanderer who is pining for home, of the son in the far-off country who remembers the comforts of the Father's house, the dainties of the Father's board, and the love of the Father's heart. Such experimental spots as these are so many opportunities for the expression of our hope. Where are we now in regard to hope, to faith? No doubt many of you can sing in the minor mode the plaintive words of Miss Steele : —

"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."

What is it to be spiritually poor? It is to feel that I have nothing and must beg for everything. Does He put the question by the power of the Holy Ghost, where is thy faith? I say, Lord, Thou knowest I do trust Thee; but my belief is but unbelief at the best. "Help Thou mine unbelief." Does He ask, where is thy love? The flourishing professor who knows nothing of the assaults of Satan, or of the deceitful and determined opposition of the old man of sin to the new man of grace, may look down with scorn and contempt upon the broken-hearted child of God who pours out His spirit in the language of dear old John Newton : —

"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?

Lord, decide the doubtful case:
Thou who art Thy people's Sun,
Shine upon Thy work of grace
If it be indeed begun."

Spiritual poverty in experimental possession is but the earnest of the enjoyment of enduring riches. Let me ask you to read, and may God seal home to your hearts, that precious declaration of Paul in 1 Tim. i. 14: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Does that suit you? Faith *in* Christ Jesus, and love *in* Christ Jesus. Would you have it elsewhere? All is safe and secure in Him. Apart from the blessed experience of oneness with Him we are proved to be worthless, wanting, wretched, and destitute. There is a blessed portion in Isaiah xli. 17, which almost always brings a little melting to my heart: "When the poor and needy seek water." It is not when they are seeking wine and dainties. No! "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none." That is the spot for the trial of their faith. "Their tongue faileth for thirst." Do you know anything of that thirsting and that failing? Such is the experience of poverty of spirit indeed. Thirsting, panting for the living God; thirsting for the righteousness of God, thirsting for the water of salvation — that water so beautifully expressed in that precious verse —

"Oh! Christ He is the Fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted.
More deep I'll drink above;

There to an ocean fulness
His mercy doth expand.
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

"The streams on earth I've tasted." Mark that!" I have tasted;" but, Lord, let me taste and taste again; yea, drink deep draughts at the fountain head of Thine All-fulness. "Their tongue faileth for thirst." Their tongue dried, parched, and paralyzed with fever, and utterly unable to articulate a single desire. Have you been brought there? Poor and needy. Poor and sorrowful. Poor in spirit. The knees bent, the spirit burdened, and a sense of perfect inability to pour out your necessities before Him. You groan, you sigh, you weep because your love is so cold, so faint, while His is so great and boundless. Look at His gracious declaration to those who want to pray but don't know how: "I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." The blessings of the kingdom shall abound to, and be richly enjoyed by, the poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake, to be an outcast indeed, and ready to perish. These are the parties who are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings, covenant immunities, and everlasting privileges.

III. — Their Privilege — "Blessed." To repeat that which I have told you before will do you no harm, as Paul declares in Phil. iii. 1: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." The blessings of the old covenant, as described in Deut. xxvii., are the very opposite to those of the new covenant. In the old they were blessed with temporal riches, in the new their state is described as spiritually poor. In the old, curses were prolific; in the new, cursing is excluded. The old covenant promised on the ground of obedience temporal riches, national privileges, and worldly prosperity. But when we come to new covenant blessings, and stand on new covenant ground, we are spiritually poor* needy,

and naked. What are the blessings according to poor, proud nature's suggesting?" Blessed are the poor in spirit?" No! We should say, Blessed are the rich in spirit. "Blessed are they that mourn?" No! Blessed are they that rejoice. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst?" No! Blessed are they that are well fed. "Blessed are they which are persecuted?" No! Blessed are those who are at ease in Zion. Do notice, that a woe is pronounced against all those who are at ease in Zion. Are you mourning over your poverty of spirit, and for the unsearchable riches of Christ? God declares you are blessed. Are you lamenting this morning over your emptiness and for the fulness of grace which is Christ Jesus? God pronounces you blessed. Are you hungering and thirsting for His glorious righteousness? God says you are blessed. Are you hated and reviled, and does the devil and the world persecute you because of your love and attachment to the person of Jesus Christ? God will have it, in spite of the devil, the world, and your evil heart of unbelief, that you are blessed. Who believes it? Why the child of the living God when left to himself, to his vain, foolish, and evil thoughts, to the buffetings of Satan, and the tossings and tumults of this wretched wilderness experience, will question and doubt his interest in these glorious covenant realities. But, blessed be God, all your questioning and my questioning, your fears and my fears, alter not the covenant blessings of our covenant God, and affect not our interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the infinite and inexhaustible treasures of His kingdom.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." How? Listen!" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i, 3). These blessings are in Christ; but the devil and our restless natures say we ought to have them. You may depend upon this, we should make a pretty mess of them. What a mercy to know that a precious Christ holds them in undisturbed security, and giants them to us in His own time of love, which to us is a time of need. Eternal life in our Head, where it can never be lost. Eternal love in God's heart, where it can know no change or estrangement. Eternal righteousness, which can never be tarnished. Eternal pardon, which can never be withdrawn.

Eternal justification, which can never be cancelled. An eternal inheritance, which can never be alienated. Eternal resources, which can never be exhausted.

Blessed with sovereign, unconditional, eternal election: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest" (Psa. lxxv. 4).

Blessed with particular, personal, eternal redemption: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people" (Luke i. 68).

Blessed with the knowledge of God and His works: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" (Psa. lxxxix. 15). Unspeakable blessings are in that sound. Pardon, justification, acceptance, grace, and glory, all flowing from the grace-filled lips of our great King-Priest who was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor. Now, my dear friends, take this question home with you, and may God bless you with a gracious answer. Are you poor? Is God's Gospel precious to you? The Gospel to the poor declares that man is nothing and God everything. It reveals the vileness, corruption, and depravity of your nature; but in the person of your great and glorious Head you are without spot, blemish, or any such thing, perfect in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him. Blessed man, blessed woman, blessed child, whoever you may be, who thus experience your poverty in self, your riches in Christ.

IV. — Their Portion And Prospect — "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In this kingdom JEHOVAH-JESUS is the King. The one law for the regulation of this kingdom is love. The true subjects of this kingdom are elect, redeemed, and eternally loved. Notice the expression, "the kingdom of heaven." It is a characteristic expression of the Gospel by Matthew, and describes the work of Christ and the elect of God in the midst of earthly surroundings; for instance, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a field." There were tares in the field as well as wheat. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every

kind," good fish and bad. You see a vast difference between this Gospel and that of John. Matthew writes of the kingdom of heaven, John of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven describes the people of God in the midst of hypocrites, professors, and worldings. The kingdom of God describes the people of God separated from all earthly influences holding fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, where neither men nor devils can touch them. Like the difference between the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. In the Colossians we see the Church in trial and tribulation holding to the Head. In the Ephesians we see the Head in fellowship with the members holding them.

"The poor in spirit" have a kingdom. Where are its laws? In the vestry? Take them out as soon as you can. Blessed be God, they are in His own hand, and He writes them in the hearts of His people by the power of the Holy Ghost. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and of death. His law of love works blessed resignation to His will. May God grant unto us the sweet realisation of His Spirit's presence with us day by day, leading us into brighter discoveries of our high calling in Christ Jesus, and our glorious standing as kings and priests in eternal and uninterrupted union with Him.

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

XXXV. "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,
July 22nd, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

— Matt. v. 4.

MOURNING is hateful and irksome to poor human nature. From suffering, sorrow, and sadness our natural spirits shrink. Naturally we shun the dark abodes of mourning, lamentation, and woe, and seek the society of the cheerful, the joyous, and the gay. The world seeks for ease and pleasure, and pursues it, only to meet with disappointment and dissatisfaction. Ay, and the elect, redeemed, and regenerate family of God is oftentimes seeking for contentment and peace where naught is to be found but vanity and vexation of spirit. The statement of the text is an anomaly to ears unacquainted with Heaven's precious message of sovereign mercy; but discourses sweet music to those who are brought into experimental oneness with the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Pilgrims, and weary way-worn travelers to Emmanuel's glory land, know full well that steep and thorny is the way to the saints' perfection up yonder. They are painfully and profitably acquainted with the fact expressed in the language of the Sheffield poet Montgomery —

"Toil, trial, suffering, still await
On earth the pilgrim throng."

Now don't imagine that I wish to infer that the people of God cannot, or ought not, to enjoy God's temporal mercies, nor gaze with delight upon His beauties which still exist amid the blight of a ruined creation; for I am sure of this, that none but God's living children can truly appreciate and enjoy the wonderful works of their covenant Father's hand. But, by the guidance of His blessed Spirit, they love to look at earthly things as He describes them — fading and fleeting. Sin has marred all enjoyment here below, and the favoured son or daughter of God who has been brought to see all happiness in Christ and Christ alone knows that "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting" (Eccles. vii. 2). I have been taught, and forced by a sweet compulsion to this conclusion, that mourning and weeping in fellowship with Jesus is infinitely preferable to all the feasting and joy that this cold world can afford. We will now, asking the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, the covenant Comforter, look at these words of Jesus as they present themselves to my mind in the following order —

I. — The Characters — "*Blessed are they that mourn.*"

II. — The Promise — "*They shall be comforted.*"

III. — The Sovereignty Of God In The Certainty Of His Promise — "*They shall.*"

I. — THE CHARACTERS — "*Blessed are they that mourn.*" Here we may ask a question or two. If they are blessed, why do they mourn? If they mourn, how can they be blessed? Can any of you answer these questions? If you can, it will be by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit alone, by whom elect pilgrims are led into the experience of fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Every mourning sinner stands by nature on a level with the rest of mankind, and as such can lay no claim to the covenant blessings so freely bestowed upon him by God. Why then are such persons

blessed? Simply because God of His sovereign will and good pleasure loved them with an everlasting love in Christ Jesus their Head and Surety before the heavens were spread or the foundations of the world were laid. He blessed them in eternally choosing them to Himself, to make Himself a glorious name in their salvation, preservation, and glorification. In Christ, God's First Elect, their Husband and Representative, they were blessed with every blessing they would need in time and enjoy throughout eternity. Here is the wonder of all wonders. A countless multitude, who, afterwards in Adam, proved themselves to be guilty sinners, haters of God, and crawling worms of the earth, were by this godlike transaction brought into eternal union and unchanging oneness with the great and glorious JEHOVAH-JESUS. In the fulness of time — that period arranged and settled in the eternal counsels — the impeccable glory of the Son of God was veiled in His sinless and spotless humanity. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. ii. 14), and through a life of sorrow, grief, and mourning, perfectly identified Himself with all those who through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. While inhabiting these lowlands of sin and sorrow, He triumphed over Satan and rendered all his designs against the Church ineffectual. He made an end of sin for His people, bore all the griefs and sorrows of His members, endured the proud world's scorn, experienced His people's ingratitude, abolished death, brought glory to the Father, and salvation with eternal glory to the loved ones of His heart. Here we have all the fulness of God coining down in Christ to elect men, that elect men with all their emptiness may be filled and taken up in Christ to

"A pilgrim through this lonely world
The blessed Jesus past:
A mourner all His life was He,
A dying Lamb at last."

If that be true of Him as my Forerunner, then as a follower I must be a pilgrim and a mourner too.

"Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before,
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this door."

Every child of God, quickened into spiritual life, and brought into fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, is a mourner indeed, and has been introduced by the Chief Mourner into the house of mourning. Do notice that precious Scripture (Eccles. vii. 3): "The heart of the Wise is in the house of mourning." Wherever an elect vessel of mercy in spiritual oneness with Jesus is found, there God dwells, there is the house of mourning. Turn with me to Zech. xii. 10: "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication ; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Some would have us believe that this means Israel after the flesh, but we believe them not. Read Eph. ii. 22, where you will see how Christ Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition between elect Jew and Gentile, and blesses both alike with access by one Spirit to the Father, brings them into the heavenly Jerusalem, into the spiritual house of the spiritual David, to know by blessed experience that they are "buildd together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." See Rom. ii. 28, 29: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

"Saviour, if of Zion's city
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy Name!

Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know."

Friend, art thou one of Zion's children? Has thy God poured upon thee the Spirit of grace and of supplication? If so. thou hast had a soul-melting view of thy Friend and Brother Jesus, whose hands, and feet, and side, and thorn-crowned brow thy cruel sins have pierced, and thy heart can sigh and sing in plaintive strains with Hart

"The soldier pierc'd His side, 'tis true,
But I have pierc'd Him through and through."

By the quickening grace of the blessed Spirit every elect sinner finds his redeemed body to be a temple of God, a house of mourning in which the heart and affections of Jesus the Wise, even the Wisdom of God, are eternally fixed, for —

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

Let us notice a few causes of mourning in the living family of God.

1. *Indwelling sin.* Every inhabitant of the house of mourning who has been brought to know the blessedness of Rom. viii. 2 — "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" — can soon discern his character in Ezek. vii. 16: "But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity." Doves love pure provision and mourn the absence of their mates; so the child of God is sick of everything but a precious Christ. Let my eyes be diverted from Him whom my soul loves, and my mind be occupied with self, I am certain to be tossed about with discontent, dissatisfaction, and distress. Suffering is a

cause of mourning to thousands, but its parent, *sin*, is my daily grief. Others are busy with their neighbours' sins, shortcomings, and infirmities, while the religious zealot howls his piteous warning, that sin rolls down our streets like a mighty torrent. This is true; but what about the streams of lust, pride, rebellion, and corruption which oftentimes deluge the heart? The mourner in Zion alone can tell that tale in secret to his faithful, covenantkeeping God, of whom the Psalmist says, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm xxxii. 5). Sin is an intolerable load, a hateful tenant; and when seen by the eye of faith and fond affection upon a sinless and loving Saviour, the heart is broken and the living soul longs for that glorious time to arrive when it will be for ever free from this body of corruption in the presence of its God and King.

2. *Open profanity* forces many a sigh from the hearts of the living in Jerusalem. See Ezekiel ix. 4: "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub" (the cherub was a messenger of redeeming love), "whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Departure from the LORD is a prolific cause of mourning to those who are Israelites indeed. Look at Psalm cxix. 53: "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Jeremiah cries, "My eyes shall weep in secret places for your pride" (chap. xiii. 17). Let us look around us and we shall see godless legislation in Parliament, godless competition in trade, and godless religion in church and chapel. The profanity of the profane and the presumption of the *pious* are distressing to those whose hearts have been broken by the power of God B love. Scoffers abound on every hand, and godless professors, who present a plausible exterior, but are destitute of life in union with a risen Jesus, sorely annoy those who walk in the narrow path

of tribulation. What do we see in the Establishment of this country? Hypocrisy! Ichabod! Free-grace articles, and, with few exceptions, a free-will ministry. An experimental liturgy, and in most cases a dead dog in the reading-desk. A godly rector who is now in glory, on being asked to describe the Church of England, answered, "An organized hypocrisy." On being asked why he did not leave it, replied, "Because I am afraid to enter a disorganized hypocrisy." This is lamentably true. Organized and disorganized hypocrisy reign on all hands. Free-will and fleshly reason arraign JEHOVAH'S sovereignty at the bar of their puny judgment, but both shall perish before it. The mourner in Zion cries, "Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of My people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow" (Jer xiv. 17).

3. *Afflictions in mind, body, and estate.* David said, "Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up" (Psalm lxxxviii. 9, 15). Afflicted in mind through the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Many of the dear children of God are driven to their wits' ends through the assaults of their triple enemy. The burden of the flesh, the crushing weight of sin, the terrors of the law, the incorrigibility of our rebellious nature, the desperate depravity of the heart, the seethings of corruption, and the ragings of lust within, distract and distress the true-born sons and daughters of God. See how David describes this in Psalm cvii.: "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end." But mark! "Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses." Again he says, "From the end of the earth, when my spirit is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psalm lxi. 2). Again, "I poured out my complaint before Him; I shewed before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path" (Psalm cxlii. 2, 3). What a mercy! Afflictions in body and estate are oftentimes the lot of the members of the living family. Failing health, a

worn-out frame, pecuniary losses, disappointments magnified by the devil into something more than ever God designed, loved ones removed by cruel, unrelenting death, the insults of Ishmaelites, the rage of Esau, the coldness and indifference of brethren, produce mourning, lamentation, and woe among the remnant according to the election of grace.

4. *The assaults of Satan* cause the children of Zion to mourn and weep. When he is cast out by the Stronger than he, never to enter into possession again, as a cunning and crafty one he will do all the mischief he can. As a roaring lion,

"He worries whom he can't devour
With a malicious joy."

Have we had liberty in prayer, and sweet communion with our best Friend? Satan is sure to inflate with pride, or cast down with doubt and despondency — our poor, weak nature being ever ready to comply with his allurements, blandishments, injections, and temptations. He will question the reality of every blessing we receive, and the very existence of the mercies we experience. See how he tempted our great and glorious Head! "*If* Thou be the Son of God." O what an awful word is the devil's "*If*." Who can tell out the dreadful depths to which it plunges the objects of his hatred? None but elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinners who are brought into living oneness with a once suffering and tempted Brother born for adversity. He injects vain, foolish, ay, and filthy thoughts; he infuses doubt, unbelief, and infidelity; and assaults, buffets, and distresses the soul with painful questionings as to its sonship and acceptance with the Father. See how artfully he points to his own hellish injections: "If thou art a child of God by eternal predestination and spiritual regeneration, why art thou so dead, so dull, and, like me, so devilish? If thou art elect, why dost thou sin? If thou art redeemed, why art thou in bondage I If thou art regenerate, why art thou so lifeless? If thou art preserved in Christ, why art thou fallen? Presumptuous wretch! thou art mine." Hateful are Satan's

insinuations. Cruel are his temptations. The experienced child of God is not ignorant of his devices, and when bowed down under his persecutions cries out, "I will say unto God my Rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" (Psalm xlij. 9).

5. *A sense of desertion.* The absence of the Friend we love best draws from the loving heart many plaintive enquiries and requests. Listen!" Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job xxiii. 3). "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me" (Psalm lxxxvi. 16). "Lord, why castest Thou off my soul? why hidest Thou Thy face from me?" (Psalm lxxxviii. 14). "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Psalm ci. 2). "O visit me with Thy salvation" (Psalm cvi. 4). "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Song iii. 3).

"Tell Him when you see His face
I long to see Him too."

When sins and corruptions seethe and surge within, when Satan deluges the mind with manifold temptations, when he has the child of God tossed to and fro in his sieve, then the presence of the gracious Deliverer is anxiously desired and earnestly sought, His absence felt by His living and loving people is hell upon earth, and cannot be borne but with pangs of affectionate desire after Him. Blessed be His holy name,

"When frowns appear to veil His face,
And clouds surround His throne,
He hides the purpose of His grace
To make it better known."

To know the love of Christ by the teaching of the Holy Ghost is to be delighted with His presence and distressed with His absence. See how blessedly this is manifest in the spirit of the disciples when He told them He must depart from them. The promise of another

Comforter was not sufficient. Jesus, and Jesus alone, can soothe and satisfy those mourning souls whom He has blessed with sweet revelations of Himself. John xvi. 5, 6, and 22: "But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The absence of Jesus in anticipation is attended with sorrow and mourning. While worldlings rejoice, the friends of Jesus weep and lament. "Ye shall be sorrowful" is Heaven's decree concerning the members of the one body, and through days and nights of darkness and desolation they must pass. But the Dayspring from on high will visit and give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guide their feet into the way of joy and peace.

6. *Days of famine* distress the living family. Many, very many, in this so-called Christian country mourn their lack of the faithful, fearless preaching of the Gospel of the sovereign grace of God. Once they were fed with royal dainties, milk and honey, the good old corn of the land, the finest of the wheat, and their thirsting souls were refreshed with precious draughts from the deep-springing well of covenant love through a preached Gospel; but now, while the swinish religious multitudes are feeding with eager delight upon Arminian, free-will, and duty faith husks, they mourn in secret for those blessed privileges they once enjoyed. Ah, my dear friends, it is yours now to rejoice in the light of the preached Word; but you know not how soon God may cause your star to cease its shining. Look at this! Amos viii. 10 — 12: "And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander

from sea to sea, and from the North even to the East, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the LORD, and shall not find it."

7. *The felt want of life and evidences thereof* is a fruitful source of mourning to very many in Zion. Such, in the mysterious, but all-wise purpose of God, are left to be occupied with themselves and what they ought to be, which inevitably results in the experience of deadness, darkness, and discontent. How can a living child be content away from the only source of life, light, and true content? Do I feel and mourn because of my deadness? My cry is, "Quicken me, O LORD, according to Thy Word." Do I experience darkness of soul and bewilderment in the pathway of His providence? I sigh, and sometimes shout, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me into Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles" (Psalm xliii. 3).

"When I listen to Thy Word
In Thy temple cold and dead;
When I cannot see Thee, Lord,
All faith's little daylight fled, —
Sun of glory,
Beam again around my head."

Am I left, as it were, the make sport of the tempestuous rage of sin, the devil's worry, the plague of my heart, and the wretchedness of my nature? My importunity is expressed in the desire of the Psalmist. "Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because Thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me" (Psalm lxxxvi. 17). We now come to notice,

II. — THE PROMISE — "They shall be comforted." Zion's mourners shall be comforted. What with? The presence, preciousness, and power of JEHOVAH, Father, Saviour, and Comforter. It is blessed indeed to know that He has bound Himself by fixed decrees, covenant engagements, unconditional promises, and sacred oaths to comfort all His mourning people, et us glance at a promise or two.

Isaiah lxvi. 13: "As one whom His mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." See how JEHOVAH the Father reveals Himself as the Comforter of His elect ones. Isa. li. 11 — 1t5: "Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be as grass; and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy *i* and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the LORD of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people." Look at the springs of comfort revealed by the Father in that precious Ephesians 1. Grace for the unworthy. Peace for the perplexed. Blessings for those who know what the curse of the law is. Election for the exercised ones. Holiness for those who mourn because of sin. Blamelessness for "poor, vile sinners." Adoption for those who know and feel themselves to be far off from Him, and acceptance and every grace in the Beloved for sinners eternally loved.

JEHOVAH the Son proclaims Himself the Comforter of His elect brethren. See Isaiah lxi. 1 — 3: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me ; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for

ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified." Read at your leisure the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John's Gospel, in which you see how words of sweet comfort and tender sympathy flowed from the grace-filled lips of a precious Christ to the mourning souls of His disciples. It is the experience of this which makes our spirits sigh,

"Jesus, my fainting spirit brings
Its wretchedness to Thee;
Thine eye, at least, can penetrate
The clouded mystery."

JEHOVAH the Spirit has been given and sent to weary, mourning souls as the Glorifier of God's Christ, and the Revealer of the beauty, bounty, and blessedness of Jesus. O how precious He is set forth in John xiv. 16 — 18, and 26, 27: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." O what a comfort for poor, weak souls to know that in the person of the Holy Ghost they have an infallible Teacher, a sure Guide, a kind Remembrancer, a gracious Comforter. When "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). When we are in doubt and fear, He graciously "witnesses with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with

Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

JEHOVAH'S own commissioned, qualified, and Spirit-taught servants, who preach His Gospel in its fulness, and who keep back nothing that is profitable to the pilgrims and strangers with Him, are made a comfort to them. Ofttimes the living cry and sigh with Jeremiah, "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me; my children are desolate because the enemy hath prevailed. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her" (Lam. i. 16, 17). It is the blessed privilege of Zion's messengers to speak, as guided by the Holy Ghost, to the heart of the tried and tempted people of God. See Isaiah xl. 1, 2: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably (margin — *to the heart*) of Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." O what a marvellous cause for comfort and consolation. Enemies defeated by the Captain of our salvation. Sin for ever put away by His all atoning blood-shedding. Grace abounding where sin did once abound, and the blessed Spirit conveying and applying covenant consolations to wounded and broken hearts.

"O the heights and depths of grace,
Shining with meridian blaze!
Here the sacred annals show,
(Sinners black and comely too.

Saints dejected cease to mourn,
Faith shall soon to vision turn;
Ye the kingdom shall obtain.
And with Christ exalted reign."

It is a blessed privilege to be a comforter of the members of the mystical body of our once suffering Lord. To proclaim the covenant

glories of Zion's King and Lord — to tell of a “finished salvation for finished sinners,” that elect ones are saved for nothing, and that when they have nothing to pay He frankly and freely forgives them. O ye who weep and lament over your sinfulness and depravity, tell me, is not the communication of truths so glorious, sweet and precious to you? Do not your hearts bound with gratitude and thankfulness to a comforting God for revealing such blessings in you? Ay, indeed they do. I can answer for you.

The children in the family are a comfort to each other as they speak often one to another, rehearsing the doings of the Lord, and recounting His mercies. Look how the very appearance of a saint will comfort and encourage others. "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us, by the coming of Titus. And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoice the more" (2 Cor. vii. 5 — 7). Many of the family mourn through fear of that dread monster DEATH, but such in experimental union with Him who has abolished death and destroyed the designs of Satan shall be graciously blest and sweetly comforted with the presence and peace of the glorious Deliverer and Sympathizer in the time of need. We whose hearts are warmed and cheered with comforts and consolations so Divine can feelingly and experimentally join with Paul in his ascription of praise, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is

steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. i. 3 — 7).

We will just glance at,

III. — THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AS SEEN IN THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROMISE — "They shall." Blessed be His name, there is no uncertainty, no contingency here. It is not "*They may*," but "They shall." The promise is free, unfettered, and unconditional, of grace that it might be sure to all the seed; "For all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are Yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). The fulfilment of the promises is secured by the oath of JEHOVAH, the intercession of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Ghost. It is glorious when the heart sings with good old John Kent,

We plead Thy promise made,
"Tie from conditions free:
'In bonds of everlasting love
I'll be a God to thee.'

"Tis like a living spring
Of waters sweet and clear,
There's not an 'if' to foul the stream.
Or 'peradventure' here.

Free in the Fountain-head,
The source from whence it came:
In 'wills' and 'shalls' of Gospel grace,
Eternally the same."

"Blessed are they that mourn: for **THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.**" O God, the Comforter of those that are cast down, we say concerning Thee — "This same shall comfort us." Grant us this blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

HYMN SUNG BEFORE THE SERMON.

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

Thou dost remember still, amid
The glories of God's throne,
The sorrows of mortality,
For they were once Thine own.

Yes; for, as if Thou would'st be God,
E'en in Thy misery,
There's been no sorrow but Thine own,
Untouched by sympathy.

Jesus, my fainting spirit brings
Its wretchedness to Thee;
Thine eye, at least, can penetrate
The clouded mystery.

And is it not enough? enough
Thy holy sympathy?
Then there's no sorrow e'er so deep
But I would tell to Thee.

XXXVI. "BLESSED ARE THE MEEK."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,
July 28th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

— Matt. v. 6.

THE meek! Where are they to be found? As we look abroad on the face of society we behold very few signs of their existence. If we look within, and judge according to God's measuring line and the balance of His sanctuary, we cannot bow our heads before Him or raise our eyes to Him but we are convinced of our lack of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. As we look at the vast mass of Adam's posterity we are forced to the conclusion that truly meek ones exist not naturally amongst them, and that meekness is a spirit foreign to their disposition. Proud, imperious self will ever rear its head in opposition to that meekness and lowliness which God reveals in the Son of His love, and which, sooner or later, is the experimental possession of every elect and redeemed sinner. Meekness, what is it? Let us look at it in contrast to many excellent qualities appearing in those who know not anything of spiritual oneness with Him who could say truly, "I am meek and lowly in heart." *Gentleness* is the disposition which soothes the senses. *Tameness* denotes subjection by training. *Mildness* indicates calmness, softness, tenderness. *Meekness* is something vastly

different to all the rest. It is the spirit which has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering, and brought into sweet resignation to God's mind and will, however much the manifestation of His will may be repugnant to the natural feelings and desires. When we closely and Scripturally scrutinize the characters and dispositions of men, the question naturally arises in the mind, Where is meekness to be found?

Look at the description given by God the Holy Ghost of Adam and his posterity. When Adam came forth first from the hands of his God he was the very image of perfection. But as we look at Gen. iii., we see Satan's victory over him, and the introduction of sin and evil into the world. The fourth chapter reveals one dire effect of sin in the murder of Abel by the reprobate, bloodthirsty, and vindictive Cain. We come to chapter v. 3: "And Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Mark that! not in the likeness of God, not in the image of Him who created him; but "in his own likeness." Look at chapter 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." Again: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Such is the testimony of an all-wise and faithful God concerning man in his natural state and condition. When we are brought and taught to see this in the light of a God-wrought experience, what do we find? Not only the want of meekness in all around us, but utter destitution in ourselves. Turn with me to the description given by the apostle Paul of the whole Gentile world in Rom. i. 28 — 30 : "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection,

implacable, unmerciful." Here we have a *pretty* picture of poor wretched human nature, that nature which the mass of religionists would have us believe can be tamed and brought to a state of *pious* and religious propriety so as to merit God's favour, notice, and approbation.

But what is the declaration of God's blessed Word and the experience of His own children in this matter? Look at the testimony of one whom Romanists and merit mongers would have us believe is very practical in his writings — I mean the apostle James. The testimony of James is not confined to the unregenerate who are left without any manifestation of God's lovingkindness and tender mercy, but refers to elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinners. In chap. iii. 6: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Mark you, this is the positive declaration of one under the inspiration of God the ever-blessed Spirit, and therefore must be true. But we will continue: "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame."

Those of you who imagine that you have by perseverance and practice gained the mastery over your tongue, and are able to give nice little lessons to others, I would ask you to notice this: "*But the tongue can no man tame*; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." In a moment some of you may be ready to say, James must have been an Antinomian. Why? Because he says with the same tongue "bless we God" and "curse we men." Notice this, he does not say to the reprobate, you can bless God with your lying tongue and curse men with the same, but he comes a little closer home. His language is the first person plural, "we." Let me tell you, if you don't know, that to curse there is no necessity to make use of profane and blasphemous terms, shocking to refined ears. We little imagine how much cursing

flows from tongues whose words are as smooth and oily as butter. I am inclined to believe there is vastly more cursing goes on under bland and smooth expressions than there is from an outburst of profane invectives. No doubt this will be called into question by man's judgment, but this affects me not, for I speak with the full conviction that herein I have the mind of Christ. If you wish for an experimental illustration of the inability of a saint to govern his own tongue, look at David. In Psalm cxli. 3, he prays from a felt necessity: "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." How many of us within these walls this morning have found again and again, when we have determined to spend a day in quietness, meekness, and sweet placidity, and act toward each person with whom we should come in contact with gentleness, kindness, and tenderness, yes, fully bent on adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, that the most trifling circumstance — a knife, a fork, a spoon out of its place — ! What effect have such trifles produced upon our fastidious eye and sweet disposition? Do honeyed words flow from that tongue which was considered tamed by the power of Divine grace? Those of us who know ourselves by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and who see ourselves in the light of JEHOVAH'S glorious perfections, bow our heads with shame, and mourn and weep in the presence of His sacred Majesty.

James's testimony, "The tongue can no man tame," runs in perfect harmony with that of Paul in Romans, vii. 25: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." To those who mourn over the bitterness of such an experience as this, and groan under the burden of the conflict, this is the blessedness, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Mark well, this blessedness is not to those who pride themselves in the fond and vain delusion that they have gamed the mastery over the flesh, and are able to carry themselves before the Church and before the world with enviable consistency; but to those who know their weakness and their failings, and that with their flesh they can do nothing but serve the law of sin. Blessed be God, such experience the power of the law of

the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which gives them the blessed assurance that "though sinning they are free from all sin," and that to them there is no condemnation because of their being in Christ Jesus.

Where is meekness to be found? Let us look at another description given by the apostle Paul of the state and condition of mankind by nature. Eph. ii. 2, 3: "Wherein in times 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: 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." Do notice that expression, "*children of wrath*," or wrathful children. Not much meekness there. If you want further proof of the wrathful disposition of the children of God in their fleshly nature turn to Titus iii. 3: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice. and envy, hateful, and hating one another." An awful picture of human nature at its very best estate. Can it be true? Why, my dear friends, look abroad on the great mass of mankind in the present day and see if it is not true. Find we not the majority of men living in malice, envy, suspicion, jealousy and uncharitableness? Religious rancor, political petulance, cruel confederacies, godless competition, all proclaim that meekness in this cold world is a rarity indeed. If this is the truth of God written in His Book, burnt into the experience of every living child, and staring us in the face wherever we go, the question may naturally arise, Where is meekness to be found?

Well now, having endeavoured with poor success to find this meekness amongst the masses of mankind, let us look for it amongst those who are distinguished as God's peculiar property, loved by Him with an everlasting love, chosen to Himself in Christ Jesus, redeemed by precious blood, justified in the perfect righteousness of Jesus, regenerated by His blessed Spirit, and humbled before His footstool to acknowledge their vileness, nothingness, and hell-

deservedness. Do we find this blessed disposition, this spiritual blessing here? Sometimes. Sometimes? Yes. But with grace bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus we ought to manifest this precious grace every day of the week, and every hour of the day. My dear friends, we do not preach what *ought to be* in Grove chapel pulpit, it is our privilege to look at, and speak of things as they are. There are those who would have trimmed God's testimony from my lips to such an extent as to bring around me those who profess profound subjection to fleshly precepts; but, blessed be God, He would not have it so, and here I am to-day, by His grace, just where I began, declaring the same glorious truths, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. It is my lot to look at things as God reveals them, and speak of them as He declares them, without over-coloring or undertoning. Now let us look at one or two whom God acknowledged as His own elect. See Num. xii. 3: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." I believe that refers as much to his natural character as it does to the grace bestowed on Him in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. But let U3 look at this model of meekness. "He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22). When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel, supposing they would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not. He sees one of his brethren suffer wrong at the hands of an Egyptian. Do look at his meekness! His determination is to have at the Egyptian at once. See! The Egyptian is sprawling on the ground — he is dead. And according to that very law which was propounded by God on Sinai, Moses the meek was Moses the murderer. Look again, how he bears with the murmurings and rebelliousness of the children of Israel during their marches through the wilderness. But we see him at Meribah (Num. xx. 7,8) : "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the Rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth His water." Mark the language — not simply water, or its water, but, "it shall give forth His water." "His," the personal possessive pronoun masculine. Paul evidently had

respect to this when he wrote in 1 Cor. x. 4: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." Moses, contrary to God's command, smote the rock and cried to the people, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" He transgressed God's command and forgot God. "They provoked his spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Psa. cvi. 33). Where was his meekness? Yet he was then in possession of rich, free, constraining, and restraining grace. Oh, my dear friends, as we look upon any child of God when left to himself, however highly-favoured or deeply-taught he may be, we may well exclaim, Where is meekness to be found?

Notice another case, Barnabas, whom you find described in Acts xi. 24: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith." If you will turn to Acts xv. 37 — 39, you will see that nepotism is no new thing. So, for a bishop to hand over to a near relative a nice piece of ecclesiastical preferment, is a weakness that can be traced to apostolic times. Barnabas had a nephew, his sister's son, whose name was John Mark. On a former occasion he had manifested weakness and inconsistency (Acts xiii. 13). Paul suggests to Barnabas that they should visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the Word of the Lord and see how it fared with them. "And Barnabas *determined* to take with him John, whose surname was Mark." You see, this good man who was full of the Holy Ghost had a little *determination* in him, even when he was on the wrong side. But this was not all, for when Paul objected, "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." Yet even in the weakness and infirmity of men the sovereignty of God is manifested, for Barnabas went one way and Paul another, preaching the Gospel of the grace of God, by which wandering ones were brought into the fold of God and mourners in Zion graciously comforted. -While we glory not in the infirmities of good and gracious men, we cannot close our eyes to them, especially when

revealed to us by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of truth; but in all humility ask ourselves the question, Where is meekness to be found?

We see the same lack of a meek and quiet spirit in other characters described in God's blessed Word. Look at our old friend Ezekiel as he is revealed in the first three chapters of his prophecy. God gives him a commission to go and preach His Word to a people impudent, hard-hearted, and brazen-faced, who would not listen to a word he had to say. Well, certainly this was not very encouraging. Will Ezekiel go? He thinks he won't, and rather than stir a step he lies down; and you know a man when he lies down cannot go except he is carried. We see something like stubbornness, obstinacy, and self-will in Ezekiel, yet he was very near and dear to his God. Throughout chapter ii., God tells him what he must do and say. In chapter lii. 14, we read, "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit (margin — *hot anger*); but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me." As we thus contemplate the character and temper of Ezekiel, may we not well inquire, Is this a saint of the Most High? Is this a sample of those upon whom Jehovah has thrust His sovereign, discriminating, distinguishing grace? Oh, how marvellous must that grace be which takes poor rebellious worms and reveals in them the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

We cannot forget, nor pass by our old friend Jonah. We read in his first chapter how God commanded him to go to Nineveh and cry against it because the wickedness thereof was come up before Him. But Jonah wouldn't. He had a little money, and you know what swaggering, boasting creatures we are if we are a little flush with this world's goods. Away he goes and pays his fare to Tarshish. My dear friends, if we have a mite of any description, either religious or moral, there will not be much disposition to pray. It was when every fraction of Jonah's money was gone that he lifted up his voice in the belly of hell, found a place of worship in the belly of the fish, and prayed unto his God. Delivered from the depths he goes at God's command and preaches the preaching that He had bidden him.

Surely after his deep experience, earnest praying, and powerful preaching, we shall see a profusion of patience, humility, and meekness. Read the last chapter. See! Instead of the Spirit we have the flesh, instead of meekness we behold anger and rebellion. Is this one of the meek whom God had blessed? Certainly. Look at him, he is exceedingly displeased and very angry. Do you call him meek? Wait and judge, not according to the outward appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Jonah feels his honour is at stake. Depend upon it, if you touch a prophet or a preacher in his reputation, if he is left to himself you may look out. What won't he do if left to the workings of his poor, proud, pettish nature? How should we deal with such? Just commend them to that meek and lowly One who alone can allay the pride and passion of those whom He loves by imparting His Own spirit of meekness and gentleness to them. "Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?" or, "Art thou greatly angry?" "And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death." As we survey the whole of this chapter we are struck with wonder at the petulance of Jonah and the pity of his God. "And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. And Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." I love to know and own a preparing God. One who can prepare a gourd for shelter, and who can also prepare a worm to destroy the gourd He has prepared and given. An infinite God who can as easily prepare a great fish as He can a little worm, and as easily prepare a little worm as a great fish, the one no greater than the other to Him. "And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement East wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." O how often have I been a poor repining fool in the same spot with Jonah, not willing to wait the Lord's will concerning me, but forced to learn what that means,

"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."

As we read this concluding portion of the book of Jonah we may well wonder that a person in possession of Divine grace, a preacher of God's covenant truth, could be guilty of such (shall say?) presumption and impertinence as to look God in the face and say, "I do well to be angry." Some of you may be ready to fling a stone of caution or correction at Jonah; but you may rest assured that those of us who are privileged to know our own infirmities and imperfections in the light of a God-wrought experience will bow our heads with shame before His mercyseat, adore the grace that brought us there, and beg of Him to work in us that precious grace set before us in the text — meekness.

"*Blessed are the meek.*" Who are the meek? All those who are taught by the blessed Spirit their unworthiness and hell deservedness because of their want of meekness in themselves; but are brought to see, feel, and experience the meekness and gentleness of Christ their Surety and Saviour. O what a mercy for me to know that His meekness forms part of that righteousness in which I stand everlastingly accepted and justified. *Meekness* is a consequence of election, as we see in Col. iii. 12: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, *meekness*," &c. It is a fruit of the Spirit. See Gal. v. 22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *meekness*," &c. See how Paul enjoins this upon Titus: "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all *meekness* to all men" (chap. iii. 2). Better said than done, say some of you. Ah, my friends, it can't be done at all; but as the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, and in the revelation of a precious Christ in the heart of a poor sinner, breaks that heart, melts that heart, heals that heart, subdues the proud and stubborn will, blending it with that of the meek and lowly One who pleased not Himself, humbled Himself, and made Himself of no reputation. Now mark! This meekness is not weakness. Many who carry about

with them more of the bull-dog than the lamb, and who have more of a bullying than of a soothing disposition, may associate weakness with meekness; but they are vastly mistaken. Oftentimes it has been seen that a man of a meek and quiet spirit has borne indignities, put up with reproach and rebuke, submitted to harsh treatment, and endured the most cruel persecution without a thought of retaliation; but at the set time has stood forth boldly in the vindication of his righteous cause and the confounding of his oppressors. Can we find anything in God's Word to disprove the charge of weakness in association with meekness? Yes. Turn to Acts xvi. 35 — 37: "And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let these men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out." God-given meekness knows how to stand upon God-given rights. Paul and Silas could sing praises to God at midnight while their feet were fast in the stocks in the inner prison ; but when asked to go in peace the true dignity of meekness was not wanting, as the astonished sergeants conveyed the startling message of Paul to the frightened magistrates, "Let them come themselves and fetch us out." Such was the conduct and language of a truly meek, but in nowise weak man, whose chastened spirit bowed in sweet submission to the gentle and loving Jesus.

"Blessed are the meek. You see the same spirit in the conduct of that blessed One who, in Matt. xi. 29, so sweetly commands His weak and wavering disciples thus: "Take My yoke upon you. and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." We read of Him as He stood before the high priest, when one of the officers struck Him with the palm of his hand, He meekly replied, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" (John xviii. 23). Look at Him at Pilate's bar, when, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Pilate saith unto Him, "Speakest Thou not unto me?"

Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore, he that delivered Me hath the greater sin." There was meekness with manliness, with neither meanness nor weakness. You may depend upon this as a truth — the greater the bully and the greater the coward when the time of trial comes. He who is loudest in his talk oftentimes proves the most wavering in his walk. Many instances can be produced, but the time forbids. The meek are those who, with the spirit of their gracious Teacher, the meek and lowly Lamb of God, are enabled to bear up patiently against difficulties and disappointments, and endure persecutions, provocations, and contempt. Look at the apostle Paul, as he is set forth in 2 Cor. xii. 9: "And He (Christ) said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." See also how he describes himself in Phil. iv. 11 — 13: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content." *Therewith?* Nothing of the kind. Paul was not content with the thorn in the flesh and the buffetings of the messenger of Satan. I wonder are our flaming professors and religious high-flyers content with the toothache or lumbago when troubled with either? See! Those who profess to be content with everything that crosses their path, I don't believe. Paul did not belong to that class. Look at the verse and you will find the word "*therewith*" is in italics. Draw your pencil through it, and you will read, "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content." Yes, content with the presence of his Master as he was tossed with no small tempest in the cornship of Alexandria, in the midst of the tumult at Corinth, and bound with his chain at Rome. He continues, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Here was a man in blessed

possession of the spirit of the Master, the Spirit which worked in him mightily, producing meekness, gentleness, patience, and sweet tranquility. Oh, what a mercy to be taught through much tribulation, persecution, and provocation, to bear and endure anything for His Name's sake, and to sing with approval and spiritual intelligence the precious words of Toplady —

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

As we are brought to know His mind and will, and to drink in of His Spirit, to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, and to submit and rejoice in JEHOVAH'S sovereignty, meekness must manifest itself before God and before men. Let us now notice the promise —

"They shall inherit the earth." There are many in our days who canalize God's glorious truths, and who drag down the spiritualities of His blessed Gospel to the level of their carnal conceptions. Our Lord here employs Old Testament phraseology in teaching new covenant truth. Carnal minds catch at the letter and contend for the literal or carnal meaning of the words. Oh, say they, when the earth is named, it means the earth. This is a Popish mode of reasoning. When the flesh and blood of Christ are spoken of in John vi., and water in John in. 5, the spiritually-taught child of God grasps an inward and spiritual meaning. So in the passage before us, we, who are blessed with God's teaching and God's light, see and enjoy spiritual, heavenly, and eternal realities. This earth of ours, blighted by sin, awaits the eternal curse of Jehovah, according to 2 Peter iii. 10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." This reminds me of the Irish bishop, who, on being asked by a peer for a motto to be inscribed on his newly built castle, replied, "TO BE BURNED." "Seeing then

that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness *f.*" The promise in our text is a quotation from Psa. xxxvii. 11. The word earth referring not to the round world, but to the land of Canaan, which to the Jews was a type of heaven. See Isa. lx. 21 : "Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever." Each child of the living God brought into the school of Jesus, and put into spiritual possession of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, shall inherit the land where the King is seen in His beauty, and where the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.

Look at God's promise to Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to him and to his seed after him, though, according to Stephen (Acts vii. 5), "He gave him none inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on." Where are the natural seed of Abraham? Scattered in all lands. What are they? Those who manifest more persistent and bitter opposition to God's Christ than all the rest of mankind. Do they inherit the land, or will they ever do so? I believe they will not. Where, then, is the fulfillment of the promise? In Christ. Look at Rom. iv. 13: "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Did God promise that Abraham should be the heir of the whole world in a natural sense? No, He did not, and those who contend for the literal interpretation of the text will acknowledge the same. But Paul, by the Holy Ghost, says, "that he should be the heir of the world," according to the promise, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. This has respect to Christ and to the whole election of grace. See Gal. iii. 2(J: "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Heirs of what? Of the world. Some of you may be mourning because you lack some of the good things of this world and know not how to meet the demands of to-morrow. Ah, my doubting, fearing friend, just turn to 1 Cor. iii. 21 — 23: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, *or the world*, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Christ is Heir of all

things, and we in union with Him are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. All that God is, and all that God has, are ours. He will sacrifice anything or everything for His people. He says, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." He cannot lose a child, and a child cannot lose a covenant blessing designed for it. Such may appear but waifs and strays upon the waves of this troublesome world, but each shall be brought to the haven of rest where he will have them. Why did God create the world? As good old James Nuttall, of Oldham, Lancashire, once said to me, "Simply to build His Church on, and make the devil and his brood take care of it for a time."

James is now in glory, safe with his Lord and Saviour, understanding in all its fulness and blessedness the meaning of our text, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

May the Lord bless us with the rich experience of it, for His own Name's sake. Amen.

XXXVII. "BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH
DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER
RIGHTEOUSNESS."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
August 5th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

— Matthew v. 6.

WHAT is the reason why any living child of God is found within these walls this morning? What is there to attract any person to a spot where nothing sensuous meets the gaze, and no provision is made for the flesh or for the gratification of carnal propensities? Surely it must be because JEHOVAH, in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy, has put you who are here present into possession of those spiritual blessings which we find clustered together at the commencement of our blessed Lord and Saviour's discourse on the Mount of Beatitudes. It must be because He has put a difference between you and the Egyptians, Amalekites, Canaanites, and Babylonians around you, because He has created within you that of which we have been singing in that precious hymn of Cowper's,

"an aching void
The world can never fill."

It is because He has given you His own eternal life, and you experience those spiritual longings and desires peculiar to that life — a life that can never die. Yet, this life is characterised by hopes, fears, cares, and anxieties unknown to the world. Mark, characterised, not fed by these, and the child of God who is in possession of them, though they are oftentimes painful, perplexing, and very puzzling, would not part with them for something handsome. It is the mercy of those of us with whom the secret and covenant of the LORD is, and who have the blessed witness of the Spirit, to look upon our pains, perplexities, and paradoxes as so many indications of His love, gracious opportunities to approach His throne of grace, and evidences that we are blessed, and not cursed of Him. Though we suffer and sorrow for a little while here below, yet, as the objects of His everlasting and unchanging love, when all His purposes of love, grace, and mercy are fulfilled toward us in this vale of tears, He will receive us up to His own glory-home, there to feast our souls on the fruits of His eternal affection, to

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

But while these privileges are ours, it is ours also to wait for our blessed Lord's return to take to Himself that people whom He loves with an everlasting love. Then, He having loved them to the end of all their sins, sorrows, cares, and anxieties, will take them home to Himself, and so shall they be "for ever with the Lord."

It has been our lot for three successive Sunday mornings to meditate upon the precious portion which God has given us in the preceding context. 1. "The poor in spirit." The spiritually poor, who have no stock of grace to boast of, but who are kept dependent upon

JEHOVAH for all spiritual and temporal good during the whole of their sojourn in this wilderness world. 2. The blessed mourners we noticed. The various causes for mourning which are experienced by the children of the living God. They mourn over sin within them, and over sin around them; they mourn over the spiritual dearth and deadness which oftentimes seize them; they mourn over the hypocrisy and godless profession reigning on every hand; they mourn the felt absence of their Lord and Master, and their propensity to wander from Him. Yet they are blessed with the sweet and precious promise that they shall be comforted — comforted by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by God's own sent messengers; and when there is no minister at hand, He will comfort them Himself by the words of a precious hymn, by the breathing out of the gracious experience of some poor, tried pilgrim, or by some covenant promise sweetly applied to the heart in the reading of His own blessed Word, thus teaching His own taught messengers that when He pleases He can carry on His gracious work without them. 3. "Blessed are the meek." Here we find something that staggers many of God's poor children. For the Lord knows I am oftentimes compelled to bow my head with shame and sorrow, and mourn in secret and solitude my felt lack of the Spirit of Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." O the blessedness of knowing and experiencing that which Paul wrote in 2 Cor. x. 1: "The meekness and gentleness of Christ." It is our privilege this morning to look at the very precious portion God has given us for a text — one so encouraging to weaklings in faith, who may not possess very bright evidences of their interest in the kingdom of God, or of their relationship to Him.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Let us consider,

- I. — Spiritual Desire — Hunger and thirst.
- II. — The Blessing Desired — Righteousness.
- III. — A Gracious Promise — "They shall be filled."

I. — Spiritual Desire — Hunger and thirst. Let us look at a few instances of natural hungering and thirsting as recorded in the sacred Scriptures. These are nature's felt wants and necessities — longings and desires after those bounties of God's kind providence which alone can satisfy, sustain, and strengthen, These are sometimes attended with intense pain and suffering, and the consciousness that, if relief be not soon at hand, death must inevitably ensue. Many instances are found in the blessed Book. Notice first of all the case of the children of Israel in the wilderness, as recorded in Exod. xvi. 2, 3. By a mighty deliverance JEHOVAH had brought them out of the iron furnace of Egypt, and given them repeated evidences and assurances of His power and care, yet distrust and rebellion characterized them. On the shores of the Red Sea they rejoice; at Marah they murmur; at Elim they rest; in the wilderness of sin “the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, *to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*” The experience of hunger forced the congregation of Israel to the conclusion, and that a very natural one, that they were brought into the wilderness to be killed thereby.

Now notice the case of Jeremiah in the thirty-eighth chapter of his prophecies, verses 8, 9: "Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; *and he is like to die for hunger* in the place where he is; for there is no more bread in the city." Such was Ebedmelech's conclusion concerning Jeremiah in his want and necessity. Look at the complaint of Jeremiah in Lamentations iv. 9: “They that be slain with the sword are better than *they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away*, stricken through want of the fruits of the field.” I need not ask you to turn to that figurative expression which our blessed Lord brought before the

Pharisees in Luke xv. 17. The prodigal son in the far country, in the midst of famine, beginning to be in want, and desiring to fill his belly with the husks that satisfied swine, said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, *and I perish with hunger!*" In these quotations you see — 1. Killed with hunger (Exod. xvi. 3). 2. Die for hunger (Jer. xxxviii. 9). 3. Pine away with hunger (Lam. iv. 9). 4. Perish with hunger (Luke xv. 17). These narrations have not been recorded in God's most Holy Word without a purpose. In each, JEHOVAH has a gracious design, for "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii.1P). And so each of these quotations has its own peculiar feature of truth to unfold in respect to the spiritual experience of the Lord's people while in this wilderness world.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst." Is it possible that poor nature and proud reason can arrive at such a conclusion? This is as much as to say, Blessed are they who fear death, and dread pining and perishing. Can this be the lot of God's own elect and redeemed people? Can it be the experience of those who have been brought into spiritual oneness with Him who is the Bread of Life, and in whom heavenly provision and all spiritual blessings abound? He who graciously commands His hungering and thirsting ones, "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved?" Can it be possible for fleshly free-will pride and carnal reason to arrive at such a conclusion? I answer unhesitatingly, No. Such can only be known and felt by the teaching of His Spirit who was ever full of His Father's glory and yet ever hungered and thirsted after it.

"And must it, Lord, be so?
And must Thy children bear
Such various kinds of woe,
Such soul-perplexing fear?
Are these the blessings we expect?
Is this the lot of God's elect?"

There are other portions of God's Word which fully demonstrate, not only the fear of the consequences of the lack of nourishment, but present inconvenience and pain. Who among us can be ignorant of that glorious allegorical Psalm, the 107th, where in each stanza we have the spiritual state and condition of God's children graphically set forth. In the 2nd verse we see them redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3rd verse they are gathered out of all lands; 4th verse they wander in the wilderness; 5th verse, "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Look at the experience attending hunger and thirst as described in this portion: "*their soul fainted in them.*" A cessation of vitality, a retiring of consciousness. Now turn to Isaiah viii. 21, where you will see another peculiarity of hungering and thirsting: "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that *when they shall be hungry they shall fret them*

selves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward." You may be ready to say, That is the character of the reprobate. To this I do not object, but remind you that our subject is hunger and thirst and their effects. Our blessed Lord, as a kind, loving, and patient Teacher, made use of earthly figures for the purpose of conveying heavenly and spiritual truths. Many times He spake to the multitudes in parables, that He might explain the same to His own disciples when they were alone with Him. Now look at the spirituality of those words for a moment or two — "when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves." Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? Have you ever been feasted with the good things of His kingdom? Have you been privileged and honoured to eat and drink with Him at His table? Has your heart overflowed with joy and gratitude as you have sung that sweet verse,

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved Is mine I
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 you have been partakers of His bounty, feasted upon His love, and have drunk deep draughts from the deep-springing well of the covenant; but where are you this morning? Eating and drinking? One says, There is nothing spread on the table before me, therefore I cannot eat. Another cries, There is a plentiful repast of heavenly provision, but I feel no appetite. My dear friends, in such a state are you contented? No, in neither one case or the other will there be either true contentment or satisfaction, but, according to the Scriptural illustration I read for you just now, there will be fretting and complaining. Wherever hunger and thirst after anything is experienced there cannot, of necessity, be real satisfaction until the soul is in possession of that which is longed for, or until God, by something of His own providing, satiates the soul and satisfies the appetite.

Let us look at another portion (Isaiah ix. 20): "And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and shall not be satisfied; they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm." This teaches us the terrible lengths to which natural hunger will drive the best of mortals when in extremities. Have we not read of those who have been cast adrift on the ocean, or on desert lands, by shipwreck, and of others besieged in times of war, who were driven to acts the most revolting? For instance, look at the different sieges of Jerusalem, especially that by Titus and Vespasian, prophesied by our Lord and recorded by Josephus, the Jewish doctor. Men turned into cannibals, devouring one another, and women eating the fruit of their own womb. The portion I have quoted, and the instances I have set forth, prove that natural hunger will drive in extreme cases to acts of cannibalism. There is a spiritual meaning couched beneath all this. Now turn with me to

Lam. ii. 19: "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD; lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young children, that *faint for hunger in the top of every street.*" These are illustrations from nature which show forth spiritual and experimental realities. In the first we see the evidence of life and the dread of death. In the second, discontent and fretfulness. In the third, cannibalism; and in the fourth the manifestation of intense desire.

With the case of Hagar and Ishmael we are all familiar. They were cast out of Abraham's house, and in the wilderness of Beersheba "the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him, a good way off: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice and wept" (Gen. xxi. 15, 16). Turn to the latter part of Gen. xxv., where we see Esau returning from hunting, hungry and faint, when for a mess of pottage he sold his birthright to Jacob, because he thought he was at the point of death. See Judges xv. 18: "And he (Samson) was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" Turn to Luke xvi. 22 — 24. Here we have thirst indeed. The rich man in the days of nature received his good things, but here we see him in hell, in torment, eaten up with intense thirst. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." This is a thirst which can never be slaked, a longing which can never be gratified, a desire which can never be fulfilled. We will now leave the signs for the things signified, the metaphorical for the real, the outward and temporal for the inward and spiritual.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst." There are many lively illustrations of this in God's Word. You see it in the case of Rachel who was barren, and in her grief thereat said unto Jacob, her

husband, "Give me children, or else I die." A foolish request from a poor, weak woman. See! She bore *a child* and called his name Joseph; but she asked for *children*. God gave her another, and she called his name Benoni, the son of my sorrow.. His birth was her death. She asked for children and life, God gave her children and death. The moment her hopes were fulfilled, and she possessed the desire of her heart, she died. Now let us look at the spiritual truth couched beneath this painful illustration. Let me ask the living children of God, Why are you here this morning? Is it not because God in His sovereign mercy has created a spiritual hunger and thirst in you which nothing short of Himself can satisfy, and never will be satisfied but with the rich apprehension and the sweet realization of His presence, preciousness, and power? You are ready to ask, Does God create hunger and thirst? I answer, Yes, for there can be no act either in grace or providence independently of Him. There can be no act in heaven, earth, or hell, without the sovereign will and irresistible behest of JEHOVAH. I know some may go away from this place and say I am making God the author of sin. To such I say, Be careful in reference to your utterance of your carnal conclusions, which cannot be deduced for a single moment by the spiritual mind from God's pure truth. But turn over to Deut. viii. 2, 3: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no." Each of these must be known and felt in the experience of God's own children. "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." O what a mercy to know that by every purpose, promise, and privilege that proceedeth out of our covenant Father's mouth we live, and move, and have our being. Mark those words: "*Re suffered thee to hunger.*" That is true in our spiritual experience now. For what do we hunger? See! Like loves like. The company we love is that most in keeping with our spirits. Whatever be our experience, we shall seek for the

society of those whose experience corresponds with our own. This may be a weakness, but, mark you, it is a weakness, or rather a privilege of God's providing. In Psalm lxxxiv. 7, you read: "They go from strength to strength;" or, as it reads in the margin, "They go from company to company." What does this mean? That weak faith loves to associate with weak faith, and strong faith with strong faith. You know full well that the company which suited you twenty years ago is not satisfactory to you now. The associations that we contract are those in harmony with our experience and tastes. Yes, like loves like. Has God imparted His own nature to thee and to me? Has He given us that "one heart" of which our old friend Davis spoke so sweetly last Tuesday afternoon? Has He made us partakers of the Divine' nature by His exceeding great and precious promises? See 2 Peter i. 4. Then we shall find all things short of Him disappointing and unsatisfying. In the promises we seek to hear the Faithful Promiser. In the Blessing we long to enjoy the presence of the covenant Blesser. In His works we love to behold the gracious Performer. This being the case there must be restlessness and dissatisfaction without the presence of our best Friend, which is a gracious evidence that we are in the family, and that the "Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst." Like loves like, as you see in Psalm xlii. 1, 2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" God, and God alone, will satisfy a living soul. God the Father in His sovereign electing love; God the Son in His pure redeeming grace; God the Holy Ghost in His regenerating and restoring favour. Ah! but see still further, He is "the living God." This is the God of resurrection. JEHOVAH revealed through the death, burial, resurrection and interceding life of the Surety of the everlasting covenant of grace. I read for you, in Isaiah ix. 20, of those who "eat every man the flesh of his own arm." Do not God's children oftentimes

try to feast themselves with delight on their own works, and when this is denied them, will they not turn in upon themselves, and consume themselves with self-pity? This is taught in the unexaggerated language of the Psalmist as he by the Holy Ghost deals out his spiritual exercises. "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, for I went with them to the house of God, with the multitude that kept holiday." He now turns in upon himself: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." Look at the margin: "*His presence is salvation.*" This is as much as saying, God is my meat, God is my drink, God is my strength, and God is my sustenance. It is true indeed that there is not one particle of satisfaction for me one hair's breadth away from Him. My true happiness is in knowing that He is All in all to me.

Now turn to Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2: "O God, Thou art my God." You see David asserted his relationship to God though he was then at a felt distance from Him. In the dark he could say, and that by the Holy Ghost, "*Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth 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.*" Look at Psalm lxxxiv. 2: "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." God my Salvation, Satisfaction, Solace, and Stay. We must now notice —

II. — The Blessing Desired — Righteousness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after *righteousness.*" Where is righteousness to be found? In Adam? Well, in Adam before his fall there was a righteousness, but not one in which he could claim equality and identity with God. In Adam, with all that perfection in which God created him, we cannot find a righteousness in which we can stand before, or a capacity in which we can enjoy, God; but in Christ, though we fell in Adam, and are brought to the knowledge of our fall, we have a righteousness which was bestowed upon us

before the worlds were framed, which could never be forfeited, or soiled, or spoiled by all the sin committed by Adam, or all the transgression that Eve was guilty of, or all the iniquities of all the election of grace from that moment to this. What a glorious truth! A righteousness just suited to my case in the person and work of a precious Christ. A righteousness revealed in His all-glorious and perfect obedience to the Divine law, which, according to one of old, "an angel's tear would soil." A righteousness, in connection with which, no created being, fallen or unfallen, could move a finger for one single moment. Such a righteousness could never be found in a mere creature; for it must meet all the demands of a holy and sin hating God, and the requirements of His spiritual, fiery, and perfect law, or else every one of Adam's race must be banished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

This glorious righteousness is found in Him who engaged Himself to perform all that His people left unperformed — that is, everything. He obeyed God's will perfectly, kept His commandments unceasingly, owned His authority uninterruptedly, and with uncomplaining resignation "bore all Incarnate God could bear," thus to work out an everlasting righteousness in which the children of God should stand everlastingly justified in His sight. Let us look at a portion or two which speaks of this. See 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He hath made Him sin for us" — that is, He accounted Him as sin, and dealt with Him as such — "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now look at 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him" — that is, of God — "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This is Christ Jesus not merely doing something for us, but Christ Jesus Himself in all that He is to the Father, and in all that He has done for us, made, constituted, and accounted righteousness for us, to us, with us, and in us. Still further, we are taught, and we hold dear as life itself a truth so little understood, and so little preached, which is this: we are not simply made righteous, reckoned innocent, and cleared from all law charges that we may

stand accepted before God; but we are "made THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." Don't you love that? I think I hear your very hearts respond, Indeed we do. Are you in the experimental possession and enjoyment of this every day? I anticipate your decided, No. But it is the desire and longing of your heart to feed upon this when the morning light chases the shades of darkness away, and when you lay your weary head upon your pillow at night. O, what a mercy to feel His head nearest to mine, that I am one with Him and He is one with me, that He is my Righteousness ; and if I should open my eyes in a solemn eternity before tomorrow's dawn I should stand undaunted in all the glorious perfections of JEHOVAH-JESUS, my Righteousness, my Salvation, my All in all. Is not that your desire? Certainly it is.

Now, a word or two in regard to religious high-flyers, for these I abhor and shun. People may say I am harsh, but let me be still more harsh in this respect, for all such are but troublers and tormentors to God's exercised children, those blessed ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness. These pests say, "O, we have the word in which the Lord has revealed all things for us, and it is ours to appropriate them and make them our own, which, thank God, we have done, and now bid adieu to doubts, and fears, and exercises. We take God at His word, and have no further occasion to trouble ourselves." What does our Lord Jesus Christ say to all such?" Woe unto you that are rich! for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger." But to the poor and the needy, the mourners in Zion, He sweetly whispers, "Ye shall have your consolation in all its fulness by-and-bye." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." We now notice —

III. — A Gracious Promise — "They shall be filled." Are there any hungering and thirsting ones here who can be satisfied with nothing short of the revelation of God's Christ in' your heart as your lawfulfilling righteousness? If so blessed, your union oneness will be evidenced by unmistakable signs, prominent among which will be hunger and thirst. These cravings and longings, to be experienced

again and again, and not as hypocrites and superficial professors would have us believe, once gratified never more to return. Through God's goodness I had my breakfast this morning, and not all the logic in the world can convince me that, if spared, I shall not want another to-morrow. Yes, I shall want more food before this evening comes, and without it not all the fine words or sweet persuasions in creation would satisfy me. So it is in the Divine life. God graciously sustains the life He gives by nourishment ministered according to the need He creates. From the fulness of the Head the varied members of the one body are graciously supplied. "For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psa. cvii. 9). Full souls will loathe the honey from the Rock of Ages, while those who experience their emptiness day by day can sing with Mary,

"He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away "(Luke i. 53). Ah, my dear friends, a hungry sinner is a praying sinner. A good spiritual appetite will call often upon Him who commands, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psa. lxxxii. 13). The experience of hunger and lack of provision are sure to cause discontent, fretting, murmuring, and repining, and I have precious little patience with those parties who talk differently. We hungered yesterday and we hunger to-day, ay, and we hunger again and again during the same day; so, as we are blessed with a spiritual appetite, and that spiritual appetite is in a healthy state, we shall experience renewed longings and desires; but, blessed be God, He will not, He cannot leave us to perish, for we do not live by bread only, but by every covenant provision of JEHOVAH brought home to our heart by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"They shall be filled" It may be our lot to experience a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord; but as sure as He lives He will be true to His covenant engagements, and in our time of need, which is His time of favour, give us blessedly to know the reality of that precious Scripture, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). *"They shall be filled"*

with righteousness. Turn to Romans viii. 3. A very blessed declaration is this: "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; *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Mark that! not only righteousness for us, with us, and upon us, but *in us*. How can this be! Because He who is our Righteousness is "Christ in us the Hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). It is this which works that gracious experience prayed for by the apostle in Rom. xv. 13: "Now the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." This experience also produces that Gospel practice expressed in the next verse: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are *full of goodness, filled with all knowledge*, able also to admonish one another."

"*They shall be filled*" with "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God" (Phil. i. 11). In experimental possession of the righteousness of the God-Man, which alone can satisfy the cravings of the Divine nature, and being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we long to serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. You see our Gospel is not only the declaration of God's righteousness imputed and imparted, but it also brings to sight fruits of righteousness springing from Christ our Righteousness and Root.

"*They shall be filled*" with the Spirit whose fruit "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against -which there is no law" (Gal. v. 22, 23; Eph. v. 18). Thus experiencing the goodness, righteousness, love, peace, and Spirit of Christ, "we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." O what a mercy to have a heart full of Divine love! Jesus alone precious and no room for ought else. It is this produces the "bubbling up" which finds vent in tears and expressions of grateful adoration. With some little experience of this my prayer for you is, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii.). Precious filling! Glorious fulness! In Christ, with Christ, by Christ, we are filled, we are satisfied, according to that discriminating declaration in Isaiah lxxv. 13,14: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

"*They shall be filled*" with bliss, blessedness, and glory, in the Father's house, the many-mansioned home, where "they shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 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. 16, 17).

May the Lord add His blessing, for His great Name's sake. Amen.

HYMN.

Jesus those happy souls does bless,
Who *hunger* for His righteousness;
Who seek the smiling of His face,
And *thirst* for fresh supplies of grace.

They cannot here contented live
On all the dainties earth can give;
Their souls can feast on nothing less
Than' Christ's eternal righteousness.

Some sweet foretastes they have below;
Hut the bright world to which they go
Will then a glorious banquet yield;

There shall their souls be ever fill'd.

May this my blest experience be!
To hunger, Lord, and thirst for Thee;
And on Thy righteousness to live,
Which can both food and comfort give

Then, when at death my soul shall rise
To the blest banquet in the skies,
I shall partake the heavenly store,
And feast and sing for evermore. Medley.

XXXVIII. "BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
September 2nd, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

A

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
— Matt. v. 7.

VERY blessed and precious privilege it is to meditate upon the varied characteristics and evidences that God has given in His most Holy Word to assure the hearts of His exercised children of their interest in His covenant love, blood, and salvation, and in the blessings, bounties, and benefits of His kingdom which He has treasured up in Himself to meet and supply all their spiritual necessities. Thus blessed and comforted, they give all the glory to JEHOVAH, and put the many crowns of salvation, creation, providence, grace, and glory upon the right Head, upon the Head of Him of whom we have sung again and again,

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,
Let angels prostrate fall,

Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

It was our privilege for a few Sunday mornings, previous to my seeking rest and restoration, to dwell upon the blessings and evidences which are given to us in the former part of this chapter. These blessings God bestows in a manner different altogether to poor nature's conjectures, and contrary to the carnal conclusions of the children of God themselves. He associates blessing with poverty of spirit; we should identify it with spiritual riches. God so reveals Himself in the blessings of His Word and covenant as to be seen, known, and felt as the Friend of the wanting, doubting, mourning, and fearing ones in Zion. Those who dread desertion, He blesses with His sweet companionship. To those who experience spiritual poverty, He brings unsearchable riches, and a kingdom which can never be moved. To those who mourn over sin and after Him, He gives everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. For those who look for naught but death and hell, He reserves an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, which fadeth not away, and blesses them with sweet foretastes of it here below. Blessed poor! the kingdom of heaven, with all its privileges, immunities, and treasures, is yours, and not one of them shall be wanting in the time of real necessity. Blessed mourners! This touches a very tender chord in my own heart's experience, for, if ever a spiritual mourner existed in the midst of God's new creation, surely, during the last few weeks, that mourner is the one who now addresses you. I have sought for strength, but found weakness; for refreshment by the way, but experienced weariness; for comfort, but have been swallowed up with sorrow; for the light of His countenance, but was cast into darkness and the deeps. I have found many opportunities for mourning and weeping, ay, for crying and sighing, when refreshing tears were denied me. I was dumb when I groaned to commune with Him and converse with His people. I was dark when I longed to walk in the light. I was dead and could only sigh for His quickening power. Yet, mark you, in all this I could never say or think that Israel's covenant God was not mine.

All this reminds me of one day meeting dear old Mrs. Cunningham; she asked, "How are *you* this morning?" I replied, "I can scarcely tell you, for I feel spiritually low in a low place." She smiled and said, "Ah! thank God for that. You may be sure He has some weak and weary ones down there, and He intends that before long you shall meet with them for their comfort and yours." It is blessed to meet with a teacher like this. I have found it so. It is profitable yet painful to know that there is not a spot of mental or spiritual exercise through which God's ministers are brought — dark, trying, and perplexing thought it be — but the same was designed in the infinite wisdom, good will, and pleasure of our gracious God for the encouragement of some poor, weary travelers to Zion, for the deliverance of some groaning and sighing prisoners, or for the strengthening of some little, weak children in the household of God. Yes, God oftentimes graciously meets with such through the ministry of His tried and tempted servants, giving them a gracious lift out of themselves, and out of their wretched surroundings, and causing them to know by blessed experience what that means, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. v. 8). It is blessed for us to know that it is ours to wait and trust in the dark, even when impatience and importunity are the chief characteristics of our spiritual existence, ay, and when beset with blind unbelief and becalmed with accursed indifference. To mourn under the painful sense of these is a blessed evidence of the possession of faith, trust, and confidence, which those who are outside the pale of God's covenant love, grace, and mercy, are utterly ignorant of.

"Blessed are the meek." Where are they? Where do they live? Left to myself I am neither meek nor gentle, and the very marks and evidences of belonging to Adam the first are seen in all their awful realities. Does this gratify me? No, it humbles me to the dust, causing me to sigh and cry for the meekness and gentleness of Christ. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Mark! It is not "Blessed are they which have hungered and thirsted;" but, "Blessed are they which *do* hunger and

thirst." This takes in all those of you who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness this morning, after a righteous Father and a righteous Saviour, after Jesus who could speak in righteousness and say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). Blessed be His dear and holy name, by the grace and indwelling of His Spirit, "ye shall be filled" with grace here and with glory yonder. Now we come to notice the portion which God in His kind providence has given us for a text, in which we see another feature of spiritual blessing: — "Blessed Are The Merciful; For They Shall Obtain Mercy."

It is truly astonishing to notice the various uses that carnal men, ay, and religious men too, make of such portions as the one now before us; and, mark you, I believe the vast majority of religious men are mere carnal professors. I have seen pictures describing natural kindness to asses and other dumb animals with these words underneath, "Blessed are the merciful." Just imagine! that these glorious truths, in which the child of God, by the eye of faith, can see the very altitudes of God's covenant, should be dragged down to such a wretched level. I am willing to admit that there are thousands in this sin-accursed world, who, in their natural disposition, manifest a kind, compassionate, loving, and meek spirit toward those with whom they come in contact day by day; but when we come to measure them by the glorious standard of spiritual truth, when we come to test them by the unerring standard of God's Word, when we come to judge them according to the eternal decrees of God's throne, we find them wanting, and out of the way of God's blessing. Some may be ready to say, Does not the Saviour in this same discourse declare, "Judge not, that ye be not judged?" Yes, certainly, but wait a moment; in that same chapter, and you read it at your leisure, you will see the Saviour tells them that they are to judge. See Matt. viii. 15 — 20: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." In Zion, in the Church of the living God, He has set thrones of judgment — that is, powers and capacities to judge — and when the Lord graciously reveals Himself in His grace and power to our hearts, we are duly qualified to judge those who are within. Wolves sometimes

detected in sheep's clothing, and sometimes sheep discovered in wolves' clothing. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13: "For what have I to do to judge them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Blessed be God, it is not our lot to judge those who are without, but those who are within, those who profess to be one with us, but whose faith is questionable and walk is doubtful. When such judging is necessary, then it is ours, according to the Scriptures, to judge not according to men in the flesh; and here comes a portion for our help and guidance, "Judge not according to the outward appearance, but judge righteous judgment." It is a lamentable fact that we are too ready to cut off the heads of those who may not be able to express themselves in language which comes up to the height or down to the depth of our experience, or may not have the understanding to grasp with us the vast realities of Divine grace, or the blessedness of covenant mercy. Lord of all power and might, keep us, we beseech Thee, from judging each other after the flesh ; but give us more and more of the spirit of Him, who, in the days of His flesh, dealt with His poor, weak and weary ones in gentleness, meekness, and pity, and who now, as our Great High Priest in the heavens, has compassion upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way. Now may it be our happy lot to dwell upon the portion before us, according to God's mind and will, under the immediate guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit.

There is much in these precious words to test that child of God who may on the one hand be biased by Arminian proclivities, and that child of God on the other hand who may be swayed by Antinomian tendencies. Those of us who are Bible readers — I don't mean those who read merely to obtain a store of head knowledge in the letter of the Word; but those who search for an acquaintance with a precious Christ, and are seeking for sweet morsels of Gospel comfort therein, are spiritual searchers in the land of Divine revelation, spiritual diggers in the mine of spiritual promise, and spiritual divers in the pearly ocean of covenant truth. To such, if they read as I read, there

will be portions which, for days, weeks, months, ay, and for years, perplex and puzzle them before God's light shines thereon to give comfort and consolation. Is it then our privilege, as a Church and congregation, to search, dig, and dive beneath the surface of Divine truth for precious treasure, precious jewels, precious pearls? If so, we shall find many perplexing and puzzling things, and we may find one in this verse: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Notice the twist that has been given to this by many who say, As you show mercy, so shall you receive mercy; or, Because you are merciful, mercy shall abound to you. If you are not merciful, mercy cannot be yours. This is the Arminian way of wresting this Scripture from its original and legitimate meaning, which is, "Blessed are the merciful: *because* they shall obtain mercy." Marvellous blessing! Mercy in store for every misery that loved and elect ones feel.

"BLESSED." We will begin by noticing this precious word. Mark you, *Blessed* previous to being *merciful*. If we were first blessed, then we were the objects of mercy before mercy was manifested to us, and revealed in us. Let us for a few moments look at this blessedness and blessing. Turn with me to Eph. i. 3, 4 — a portion which my soul dearly loves, though some of you may be weary with my oftentimes quoting it; but may God grant that the day may never dawn when I shall be weary of quoting it, or ashamed of owning as experimentally my own by the sweet bedewing and teaching of God the Holy Ghost. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." That is a glorious declaration of new covenant truth! Blessed in Christ that we should be holy. Blessed in Christ that we should be without blame. Is it not a mercy that the Holy Ghost by Paul does not say that we should be holy and without blame *before the Church or before the world*? It is indeed a mercy that God has declared His people holy and without blame *before Him*. It is my intention to prove to you that those persons whom God

has eternally blessed, who are holy and without blame in Christ, who are merciful by the mercy of God brought home to their hearts by the gracious Comforter, are looked upon by the free-will, fleshly religious, and *universal charity* gentry as the most unmerciful and uncharitable beings that ever lived upon earth. Yes, this is fact. Such is the corruption of the human mind, the darkness of the human understanding, and the pride of human intellect, that all these, as guided and governed by religion coming from any source but God, are sure to wrest the sacred Scriptures and distort the fair proportions of Divine truth as they appear in the pages of revelation. But let us look into this declaration, "*that we should be holy.*"

"*HOLY!*" What is that? Ah, says the "electro-plated and sugar-coated Evangelical," you must be pure in your motives, intentions, and thoughts, always resigned to every cross, submissive to every loss without murmuring, discontent, or rebellion. Have we any answering to this description here this morning? I know we have not; for those who have been brought to know the blessedness of standing before God, holy and without blame, do not believe in such rubbish for a single moment. Those favoured ones who are holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight are the very persons who daily mourn over their unholiness, impurity, defilement, and devilishness. Yes, these know, like James, that they carry about with them a nature which is "earthly, sensual, devilish." This is God's truth, and not simply mine. But let me ask such, Where is your holiness? Where is your sanctification? Not in your wretched self with all its corrupt affections, imperious lusts, and carnal propensities. Oh, no. It is in that which reigns over all these. See Rom. v. 21: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord." If grace reigns in me, it must have something to reign over in me. Some of the very proper and precise may think they are proceeding cozily and comfortably toward heaven; but the tried and the tempted, the tossed with tempest, know something of that which grace reigns over in the experience of the living in Jerusalem. Read at your leisure Rom. vi. and vii., and you see there the triumphant reign of

grace over the members, dispositions, desires, and determinations of the old man of sin in the new life of those who are holy and without blame before God. "*Holy!*" Where is our holiness? Listen. This is it — "Christ Jesus, of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30.) We have not a particle of holiness or sanctity out of, or apart from, a risen and glorified Christ. He is my Sanctification, He is my Holiness, and only as I am blessed with the knowledge and understanding of my oneness with Him by the grace of His indwelling Spirit do I rejoice in the enjoyment of my holiness and unblameableness in the sight of His Father and mine.

Peter well agrees with Paul in tracing all our blessings up to the grace and mercy of God. 1 Peter i. 3: "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 I find myself blessed indeed. Blessed in Jesus according to the abundant, or, as you read in the margin, "*much*" mercy of Israel's covenant God. Not only blessed in Christ and chosen, but blessed and redeemed by His most precious blood-shedding — blessed and justified on the ground of His finished and perfect obedience, blessed and begotten again *by* the resurrection of my great and glorious Head. On resurrection ground I stand a living member of the mystical body of my once suffering, but now glorified, Lord and Master. As a living member of that body which by joints and bands has nourishment ministered to every part, and increaseth with the increase of God, I must of necessity manifest the same spirit that He has imparted to me. I cannot be experimentally one with Him and not do so. Now let us ask, With what are we blessed? Our adoring hearts "bubble up" and cry out, Blessed with mercy. Mercy flowing through the wounds and blood of a dear Redeemer. We will look well at this word mercy. What is the meaning of it? It is the disposition to deal with tenderness and compassion to those in distress, or concern for the sufferings of another. See! No misery no mercy. In every place of worship in connection with the Establishment of this country there has been this

morning a repetition of the plea for mercy to miserable sinners. I am not prepared, as many foolish Dissenters are, to rail against these petitions as *vain* repetitions. How am I to know that they are *vain*? See! They are *vain* as they fall from the lips of dead professors, but not as they ascend like fragrant incense from the exercised hearts of those spiritual worshippers in the Establishment who love the testimony concerning a precious Christ from the lips of our Battersbys, Rollestons, and other Spirit-taught men. Such petitions are not *vain* repetitions from the hearts of these godly men. *Vain* repetitions are those used by the parties to whom Jesus spoke, and to whom He now speaks through the written Word — the heathen, hypocrites, and Pharisees. Do you call those *vain* repetitions in those blessed hymns where the last line of each verse contains the same truth, ay, the same words? Look at that glorious hymn of dear old Medley, commencing with, "Awake, my soul, in joyful lays," and each verse ending with an ascription of praise to JEHOVAH for His lovingkindness. There you have repetition, but not *vain*. And then we have Psalm cxxxvi.; at the end of every verse we find, "for His mercy endureth for ever." Will that repetition suit you? Yes. Why? Because it is inspired. Yes, it is, but not to you except the Spirit breathe on the truth and carry it with solemn and sovereign sweetness and power to your hearts. We will leave that and look at this — Blessed With Mercy! What kind of mercy is it?

COVENANT MERCY. See Psa. ciii. 17: "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant." This is the mercy of a covenant God to a covenant people, as graciously described in Psa. lxxxix. 1 — 4: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with My mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have sworn unto David (Christ) My Servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne unto all generations." It is this mercy

sweetly experienced that causes the heart to sing in the glowing language of Toplady,

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

Oh, what mercy for me to know that JEHOVAH'S heart of love was fixed on me in His foreknowledge of what I should be amid the ruins of the fall, in the depths of sin and sorrow, and in all the dreary spots of distress, necessity, temptation, and tribulation. He saw all these, yet loved me, and having respect to His covenant, made gracious provision for my deliverance out of every misery. Mercy, covenant mercy, is the joy and delight of my heart. See! In His love He had regard to every sigh of my bosom, to every yearning of my heart, to every groan of my spirit, and to every aspiration of my inner man. Yes, all this is blessedly true; and however strong and firm, or weak and feeble, the pulsations of His own life in me maybe, in respect to each of them He had regard to me in His covenant, and will manifest the same to me in His own time, which is called in His blessed Book, the set time, a time of need, a time of finding, the time of love. God's covenant care and concern over me in all my miseries, are called covenant mercies. God for me in all that He is, in all that He has, in all that He is doing, and in all that He has done, is mercy indeed! Do you believe it? You answer, Not every hour of the day. Well, that does not affect your interest in it at all; for "if we believe not, yet He is faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

GREAT MERCY. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him" (Psa. ciii. 11). Can you

measure infinite space? Never. No more can you measure the infinite mercy of our God. Try to imagine the heaven from the earth measured by so many grains of sand, and each grain representing the sins, sorrows, and sufferings of Zion: you would have a faint illustration of that mercy which our covenant God reveals to His covenant people in putting away every sin, sympathizing with every sorrow, supplying every need, and burying every failure, fall, and folly in the sea of eternal oblivion. Do you not find some glowing of affection in your heart toward such a God as this?

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

IMMUTABLE MERCY. From the first moment that mercy was manifested to me, I have, by my forgetfulness, ingratitude, and perverseness, tested it again and again, yet it is the same mercy still. Is it not wonderful that JEHOVAH, to show forth the depth of His mercy, and the fulness of His affection toward His tried and tempted children, should describe Himself as a nursing mother? "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isa. lxvi. 13). You may see this again in Song viii. 1, where the Church is experiencing mutual oneness in this maternal aspect of JEHOVAH: "O that Thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find Thee without, I would kiss Thee; yea, I should not be despised." Is not this what you and I long for? "O that Thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breast of my mother." That is as my baby-brother, one that I can take in my arms in the presence of company in the house, or before a multitude in the streets, press Thee to my bosom, and hold Thee in my loved embrace without fear of a scoff, a jeer, or a sneer. Every tried child of God, in sweet experimental oneness with Jesus, longs for familiar intercourse and communion with Him at home and abroad, in private or in public, in the presence of our friends, and in the face of our foes; to be able to take Him in the

arms of faith and love, acknowledge our oneness with Him, fearless of what either might think or say. O how blessed it is when God reveals Himself to us as a mother in ties of fondest love and affection. Yet, natural maternal fondness may change, but the mercy of our God, never. "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. 15). Tell me, you who are mothers indeed, Are you unmoved and unconcerned when your child is in danger or distress, or in the midst of influences apparently adverse to his well-being? You answer with all the vehemence of a mother's love, No. Is he grown to manhood? With unwearied anxiety and fond concern you watch His every step, because he is the same lad for whom you travailed in sorrow and distress. What then must be the mercy of our God?" It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. iii. 22).

SAVING MERCY. Not only in purpose by the Father, and in purchase by the Son's work of redemption on Calvary's bloody tree, but by the power of His blessed Spirit, from sins, from sufferings, from sorrows, and from self. See! "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but *according to His mercy He saved us*, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus iii. 5).

"He saves us at first and He saves us again,
Each day full a thousand times o'er.

But the time would fail me to enumerate the varied characteristics of this mercy. It is *Sparing*, as you and I well know. It is *SUPPLYING*, as our grateful hearts acknowledge. It is *SUSTAINING*, as our oftentimes fainting spirits can abundantly testify. It is *SUPPORTING*, as our harassed souls feelingly declare. It is *SATISFYING*, as our hungering and thirsting affections do fully prove. God says concerning His people, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psa. xxxvii. 19).

But how is this mercy revealed? Only through the person, blood, and obedience of a dear Redeemer, does God manifest His mercy, and that by the power of His blessed Spirit in the hearts of His own children. Wherever this mercy is experienced, it will be highly prized, because the necessity for it must have been previously felt. We see this in the various experiences recorded in God's blessed Book. Look at Luke xviii. 10 — 14. The proud and self-sufficient Pharisee *prayed with himself*, not with God, nor in communion with the saints; but the publican prayed with God, for his prayer was Godbreathed and Spirit-indited; he prayed with the broken-hearted saints, for his petition was in harmony with the experience of all the living family. He stood afar off — no parade. He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven — no pretence. He “smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner,” or “to me the sinning one,” as though there was not another sinner under the whole heaven. See also Psa. li.

Let me ask you — you into whose hearts the arrows of the Almighty have entered — whose hearts have been cloven and laid bare by the ploughshare of God's law — you who see and judge yourselves in the light of infinite excellency, and see yourselves anything but loveable and merciful — can you not say Amen to the most awful descriptions given of human nature in the sacred Scriptures? Certainly, with an honest and good heart you can. Let me read for you something of that which the law reveals in the experience of every convicted child of God. Notice Rom. i. 29 — 31, where, in a very black catalogue, we find. “Maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, unsociable, implacable, *unmerciful*.” Read at you leisure 1 Cor. vi. 9 — 11. Now turn to Gal. vi. 19 — 21, where, among the works of the flesh, you read, “Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders.” Come to Eph. ii. 1 — 3, in which you read, “and were by nature the children of wrath” — or wrathful children — “even as others.” If you wish for further proof of this [^]o to Titus iii. 3: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful,

and hating one another." Without the regenerating and preserving grace of God the Holy Ghost such is my state and condition, fit fuel for hell; and were it not for JEHOVAH'S preventing mercy, there I must go. But, what a mercy it is or me to sing with dear old John Kent —

"Preserved in Jesus when
 My feet made haste to hell;
And there should I hare been,
 But Thou dost all things well;
Thy love so great, Thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me."

Yes, determined to be damned, but could not. Wonderful mercy! See Eph. ii. 4 — 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 ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." This is covenant mercy which has respect to misery and not to merit.

But who are the merciful? Without the Spirit of Christ there is no true spirit of mercy in us. As the world judges, we may be kind and considerate as parents, brothers, sisters, or neighbours; but destitute of the love, mercy, pity, and com-, passion of Jesus, what are we? Nothing but heaps of selfishness; for if we cannot have what we think is right, we lack in showing mercy. There may be in us a sense of right or justice which is not associated with the sovereign, unmerited mercy of God, therefore, there can be no manifestation of a merciful spirit. A want of mercy is not always characterized by the manifestation of cruelty. Let me tell you of one display of the want of mercy: It is when one is determined to have his own way at the expense of the feelings and convictions of others. Though such an one may be unconscious of the fact, he is actuated by an unmerciful spirit. Those who cannot have compassion upon the ignorant and

upon them that are out of way, but are ever ready with a spirit of censoriousness to expose the failures and infirmities of others, cannot, in truth, lay claim to that blessing — *merciful*. Let me now point out a few who obtained mercy, yet had strange ways in showing their merciful spirit. Look at that marvellous, and, to unregenerate minds, mysterious Psa. cxxxvi. Mercy at the end of each verse; but judgment against all the enemies of God's Israel, in which Moses the meek man was one with his God. Turn to Judges iv. Deborah the prophetess commands Barak to go out against Sisera. Barak hesitates. Deborah declares, "the journey thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." This was Jael, a blessed woman, one who obtained mercy, and was merciful. Merciful! To whom? Not to Sisera. See! He is asleep in her tent. She took a tent-nail in one hand and a hammer in the other, when, nerved by Divine power, she smote the nail into his temples. There was God's mercy manifested to Israel through the apparent want of mercy in a poor weak woman. Read Joshua ii. and vi. The spies who were sent across the Jordan found on the walls of Jericho a harlot's house with a harlot in it. Why this is our old friend and sister Rahab. She received the spies in peace, which act was one of treason against her king and country. She hid them under the flax, and she hid them under her lies, yet we find her on new covenant ground among those blessed ones upon whom God thrust signal honour, as revealed in that precious testimony of Heb. xi., "These all died in faith." Rahab was a blessed woman, therefore she was merciful, even in that act which devoted her country to destruction. Mark you, all this was a true manifestation of distinguishing mercy, and illustrates that glorious truth, hated by all free-willer, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Exod. xxxiii. 19; Rom. ix. 15).

Come to the New Testament (Luke x. 30 — 37) where, in the parable of the good Samaritan, we have the spirit of the Lord set forth, and also the spirit of all those who are in spiritual union with Him. While at Lowestoft, I saw in a shop window a sermon,

entitled, "The Good Samaritan." I bought and read it. The noted and popular preacher said, "I do not think our Divine Lord intended to teach anything about Himself in this parable, except so far as He is Himself the great Exemplar of all goodness." He was answering the question, "Who is My neighbour?" and He was not preaching about Himself at all. There has been a great deal of straining to bring the Lord Jesus and everything about Him into it, but this I dare not imitate." Well, my dear friends, without straining or imitating, it is my lot to see the bounty, benevolence and compassion of Jesus set forth throughout the whole parable. When priests and Levites, preachers and praters, all fail to reach the case of a bruised and broken-hearted sinner, then it is precious to see, and know, and feel that Jesus, when He journeyed on His Father's business, came just to the spot of my sins, sorrows, and sufferings. This is He who has compassion upon the "weak and wounded, sick and sore." Not anything about Jesus in this parable! When such a statement was made, I believe there was more of the devil than of the Spirit of Christ in the pulpit. Yes! In this precious parable "we see Jesus;" and, as we feast our souls upon His mercy, we are moved by the same spirit and know feelingly what that means, "He that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor" (Prov. xiv. 31). Bowels of mercies are experienced by us and seen on us (Phil. ii. 1; Col. iii. 12), and we are graciously delivered from the doom set forth by James, "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy" (chap. ii. 13).

As we obtain and experience the covenant mercy of our God, we cannot help manifesting a merciful disposition; and as we are in possession of these, we have the pledge that mercy shall be ours in every time of need. While He teaches us to maintain a very select circle in fellowship with Him, He also graciously moves us to a spirit of true liberality. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

May the Lord in His infinite goodness grant that we may experience more and more of His sweet mercy, and cause us daily to manifest in our walk and deportment that we are His. Amen.

XXXIX. "BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
September 9th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

— Matt. T. 8.

HERE we have words of perplexity to some of God's children and words of peace to others. As the blessed Spirit is pleased to reveal their hidden and spiritual meaning, so will the hearts of God's elect, redeemed, and regenerate people find sweet encouragement, and as He is pleased, in the exercise of His glorious sovereignty, to withhold the meaning from their view, so will their anxieties and perplexities abound. The parables and paradoxes of the Bible, the explanation of which is only for the peace and comfort of true disciples, are placed there to increase that earnestness, longing, and vehement desire which characterize the living in Jerusalem — those who are Israelites indeed, in whom, through the gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost, there is no guile. Yes, that is true, no guile in their dealings with Him, no reserve, no crookedness, no double-dealing in their communications and confessions before the mercy-seat, or in their acceptance and appreciation of those covenant

unfoldings which He brings home to their hearts by His irresistible power.

May it be our gracious privilege this morning, in simple dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, so to speak and hear that our profiting may appear to many. It is impossible for a child of God to hide the grace God bestows upon him, as the man in the parable hid his natural gift, in the shape of a talent, in the earth, for, sooner or later, in the order of God's never-failing providence, it must be made manifest. Grace in the heart of an elect vessel of mercy is nothing short of Christ in him the Hope of glory. Throughout the sojourn of our blessed Lord and Master in these wilderness wilds, He sought oftentimes to hide Himself from the multitude who thronged around Him. He went into desolate places to pray and hold sweet communion with His Father, yet, marvellous truth, "*He could not be hid*" (Mark vii. 24). If the Holy Ghost has created an anxious, longing, seeking spirit in any poor sinner, Christ cannot be hid from such in the set time of favour, though the devil, the world, and the flesh will do their utmost to hide Him; and if He has taken possession of our hearts, and endeared Himself in our affections, His grace and beauty cannot be hid, but will be manifested to some poor, weary travelers Zionward for their encouragement, and for that consolation which God in His predestinating providence ordained for them before the world was.

Why do I speak thus? Because my mind has been led to look at the persons mentioned in the text in striking contrast to those who appear on old covenant ground seeking to associate themselves with the Man who was despised and rejected of men. *These* sought for heavenly and spiritual blessings; *those* were eager for earthly grandeur, and were bent upon worldly pomp, position, and power. When Jesus appeared upon earth, very few were waiting for Him. The shepherds of Bethlehem, the wise men from the East, Simeon, Anna, with the elect remnant, were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. It is truly surprising to notice what carnal and confused ideas of redemption many of these waiting ones had. Listen to the

confession of the two friends of Jesus as they walked with Him to Emmaus after His resurrection: "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21). All their expectations had perished, and their hopes blighted with bitter disappointment by the death of Jesus. You see how worldly prospects were uppermost in their minds. Then look at the state and condition of the vast mass of the Jews. They were looking for an earthly kingdom, expecting sensual delights, and on the alert for worldly splendors and perishing pleasures. Left to themselves, and utterly ignorant of the spirituality of the Saviour's kingdom and of His glorious sovereignty, their names were written in the earth, but not in heaven, as evidenced by their affection being fixed upon things below and not on things above.

Our blessed Lord and Master, in the commencement of His discourse on the Mount of Beatitudes, pronounces them blessed who are poor — not those who are wallowing in riches, nor those who are rejoicing in the possession of temporal blessings, bounties, and benefits, nor those who are on the look out for fleshly feasting and carnal indulgence in so-called millennial times. In the spirituality of His mission Jesus came to erase these carnal notions from the minds of His people, and thus His testimony became a savour of life unto life to the spiritually-minded, while it proved to be a savour of death unto death to the carnally minded. If you require testimony concerning the earthly, sensual, and devilish state of the Jews, when Christ was upon earth, turn with me to Matt, xxiii. 25 — 28: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Not very complimentary. Jesus measured not his terms, neither did He take into consideration the feelings of those whom He was faithfully describing and fearfully denouncing. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees-, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead

men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." There is a picture for you of religion in the days of our blessed Lord and Master, and I do not think I shall be going too far in saying that it is a faithful description of professing Christendom in these our days. I speak advisedly when I say, If this be not the truth, then, there is not a more deluded wretch in all creation than myself, nor a more mistaken congregation than ours in the whole of the British isles. If the free-will heresy, which permeates both the Establishment and Dissent, be true, then, where are we? If the "electro-plated Evangelicalism," which is looked upon by so many as God's truth, be true, what are we? May God, in His infinite mercy and goodness, keep us from thinking of such a wretched compromise. It is our blessed lot to look at spiritual and eternal things as revealed in the person of God's dear Son, and carried home to the waiting hearts of His own by the power and grace of God the eternal Spirit. We will now look at the text —

"Blessed Are The Pure In Heart: For They Shall See God."

I. — We will notice that word and what is meant by it — "HEART."

II. — The persons referred to — "THE PURE IN HEART."

III. — The promised blessing — "THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

I. — We will look at that word, "HEART," and at its Scriptural signification. You who have heard Christ, and have been taught by Him, know well that the living children of God are intensely fond of heart-work. Head-work, such as ideas, opinions, views, or even sound creeds, can never satisfy them. No, nor can the doing of the religious enthusiast, which is hand-work, please the tried and exercised children of God. These love and pray for heart-work, the work of the indwelling Spirit of God, by which we are brought to know who and what we are as bankrupts, beggars, sinners, and rebels, at His feet; then, in the revelation of a precious Christ to our hearts, blessing us with unsearchable riches, gracious supplies,

sweet deliverances, and feasts of love. O what a gloriously gracious God is ours! He is with us in all our doubts and darkness, exercises and extremities, wanderings and waverings, and will not, cannot leave us or forsake us.

Now, turn to your Bibles and look at several of the descriptions given of the human heart. When I speak of the heart, I mean the mind — that is, the understanding, will, and affections. Not that piece of fleshly pulp, the organ of blood-motion, which will work unceasingly in the bosom until life shall end. See 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." Turn to Psalm xii. 2: "With flattering lips and with *a double heart* do they speak." In Psa. ci. 4, we read of "*a froward heart.*" Turn to Isa. xlv. 20: "*A deceived heart* hath turned him aside." Listen! "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it!*" (Jer. xvii. 9). You read of Ephraim in Hosea vii. 11, "like a silly dove *without heart*" — that is, without understanding, knowledge, or desire after God; but seeking for pleasure and enjoyment where God had never promised either. See! "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). No peace in the world, no consolation out of Christ, no rest out of the covenant. As I have said to you many times, and may it be my lot to repeat it with my last expiring breath — No peace, comfort, or consolation for my heart one hair's breadth apart from a precious Christ. But man's heart by nature is rebellious, ay, enmity against God, and can do nothing but startup in blind opposition to Him. Turn to Ezek. xxxvi. 26: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." A stony heart! know ye anything of this? I do not ask you, Are your hearts cold, dead, senseless, and lifeless? but, have you hearts beating with just as much life that causes you to feel your deadness? Have you the experience of just as much of the softening power of God's love as makes you mourn over your hardness? Have you the sight of just as

much fruit that causes you to weep over your barrenness? Ah! Well may we look in and sigh,

"The rocks can rend, the earth can quake,
The seas can roar, the mountains shake;
Of feeling all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine."

O what enmity, pride, rebellion, and selfishness is experienced and mourned over by the living family!" The dead know not anything." It is no small mercy to know that such an experience is a sorrowful sign of life. But Satan will suggest, If such be thy state that the good that thou wouldest do, thou doest not, and the evil that thou wouldest not do, is the very make-up of thy existence, how canst thou hope to find favour and acceptance with Him against whom thou art constantly sinning? My dear friends, if this be our lot, how can we expect to stand in the presence of our God with the blessed consciousness that we are in deed and in truth described in the words of our text, "Pure in heart?" Only on the ground of sheer grace; and God in the riches of His grace brings us to know and feel our foolishness that Christ may be our only Wisdom. He will cause His Ephraims to bemoan their rebelliousness that a patient Father's love may be the joy of their heart. The bullock unaccustomed to the yoke must not only be tamed, but he must be brought to realize what true meekness is in the presence of God, and to know what that means, "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). This brings us to notice —

II. — The persons referred to — "THE PURE IN HEART." God's covenant mercy to His sons and daughters can only be experienced on the ground revealed in the second division of the text, and not in the old deceitful and desperately wicked heart. "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. 14). From whence does purity of heart spring? From the impartation of the life of God, and the experimental possession of a new nature in union with a risen and exalted Redeemer brought to light in regeneration. Let us look at this in contrast to that which is dealt out of ten thousand pulpits this morning. Multitudes in this so-called Christian land — this land of Bibles — are incessantly insisting upon that which God has not revealed in His blessed Book — *a change of heart*. You may hear the question asked again and again, Have you experienced a change of heart? To which I invariably and unhesitatingly answer, No. Some of you may ask in surprise, How then can you presume to be a preacher? Because God has given me to experience, not a change of heart, but that set forth in Ezekiel xxxvi. 26: "A new heart will I give you." Ah, my dear friends, no change whatever in the old heart; but God, in accordance with His covenant purpose, and in fulfillment of His covenant promise, bestows a new heart, as it is written, "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40). Nothing concerning a change of heart in God's declarations of covenant mercy. The old heart after regeneration remains ever the same. Deceitful, deceived, evil, foolish, froward, proud, and stony. Incurability is stamped upon every nook and corner of it. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. xiii. 23). Can the heart be changed? No. Will God change it? No. Does He not change the hearts of His own regenerate children? Not for a moment; but He gives them one heart (Jer. xxxii. 39), a new heart (Ezekiel xxxvi. 26), a broken and a contrite heart (Psa. li. 17), an honest and good heart (Luke viii. 15). You read also in Ezekiel xxxvi. 26: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." No change, but a taking away of the stony heart. Where from? From that supreme control and authority which it had asserted and maintained from the first moment of natural existence until a precious Christ

came and turned the devil out, taking possession of His own house, where He must reign until He has put all opposers under His feet. We who are blessed with the experience of His gracious reign and spiritual kingdom in our hearts, are sure that none but He can reign and rule over our obstinate and rebellious wills, corrupt and carnal affections, and blind and stupid passions; and this He will do until the redeemed spirit is delivered from its tenement of corruption, and soars aloft to its native home to be "with Christ which is far better."

Now let me ask you to notice that portion in Prov. xxiii. 26: "My son, give me thine heart." A favorite text with Arminian muddlers. To whom is this language addressed? To everybody? No. The language and address are clear — "My son." Friend, art thou a son? Then thou art so by eternal predestination, gracious adoption, and spiritual regeneration (Eph. i. 5, 6); — God-begotten and Spirit-quicken'd son and born in the Father's house. To all such He Says, He commands, and communicates power to yield willing obedience — "My son, give me thine heart." God does not demand where He has not given. David explains this in his thanksgiving to God when the people willingly contributed to the building of the temple. See 1 Chron. xxix. 14: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? *for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.*" So can we who are born again, say unto Him, The heart which Thou hast bestowed we yield to Thee again. But we may accept this rendering, which will tend to remove all difficulties from the mind of the child of God: My son, give Me thine undivided attention while I reveal to thee My glory, and teach thee of My ways. We may talk about giving God our heart, but it will be well for us to ask ourselves the question, Are we possessed of such a heart as God can accept? See what the Holy Ghost by Solomon says, "They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD" (Prov. xi. 20). "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good" (Prov. xvii. 20). God can never accept abominable things, as He abundantly testified to the Ritualists of Isaiah's days, as recorded in the first and two last chapters of that prophecy. If I am in possession of none other than

my deceitful and froward heart, which is an abomination to Him, He cannot receive either it or me. But, blessed be His name, He gives unto His own people a new heart, upon which He graciously works by the indwelling of His blessed Spirit. "I will give you a heart of flesh" — that is, a soft, submissive heart, upon which He writes His new name, the lessons of His love, the blessings of His covenant, and the glory of His salvation. Paul writes of this in 2 Cor. iii. 3: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Not fleshly, but fleshy; a heart softened by the mellowing power of Divine love shed abroad therein, and susceptible of gracious impressions. Now look at that precious Psalm, the 51st. See how the broken-hearted sinner addresses his God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." Mark! not *this* evil; but evil, and nothing else but "evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." Look at his description of a heart of God's giving: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." What is it that effectually breaks the heart? It is the revelation of the love of a once broken-hearted Christ. What is it that truly softens the heart and makes it tender before Him? It is the revelation and communication of His covenant and unchanging love. What is it that leads and guides the heart into sweet acquiescence to God's mind and will? It is the grace and indwelling of the Spirit of life, the Glorifier of the Father's Christ, who testifies of our eternal union to Him. Then let me ask the question, Do we possess the *new* heart of God's own giving, the *soft* heart of His own bestowing, the *honest and good* heart of His own implanting, and the *submissive* heart of His own leading and guiding? If we can answer truthfully in the affirmative, then we are amongst the blessed who are pure in heart.

"*Pure in heart!*" Purity! What is it? Freedom from defilement; chastity, cleanness, clearness, genuineness, innocence, sincerity. Purity is opposed to improper connections, erroneous views, and

corrupt doctrines. Have we such characters here this morning who are really and truly pure in heart? It does not say pure in head, for I believe there are many of God's poor children who are very muddled in their heads concerning Divine truth, but right with Him in their hearts. Yes, many of them are tossed with tempest upon a sea of uncertainty and know not their certain dwelling place in Him, yet, blessed be God, they are pure in heart. Purity of heart begets searching of heart, and those who, by the convicting power of the blessed Spirit, search for purity in themselves, find naught but sin, depravity, and filth, over which they mourn day by day, and acknowledge their due desert to be "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." These dread the vengeance which JEHOVAH hurls against all out of the Son of His love, and find no true satisfaction but in hallowed communion and intercourse with Him. Am I pure in heart? It is no small mercy to know this. Look at it! Purity of motive. What motives induced you to come here this morning? Were they not the yearnings of spiritual life to meet with your God and Father, to gaze with the eyes of faith and fond affection upon your God and Saviour, and to enjoy sweet communion with your God and Comforter in the assembly of His saints? The poor in spirit come to be enriched, mourning souls to be comforted, hungering souls to be fed at His table, poor gleaners to gather handfuls of purpose, the pure in heart to learn more of His purity. One says, I think I know a little of His love, but I come to learn a little more. Another says, I am oppressed and discouraged because of the temptations and tribulations of the journey, Satan's insinuations and buffetings, and the doubts, fears, unbelief, and indifference which oftentimes beset me, the Spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh lusting against the Spirit — the flesh says, home, the Spirit says, the sanctuary; the flesh says, self-indulgence, the Spirit says, self-denial. Here I am like the ass which was tied to a door, without, where two ways met. All that I want is the presence and power of my gracious Deliverer. Why are we here? It is because grace has triumphed over the accursed indifference which would have kept us from bowing lowly with the gathered ones before the throne, and here we are to testify by our presence at

least that we have none in heaven but Him, and that there is none upon earth that we desire beside Him. Yes, we have no other desire or motive than to see the face of Him we love, to hear His voice, to delight ourselves in Him, to glory in His salvation, and be blessed with fuller apprehensions of that love which dispels all fear, silences all accusers, and renders Satan ineffectual in all his designs against the Church and people of God. What is my desire this morning? See! Knowing some little of what sin is, and having experienced a sweet sense of pardoning, justifying, and accepting mercy, I thirst for deeper draughts of that refreshing stream. Feeling my inability to grapple with the stern realities of life, and the trying exercises of a God-wrought experience,- I long to see my gracious Deliverer and Defender. I look for Him to settle every disputed point as to my sonship. I beg of Him to give me the assurance that I have a heart of His own bestowing, a heart in gracious, experimental oneness with Himself.

"Pure in heart." Purity of heart can only be found in its unsullied perfection in the person of Jesus. Did you notice that expression, "I will give them *one* heart?" How are we to experience the possession of this inestimable benefit, and know that in an assembly like this, there are many persons, yet one heart? By the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the school of conviction, the furnace of affliction, the fires of tribulation, and the vale of humiliation. In these spots, unfrequented by hypocrites and mere professors, the child of God experiences the heat of God's fiery law and truth, producing a melting of heart before Him and a mingling of spirit with the tried and tempted family. Such favoured sinners will hail each other's company, and seek each other's welfare; and though there may be two or three, or dozens, or scores, or hundreds, yet, blessed be God, a precious Jesus in the midst is the heart of the whole assembly. Christ is not only the Head of His people, from whence all spiritual nourishment is ministered to every member of His mystical body, but He is also the Heart of His people from which all Divine comfort and consolation, all true sympathy and succour, flows to those in whom the sufferings of Christ abound. These are the parties who

possess a heart pure before God, a heart which beat for them from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, ay, a heart flowing with love to them before the worlds were framed, in the person of Christ in covenant, and made known in time by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. Although I have, at this very moment, a heart as dark and deceitful as the devil can make it, yet — O mercy of mercies ! — in the face of all this, I have the evidence of the possession of a heart as pure as God is pure, as perfect as He is perfect, a heart soft with the dew of His heavenly grace and benediction, and melted with the flame of His own uninfluenced, invincible, and immutable love.

Those who are pure in heart oft times mourn and bewail their own impurity. Well, my dear friend, mourning because of thine impurity, sorrowing over the seethings and surgings of corruption which seem to deluge the life of God within thee, give blessed evidence of thy salvation and safety in Jesus. Look at the precious and glorious truth which God has given thee for purification, or for the revelation of thy eternal purity and perfection in Christ. "Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17). Go to the Papists and Ritualists and ask them from whence does purification flow, and they will point you to the sacraments and to the fires of purgatory. Poor deluded wretches! Ask the Arminians and duty-faith muddlers, and they will point you to something more than God has ordained, ay, to anything but that which He, in the riches of His mercy, has revealed in His most blessed Word. Then what is God's grand ordinance for purification? See 1 Peter i. 22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Ah, my dear friends, spiritual purification is only in obedience to the truth divinely communicated, truth applied by the resurrection power of Him who, in the revelation of Himself by the Spirit of truth to the hearts of His people, becomes experimentally the Truth to them. Look again: "And every man that hath this hope" — this Christ, this Truth — "in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). You read again in Acts xv. 8, 9, how Peter declares this glorious truth: "And God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness,

giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Who is the Purifier of the heart by faith? The Holy Ghost. As He graciously reveals a precious Christ in all that He is to, and in all that He has for, His sin-convinced and sin-burdened people, the hand of God-wrought faith clings to Him, while the soul flies to the fountain opened in His side, and cries,

"Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

O the preciousness of all-atoning, all-cleansing blood. "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" (1 John i. 7). Glorious truth! It is in the present tense, and ever will be while God has a child upon earth. Cleanseth me from this morning's sins, from my private sins, from my pulpit sins, from the iniquities of my holy things. It is a blessed privilege to spiritually understand the purgings and cleansings as stated in the ceremonial law, especially those concerning lepers in Lev. xiii. and xiv., and concerning the Levites in Num. xix., which beautifully set forth the all-cleansing efficacy of Jesus' precious blood, and the rich provision made therein for the removal of all sin and pollution from the persons of God's elect. O what glory shines forth from that wonder of Divine revelation in Exodus xxviii. 38: "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD." Only in experimental union to Jesus, our antitypical Aaron, can we know and enjoy our perfection and purity in the sight of a sin-hating God. All those who experience purity of heart will meet with *discouragements* before which the heart will melt, *distress* which will cause the heart to sink, *danger* which will make the heart to faint, and *doubts* which will bring on heart fluctuation; yet with all these they shall be brought to the enjoyment of —

III. — The promised blessing — "they Shall See God." When Moses desired to see the glory of JEHOVAH he received the following answer: "Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). And yet we read in Exod. xxiv. 9, 10: "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the. God of Israel." How came this about? Look at the previous part of the chapter, where you will see "an altar under the hill" with burnt-offerings and peace-offerings sacrificed before the LORD, and blood sprinkled upon the people, all speaking of sin put away by the blood-shedding of Jesus, thus causing the living children to sing —

"Christ is our Sacrifice, Christ is our Altar,
Christ is our Mercy-Seat sprinkled with blood;
O, ye desponding ones, fear not nor falter,
Christ is our Peace in the presence of God."

Only in the Person of Jesus can we see God. See John i. 18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." A sight of God in Christ kills the beholder to the world with its joys and pleasures. You see this in the case of Isaiah as he entered the temple and saw the glory of JEHOVAH-JESUS, and cried, "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" (Isa. vi.). How are we to see Him then? By the teaching of His Spirit, by the eyes of God-given faith, the eyes of an enlightened understanding, the eyes of fond affection. God is thus seen in Christ as Father, Provider, and Preserver. This is that paradox we have in Heb. xi. 27, concerning Moses, "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." In all straits and difficulties he was brought to see a providing and preserving God.

"They shall see God." "We see Jesus! "was the delight of Paul's heart. Jesus covenanting before all worlds, Jesus crucified upon Calvary, Jesus communicating in regeneration, Jesus communing in

separation from the world, Jesus comforting in sorrow, Jesus crowned in glory. Blessings ever rest on His dear Name, the saints shall experience His presence when all else shall forsake them, they shall be blessed with the enjoyment of His love, and the sweet assurance of one day in ascension glory seeing Him as He is, and being as He is. This is the joy and delight of living souls in union with Him. See Song ii. 14: "Let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice; for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely." This is the mutual desire of Christ and His Church. Oh, how we delight to see Him our Saviour from sin, our Deliverer from danger, our Friend in necessity, our Vindicator in reproach, and to know that He will be our Companion through a long eternity. It is the joy and comfort of our exercised hearts to know that when faith is lost in sight, and our spiritual understanding is perfected in glory, we shall see Him as He is and know Him as we are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12). That is a precious testimony in Job xix. 25 — 27: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;" or, as it reads in the margin, "*not a stranger.*" What a mercy! God and His people in Christ eternally associated with each other. We shall acknowledge the Friend who stuck to us in all our sins, sorrows, and sufferings, and would not let us go, not even when the floods of our own sins and corruptions appeared to overwhelm us. Then we shall remember the spots where we could sing feelingly and experimentally —

"When the foe desir'd to have me,
Jesus said, ' This sheep is Mine,'
And resign'd His life to save me:
Jesus.' what a love is Thine!
All victorious is its course,
Nothing can withstand its force."

David, though constantly sinning, was pure in heart and free from all sin, and when blessed with the witness of the Spirit, and sick of the

world and its men, he could say with confidence, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Psa. xvii. 15). John, who had seen, and felt, and handled Him, when separated from Him, longed for His company, and with a heart full of joyful anticipation, wrote, "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" (1 John iii. 2). Mark! "Every eye shall see Him ;" but how many within these walls to-day see Him and know Him as your own covenant God and Saviour? It is my blessed privilege to know a little of Him — only a little — as the Revealer of God in all that He is and in all that He has for His eternally loved people; *God for me* in His eternal choice of me before all worlds; *God with me* in my nature from Bethlehem to Calvary, and up to the heights of glory.

"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."

God in me reviving, restoring, refreshing me with sweet views of my living and loving Lord —

"And Thou, eternal Spirit vast,
What love can Thine transcend?
Since Thou Thy lot with me has cast,
Indwelling God and Friend."

By His gracious indwelling we are conformed to the image of God's dear Son, and are blessed with His society, and rejoice in the fact that, though *black in self*, we are *comely in Him*, and, though sinning, yet, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, we are free from all sin. The assurance of this will cause our hearts to sing again and again —

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

May the Lord add His blessing, for His own Name's sake. Amen.

XL. "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
September 16th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

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

— Matt. v. 9.

THE Bible to the infidel, the carnally-minded, and the unregenerate, is full of anomalies, paradoxes, and contradictions. When I speak of the infidel and unregenerate, I do not confine these terms to non-professors, but to all those who are at issue with JEHOVAH in the revelation of Himself through the Son of His love by the grace and indwelling of His Spirit in the hearts of those whom grace has made peculiarly His own, according to the Scriptures. All persons not one with Him in spirit must feel, when reading His Word, or when looking at the mysteries of His providence, a spirit of antagonism to Him and to the very mention of His grace. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). This may appear harsh and severe to the minds of many, yet, you may rest assured, it is God's truth. Yes, His truth as He has revealed it in the Scriptures of truth, and as He

communicates it by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to the enlightened understanding of His elect, redeemed, and living family.

The declaration of the portion which I have read for you by way of text, is an anomaly to the natural mind when seen in connection with God's first message of peace to His people. Let us read it (Gen. iii. 15): "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." There is marvellous sovereignty! Enmity, unceasing enmity, put by God between the devil and His Christ, between Satan's brood and His elect children. Turning to the last book in the canon of Holy Scriptures (Rev. xvii. 14), we read the same truth: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is the Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." If you read carefully the whole of the book of Revelation, you will find more than one description of the two contending hosts under the respective leadership of Messiah the Prince, and Satan. But look at the declaration, "These shall make war with the Lamb." It is with the Lamb as He is revealed in the experience of those whose natural dispositions are the very opposite to His, that Satan and his brood make war. What a miracle of mercy to think that in those, whose natural feelings are on a level with the wolf, the leopard, and the tiger, without the boldness of the lion, there should be the marvellous manifestation of Divine mercy, and the gentleness, innocency, and purity of the Lamb revealed. Against all such who are brought under the peaceful sway of Shiloh's sceptre the devil will make war. This is JEHOVAH'S declaration throughout the pages of Divine inspiration. Look at the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in Jacob's remarkable prophecy in Gen. xlix. 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." What is the meaning of the word Shiloh, the name which Jacob gave to the promised Messiah? It is Peace, and points to the Peacemaker, the Prince of peace — He of whom Paul wrote, "He is our Peace." The sceptre departed not from Judah until Archelaus,

son of Herod, was deposed because of mal-administration of the affairs of the kingdom, then the dispensing of the laws passed into the hands of the Roman Emperor, as the shout of the infatuated Jews at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, "We have no king but Caesar," abundantly testifies. Shiloh then had come. The Prince of Peace had appeared. The choir from heaven's heights had sung so sweetly over the plains of Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke ii. 14). Let us look at the Peacemaker in His first proclamation of God's way of peace. He stands in the synagogue of Nazareth. He reads Isaiah lxi. 12. He preaches. Look at the result! Was it peace in the synagogue? Nay. The first sermon of the Peacemaker stirred up all the wrath of the devil's religious children. Listen! "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong" (Luke iv. 28, 29). Satan's brood made war with the Lamb. The moment He was revealed in His glorious sovereignty, the enmity of human nature, the enmity foretold in Gen. iii. 15, displayed itself against Him, and against the covenant truth He so graciously and faithfully unfolded; and had it not been for His Almighty power in hiding Himself — though in their very midst — they would have perpetrated a breach of the sixth commandment — "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. xx.).

But we will prosecute our inquiry into this subject still further, and may God preserve us from skimming over any portion of His Word, so as to take home to ourselves that which belongs not to us, or to pass through the world quietly in peace with those who are enemies of so kind and loving God. My dear friends, that is not peace, but simply a truce with Satan, an armistice with his legions. Many a poor child of God may enjoy a little fleshly quiet, and hug to himself that certain woe, "*at ease in Zion* ;" but as assuredly as such is the case, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and discontent are sure to follow. Mark you! The children of God are taught to take these things in all their painful and profitable realities, with that

persecution, reproach, contempt, and shame which the grace of God in Christ Jesus ever brings with it; but they shall have the blessed assurance and experience of deliverance from every woe from the first to the last, especially exemption from that which Christ declared: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you" (Luke vi. 26).

Natural religion will say, Surely the power of the Peacemaker will be seen in allaying prejudices, smoothing differences, and removing dissensions and strifes from the Christian Churches. But listen! Another anomaly! "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. x. 34 — 36). See! He who communicates His own peace, reveals God's way of peace through His wounds, His blood, and His righteousness, and gives His own to experience "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," and which keeps, or garrisons, their hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and in the communication of the same, reveals the line of demarcation which separates between purity and corruption, truth and error, the Church and the world, the Spirit and the flesh. The knowledge of this is the sure and certain evidence in the child of God that he must be a man of war until the last sigh escapes from his heaving bosom, and he is safe from the attacks of all spiritual and infernal enemies in the halls of the glorified. It does appear strange that such a message, as "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword," should come from the lips of Heaven's duly-commissioned Peacemaker, the Bringer of peace, the Giver of peace, and the Applier of peace to the hearts of His redeemed. Blessed be God for the glorious revelation that the peace which we, who are separated to Himself, possess, is not a peace with Satan, the world, or ourselves ; for self, as it is manifested in the flesh, "is enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7), the world "is enmity against God" (James iv. 4), and Satan is the archenemy of God and man. See! If Satan, the world, and the flesh are at deadly antagonism

with God, then our being at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ is a sure sign and evidence that we are at war with all three, and shall be as long as we remain on this side heaven's gates.

We live in a day distinguished by the attempts of politicians, philosophers, and philanthropists to bring about a state of universal and uninterrupted peace. We hear much of arbitration as the grand panacea for strikes and wars; but ready talkers generally reckon without their host. What about the declaration of the Master?" And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matt. xxiv. 6). Those who seek for a peaceful Utopia on this sin-accursed and death-doomed earth must meet with miserable failure and disappointment. It is well to seek the peace of all those with whom we are brought into contact; and it is pleasing to see persons striving to avoid strikes and to allay differences between class and class; but it is the mercy of the Spirit-taught ones who worship a covenant God within these walls to know no class distinction here. As spiritual children, and not as carnal, we know nothing whatever of those societies and sects, political and ecclesiastical, the existence of which is a prolific source of envy, hatred, jealousy, malice, uncharitableness, and blood-shedding. Our life is "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 11). It is remarkable as we look at these two words, barbarian, Scythian; in the barbarian we can see the Turk, and in the Scythian we can see the Russian. But while there are those who, in the name of religion and philanthropy, foment and perpetuate the hatred and animosity of race against race, we who are taught of God to love one another, acknowledge not those accursed distinctions which harrow up the enmity of the Russian against the Turk, and the Turk against the Russian. No! As we are brought into the rich realization of our covenant oneness with the God of peace in the person of the great Peacemaker, we acknowledge nothing of this. But why do I speak thus? Because from a child I have studiously watched the earnest efforts of well-meaning but misguided men to

secure peace among the nations, which have all ended in confusion, blood, and smoke. The Exposition of '51 was to be the means of working wonders in the earth, bringing Russians and Turks to embrace each other, and causing the Frenchman to kiss the German, and the German to hug the Frenchman with fraternal delight; Yes, and to come a little closer home, we were to see the end of all the enmity manifested by the Celt against the Saxon, and the Saxon against the Celt. Well, does this state of things exist? Only in the future of this world's history, and that nowhere but in the disordered imaginations of those whom God has given over to a mind void of judgment. These are solemn realities, my dear friends, and if in our right senses, we cannot for a single moment controvert them. But let us away from this to the contemplation of that undisturbed and uninterrupted peace which JEHOVAH has revealed in the Son of His love, and brings home to the hearts of all those whom He has made one with Himself in His counsel and covenant of peace. Look at the text —

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS: FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD."

Who are the peacemakers? By nature they are all peace breakers, possessing the spirit of him whose slaves they are, and under whose authority they live, and move, and act. Their natural disposition is manifest in every look, word, and act of their walk and conversation. Look at it! "ENMITY AGAINST GOD" (Rom. viii. 7). This is true of the natural state of every elect vessel of mercy —

"At peace with hell, with God at war,
In sin's dark maze they wander far,
Indulge their lust, and still go on
As far from God as sheep can run."

Turn to Col. i. 21: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." Let me just give you a hint here. Search your Bibles

through, and see how many places you can find where the word "*reconciled*" has any reference to God, or to any change in His disposition toward His people. You cannot find one, for He rests, is silent, or unchanging in His love. This portion was written to remind the Colossian saints what they were by nature — "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." Read with me Rom. v. 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." What a glorious truth! Reconciled enemies. Here a solemn question arises in the spiritually enlightened mind — How has this reconciliation been brought about? A God all purity, and sinners all corruption; a God all love, and aliens all enmity brought together in peace, of one mind, heart, and spirit! All by JEHOVAH Himself, according to His own covenant purpose and grace in Christ Jesus before the worlds were framed; by God's ever-blessed Son in the performance of His covenant engagements, suffering in His people's stead, and working out a righteousness equal to all the demands of God's law, His infinite justice, and consummate holiness; by the grace and power of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts of elect and redeemed sinners, giving them to experience a saving interest in the counsel and covenant of the Father, and in the atoning and reconciling work of Zion's Redeemer and Deliverer.

See! The fulness of the time had come when the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the salvation of elect sinners must be revealed. Shiloh came — the Holy Child Jesus was born in Bethlehem; angelic hosts heralded His advent, and "a very small remnant" welcomed Him as the Peace and Consolation of Israel. From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, in sighs, groans, sufferings, blood, and death, He met and satisfied the wrath of a sin-hating God. Mark that expression! The wrath of a sin-hating God. How was this appeased and satisfied? Only by the suffering due to sin being endured by the sinner or his Surety. In Jesus we see our Divinely-appointed Surety, the sinless Representative of His eternally-loved people, the Elect Brother of all His elect brethren. As the bruised Bridegroom of His bride, and in the manifestation of His eternal

relationship to her, He endured all the anger, fury, indignation, and wrath of JEHOVAH, until He cried in triumph, "IT IS FINISHED!" Then, sin was put away, death was abolished, the grave was despoiled, hell, in hell, was laid low, and Satan, in his designs against the Church of God, was everlastingly frustrated. Justice was satisfied. Holiness was maintained. All the attributes of JEHOVAH harmonized in the person of Jesus, in the everlasting salvation and eternal glorification of the whole election of grace. A word of explanation may be necessary here, for I remember the time when I was ever ready to catch at anything I thought was inconsistent in the preaching, and make the preacher an offender for a word. The question may be asked, Against what is the wrath and indignation of God manifested? I answer, Not against a single soul for whom Christ died, but against that which is contrary to His nature — SIN. Mark you! Though God loves His own with an everlasting love, He hates and abhors the sins which they commit. In His marvellous sovereignty, unknown to many, and at the declaration of which many of God's poor, timid children shudder, He makes the very sins they commit, as they are revealed in their heinousness and abominable nature, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to be the means of their approaching His throne of grace, to receive from His gracious lips that forgiveness which flows so freely from His heart of eternal and unchanging love.

O, what a marvel of marvels! A precious Christ in His blood-shedding, His forfeiture of life for His people, bringing the eternal, unceasing, and uninterrupted peace of God to the hearts and understandings of poor, weak, and rebellious sinners such as you and me. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20). This question is often asked — Have you made your peace with God? To which I invariably answer, No. From the moment when God first revealed to me His own sweet peace established in His everlasting, well-ordered, and sure covenant, secured by the wounds, blood, and obedience of Jesus, and made mine in the application thereof to my soul by the Holy Ghost, from that moment to my dying breath I must treat such a God-dishonoring question

with the abhorrence it deserves. Peace with God is the work of my great and glorious King, my loving and affectionate Brother, my kind and compassionate Saviour. Look at Eph. ii. 14 — 17: "He is our Peace.... so making peace. . . . came and preached peace." *Our Peace*, not only in the enduring of the sufferings we so richly deserved, but in providing for us a perfect, pure, and unsullied obedience, in which the Father looks upon us with ineffable delight and unceasing satisfaction. Nothing short of a perfect obedience will satisfy a perfect God, and in the obedience of Jesus to His Father's law, in the acquiescence of Jesus to His Father's will, in the submission of Jesus to His Father's authority, from the first sigh of His infant soul to the last groan of His agonized spirit, there was perfect oneness with the mind, will, purpose, and pleasure of JEHOVAH. No flaw, no defect, no hesitancy, no wavering, no, not in the slightest degree. Each pure emotion, kind look, gracious word, sorrowful sigh, and sympathetic tear conspiring to give glory to the Father in that which I could never give — a perfect righteousness given by a perfect man.

But there is something yet vastly more precious than this. -What is it? See! In the shedding of His most precious blood, in the accomplishment of His glorious righteousness, Christ Himself became the Righteousness of His people. Mark this well. I have no righteousness apart from the person of my once suffering and obedient Lord and Master. I may preach up imputed righteousness, and talk much of what Jesus has done, but if there is not the blessed assurance that He is my Righteousness, that He is my Peace, that He is my All in all, my confidence will be weak, my comfort will be small. God has made Him to His people, Righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30), and makes this to them an experimental and gracious reality. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;" (Jer. xxxiii. 16). See 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He hath made Him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Will that do for you? I not only stand before the face of the Father in a righteousness

Provided in the obedience of Jesus, but Jesus Himself, my Lord and my God, whose I am, and in whom I have stood in eternal relationship with the Father from before all worlds, is *my* Righteousness, and will be when all worlds have passed away, and God in Christ is All in all. Now turn over to Isa. xxxii. 1: "Behold, a King shall reign *in righteousness*, and princes shall rule in judgment." Look at the 17th and 18th verses: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Some poor tried pilgrim says, I do not experience that. My dear friend, thy lack of enjoyment alters not the fact; the peace of thy God can never be disturbed, nor His quietness concerning thee ever be broken. When thou art tossed with tempest and not comforted, when thy poor heart sinks within thee through the temptations and assaults of Satan, when little faith is ready to give up the ghost, and fainting hope ready to expire amid the stench of thine indwelling corruptions, even then He blesses thee with a gracious lift, and the cry of thy heart is, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa. xxxviii. 17). Sins gone, and the righteousness of the God-Man thine. Marvellous grace! God, one with thee throughout eternity. Man, one with thee through all thine infirmity.

"When o'er thy head the billows roll,
And shades of sin obscure thy soul;
When thou canst no deliverance see,
Yet still this Man thy Peace shall be."

"*Blessed are the peacemakers*" Who are they? Well, when I look at any title given in God's blessed Word to the Lord Jesus Christ, I can see that that title belongs in a mysterious manner to the Father and to the Holy Ghost, and belongs also to every living child of God. This may not appear so to some of you ; but as assuredly as you belong to Him, it will be revealed to you and in you, sooner or later, in its

preciousness and power. I can see God the Father a Peacemaker in purpose, God the Son a Peacemaker in purchase, and God the Holy Ghost a Peacemaker in power. I can also see that living souls brought into vital union with the covenant Three, in God's own good time, and in the spot which He has designed for them, are peacemakers too. But when we speak of peace, we are not to be led away with the fond idea of a truce with Satan, the world, and our own wretched natures. Just look at those who talk so loudly of universal charity, and are persistent in their efforts to bring about peace and good will amongst all mankind. What, is the instrumentality put forth by these? Not God's truth, for their very endeavours are at issue with Him, and contrary to the teaching of His most Holy Word. In the beginning He declared He would put enmity between the two seeds. By the flood He demonstrated His will in this respect. In Egypt He said to Pharaoh, "But I will put a division" (margin — *redemption*) "between My people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be" (Exodus viii. 23). Israel was typical of God's people throughout all time. When at war with the Egyptians, God fought for them. When at war with Amalek, God fought with them, when in Joshua we see a lively type of Jesus the Captain of our salvation. Carried away into Babylon, we see in type the world opposing God's Zion, yet His Spirit remaineth with all true Zionites, and goes with them, and in them, whithersoever they are led or driven. In all these we have revealed to us the distinction irrevocably put between the elect and the reprobate, the redeemed and the unredeemed, the children of God and the children of the devil (1 John iii. 10). It is solemnly true of each of you within these walls this morning, you are either elect or reprobate, redeemed to God by precious blood or unredeemed and the slave of Satan; there is no middle course, no neutral ground. In hearing this some may cry out, Very injudicious! Very injudicious! To which I answer, May I be increasingly injudicious, for by such statements, hundreds of God's children have been roused, found out, and experimentally saved.

Peacemakers! Who are they? The Holy Ghost by Isaiah and Paul describes those in the forefront thus: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Isaiah lii. 7; Rom. x. 15) — those whom God teaches, qualifies, commissions, and sends forth with His own message of peace, and speak not "a vision of their own heart," but declare God's mind concerning His Christ, His salvation, His peace, to the election of grace. This is carried home by the Holy Ghost to the hearts of those for whom it was designed: thus, ministerially and testimonially, God's own sent ministers are peacemakers. But we come a little closer home. Peacemakers! Where do they live? If we judge after the flesh we shall fail to discover their dwelling-place. See! A little company sat down with our blessed Lord at the institution of His own supper. Sounds of contention were heard, and signs of strife were manifest. Luke xxii. 24: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." That spirit has not ceased to exist in the living Church of God, for amongst those who are near and dear to Him, who love to sit at His feet and enjoy His blessed company, drink in His words of grace and looks of love, the devil is sure to appear and make grace itself the cause of contention and strife. I have found persons blessed with deep experiences and blessed revelations, so-called, soaring far away from their elect and redeemed brethren, and displaying with no small amount of spiritual pride the experimental great I. O my dear friends, may you and I be taught what that means,

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

Blessed position! Precious privilege! Sitting at the feet of Jesus, waiting His bidding to serve the feeblest child in His family. See! He speaks to His contentious disciples: "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?"

is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."
What a glorious sight! The great King-Shepherd Stooping to serve

the weaklings of His flock. Blessed with so gracious a sight, and having drunk in of His Spirit, we are willing to be anything or nothing at His command, for His glory and for the consolation and peace of His people.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James iv. 1). Mark! James is writing to the saints. Ah, oftentimes when a poor child of God is left to himself, he is like a hedgehog turned inside out; for if he cannot fight with another he will turn in upon himself, until God, in the riches of His grace, blesses him with the sweet experience of His peace which passeth all understanding, and which flows through the wounds, blood, and obedience of a precious Christ. When we look at the black catalogue of the works of the flesh, we find associated with the blackest crimes and the filthiest actions the sin of being a busybody in other men's matters. What think you of that? I think it is too practical for restless Arminians, and for clear-headed and cold-hearted Calvinists whose religion is made up with fighting against Arminians. If we have the life of God in us, it will not be manifest so much in fighting with the goats as in feeding with the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock in the green pastures of Divine revelation and covenant favour. Is it not remarkable that Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude should write so much to the elect of God in reference to bickerings, contentions, dissensions, and strifes? And is it not amazing to see the Churches — ay, free-grace Churches too — eaten up, scattered and peeled with this evil? Lordly deacons oppressing the pastor; injudicious pastors pelting the people. Cliques in the congregation hostile to each other. Well might the Churches listen to the words of Paul — "There are contentions among you" (1 Cor. i. 11). Again, "For there must be also heresies (margin — *sects*) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 19). What is the manifestation of the Church's and God's approval of an elect, redeemed, and regenerate sinner? When such are found abiding by the stuff, clinging thereto through evil report and good report, and blessed with a spirit to hold by the covenant verities of

the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in the face of the combined onslaughts of hell, and earth, and self.

Now turn with me to that precious testimony given in Psalm cxxii. t5 — 9: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." Here are the peacemakers. These are not the praters and prattlers about every grievance, to the annoyance of the peaceably disposed in Jerusalem; but those who are brought down in true humility before a sovereign God to breathe out their soul's desires and longings for the peace of the community in the midst of which a covenant God is glorified, a precious Christ is exalted, the Holy Ghost is honoured, and poor sinners are taught to experience their worse than nothingness, and that soul prosperity which is found alone in Christ. "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." O may that be the aspiration of every redeemed and regenerate sinner who treads these courts — courts hallowed by the sighs and the sorrows of those who were found here in times long past, who were quickened into spiritual life, and who now in the heights of glory enjoy the presence and company of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them, according to the precious language of dear old Joseph Irons,

"Hark! how the glorious hosts above
 Around the great JEHOVAH'S throne,
Enjoying His eternal love,
 The Author of their glory own;
Without a jarring note they sing,
'Salvation to our God' and King."

Peace! I thank my God with fear and trembling that for the last fortnight or three weeks He has blessed me with so much of His own sweet peace, through the revelation of a precious Christ to me, that I would not part with for ten thousand worlds. But, from the third heaven of spiritual privilege and Divine communion, the favoured child must descend to encounter the buffetings of Satan and the rankling of the thorn in the flesh. Well, blessed be the name of our

gracious Deliverer and Defender, the descent from the bright slopes of Zion to the dingy vale of Meshech, is in His gracious hands. "Peace be within these walls" where heart blends with heart, and spirit mingles with spirit in the thorough renunciation of self and in the rich experience of the power, preciousness, grace, glory, and sovereignty of Him who was once for us "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Let us read the whole of that precious portion, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companion's sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good."

Now look at Rom. xiv. 17: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Where is this kingdom? "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21). Where is this righteousness? "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom viii. 4). Where is this peace and joy? "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 13). In the possession of blessings so rich and rare the peacemaker becomes a peacemaker. His delight is to think and speak of God's thoughts of peace (Jer. xxix. 11), God's covenant of peace (Ezek. xxxiv. 25), God's counsel of peace (Zech. vi. 13), and to experience the power of that covenant command — "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in .one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. iii. 15). The prayer of such for the people of God is, "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thess. iii. 16), while the practice will be, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 18 ; Eph. iv. 3). Just for a moment look at 1 Thess. iv. 11: "And that ye study to be quiet and do your own business." It is a very blessed business to be a peacemaker. Very blessed to "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Very blessed, as the Spirit gives us utterance, to speak of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Blessed peacemaker!

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Blessed with the forgiveness of all transgressions, the covering of all sin, the non-imputation of all iniquity, and the possession of an honest spirit before God. Blessed with communion and fellowship with the friends of Jesus, and the sweet earnest of uninterrupted association with Him up yonder. *"For they shall be called the children of God"* The words *"they shall be called"* are equivalent to *"they shall be."* You will see this is the comparison of a few passages in God's Word. Compare Gen. xxi. 2 — "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" — with Rom. ix. 7, 8. Compare again Matt. xxi. 13 — "My house shall be called the house of prayer" — with Luke xix. 46 — "My house is the house of prayer." Again, 1 John iii. 1 — "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" — with John i. 12 — "But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God." *"To be called"* and *"to be"* are one and the same in God's mind. So when Christ says in the passage before us, "they shall be called," He really means *"they shall be the children of God."* How? By eternal predestination, gracious adoption, and spiritual regeneration. When? Called, owned, and acknowledged by Him in regeneration when the lisplings of the child are heard before the mercy-seat, when the confession of sin and shame is heard from the far country, when locked in a loving Father's embrace, when seated at the Father's table, and when blessed with spiritual association with weary pilgrims whose hearts are warmed with their godly conversation. May it be your lot and mine to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him who is the Peace of His people and their glory to eternal ages. Amen.

XLI. "BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH
ARE PERSECUTED FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
September 28th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

— Matt. v. 10 — 12.

THE natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of J- God: for they are foolishness unto Him; neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). This declaration of Paul to the Corinthian Church is true in respect to each of the evidences of spiritual life and those gracious blessings of the everlasting covenant conferred by JEHOVAH upon all those in grace-union to the Lord Jesus Christ during their time-state here upon earth. These evidences of spiritual life are the very opposite to the desires of our wretched nature, ay, the very opposite to what you

and I as living members of the mystical body, when left to ourselves, would choose as our lot. But it is our mercy to know that the choice and disposal of our lot are not with us. They are in better hands, according to the declaration of Solomon, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Prov. xvi. 33). What is this lot? All God's people with all that concerns them for time and eternity. What is the lap? It is the bosom of the great and glorious Surety of the covenant. Look at that! All the persons, blessings, mercies, and concerns of the whole election of grace cast into the bosom of our most glorious Christ, the whole disposing thereof in His gracious hand, and the application of every blessing, with the experience of every mercy, according to the sovereign will of the Lord the Spirit. Not anything can happen by blind chance; and whatever comes, whether painful or pleasant, is all right. This may appear, to wavering and unstable minds, a rash and reckless assertion; but to those with whom the secret of the LORD is, and who are blessed with gracious lifts into the glorious altitudes of the covenant, can sing, and sing sweetly too,

"Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker'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."

This is the great and glorious One who manages all things for His children. Blessed be His holy name, He performs all things for them and all things in them, and each child of His who is brought to survey each day's history in the light of His excellencies and perfections, can well say with a grateful and bounding heart,

"He manages my mean affairs."

O what a blessed privilege it is to know, and feel, and sing with spiritual appreciation,

"Our lives thro' various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thine eternal thought moves on
Thine undisturbed affairs."

These are not mere doctrinal statements, but precious experimental realities wrought in the hearts of living children by the grace of God the Holy Ghost. This is true, practical Christianity, found oftentimes at the mercy-seat, bowing lowly in due submission to a loving Father's will and authority; and whatever is mysterious in His acts, difficult in His Word, or perplexing in His spiritual dealings, is brought to Him in child-like confidence for explanation. He graciously deigns to be our Teacher, and "Who teacheth like Him?" (Job xxxvi. 22). We who are sound Trinitarians love to behold the Divine Three in active operation in each blessing conferred upon the children of the living God, and we are blessed in knowing the Father as our Teacher (John vi. 45), the Son as our Teacher (Matt. v. 2), the Holy Ghost as our Teacher (John xiv. 26). Here are the Teachers of whom Isaiah declared to waiting Zion, "Thine eyes shall see thy Teachers." By these, infallible truth, covenant truth, eternal truth is revealed, brought home, and applied to the heart of every elect vessel of mercy. It may be that some tried and timid child of His is saying, That is taking a position vastly higher than I experience. Wait a moment, my anxious friend; we will not question thy experience, but seek to know the will and promise of the Lord in those words, "He shall teach you all things; He will guide you into all truth." This is a marvellous promise to the anxious and trembling children of God. He will teach them all things that are necessary for them to know in this time-state. It makes my heart "bubble up" with thankfulness and gratitude to know that all truth necessary for my spiritual education shall be communicated to my understanding by the blessed Spirit, who has held Himself responsible, and bound

Himself, by the most solemn obligations, to reveal that in me by which the eternal glory of JEHOVAH should shine forth, and His infinite wisdom be demonstrated through our ignorance.

Paradoxes and puzzles abound in God's most Holy Word. They are seen, felt, and known in the Beatitudes. Poor, yet blessed; mourning, yet blessed; oppressed, yet blessed; hungering and thirsting, yet blessed; persecuted, yet blessed. Now, according to our natural reason and our ideas of right and wrong, this cannot be true. Yet from the lips of Him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, from the heart and mind of Him who is the Wisdom of God, these startling anomalies, these wonderful incongruities are declared.

"BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE."

For a short time let us look at the word *persecuted*. What does it mean? Its simple meaning is to chase or pursue, so as to injure, vex, or afflict. Like the avenger of blood pursuing the manslayer, or the beast of prey chasing the hart that pants for the water brook, or the hawk that persecutes (that is the word) the innocent and timid dove. Yes, to persecute is to annoy, to oppress, to tease, to tantalize, to torment without a just cause. Let me ask, Which of us with the right use of our reason, independently of the grace and guidance of God's blessed Spirit, would come, to such a conclusion as that found in the words of the text? But, mark you, it is a painful and profitable revelation of Christ to His disciples. Let us now look at the causes from whence this persecution proceeds. Turn to John xv. 16: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore

the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you." He as much as says to them, I know how forgetful you are. Yes, and we are forgetful when we murmur and repine at the persecutions and revilings we are called to endure; but as assuredly as He has said, "Remember the word that I said unto you," He will see to it that the covenant Remembrancer is at hand to bring His sayings to the remembrance of His forgetful disciples. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." The confession of union to the Lord Jesus Christ, and oneness with Him in the Father's eternal choice, is a sure sign of the world's hatred, and of persecution from its hands. But mark this well. As the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh spoke these truths home to the hearts of His disciples, so will the blessed Spirit communicate the same to every elect and redeemed child whom He graciously calls and quickens from death unto life. As this is communicated to the heart, there will be an assimilation or blending of the mind with that of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. You will see this if you will turn to 2 Tim. iii. 12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Notice that. It is not all that live godly; but *"all that will live godly."* I believe there are those who do live godly, while there is little or no persecution to them, because *the will* to live godly is not manifest to the world. The moment the will of a sovereign God is revealed in us, and our election, redemption, and regeneration are known to the world, persecution is sure to arise. Hence the declaration of the Holy Ghost by Paul, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Yet, the persecuted are all safe and secure. From whence does their security spring? From the everlasting love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; from JEHOVAH'S sovereign appointments, irrevocable decrees, and covenant arrangements; from the eternal election and unconditional predestination of the persecuted ones to life and glory by Christ Jesus. Wherever these glorious realities are known, felt, and acknowledged, persecution is

sure to abound. See! You may live soberly, righteously, and honestly, and no persecution attend you; but the very moment you dare, by the grace of God bestowed upon you, to acknowledge and declare His sovereignty over all things in heaven, on earth, and in hell, and His right to dispose of all creatures according to His own good will and pleasure, without consulting lordly man, that very moment you are marked as an object of the world's hatred, reproach, and scorn. Yes, suffering and sorrow must be the lot of all those who are brought to experience oneness with a once persecuted Christ. It must be so.

Looking at this subject in the light which God sheds upon it, we can well understand how some persons who have a smattering of free-grace truth in their heads, and who will even preach against that lie of Satan, "Free-will to do good," sometimes tone down their testimony, and accommodate then preaching to the whims and fancies of those who hang upon their lips. Oh, my dear friends, may the day never dawn — and I say it from the depths of a heart exposed to the searching gaze of Him with whom I have to do — may the day never dawn upon which I may be left to seek the world's applause and patronage by handling the Word of God deceitfully, toning down the testimony He has taught me, or by measuring my terms so as to be a man-pleaser and not a God-pleaser. Rather than this, let us have war with Egypt, Amalek and Babylon, to the very gates of hell and to the very heights of glory. I speak this, not as a novice, nor as an amateur soldier got up for drawing-room parade; but as one whom the Lord has graciously preserved through many a hard-fought field during the experience of these last twenty years. Satan, saints, and sinners have attempted to make me *mare judicious* and prudent, but all have failed; and I do hope and pray that if plain speaking and honest dealing in the things of God be accounted injudicious and imprudent, let me be still more so. O God, send forth Thy pure and unmingled Word in its separating power, distinguishing between the precious and the vile, discerning between the flesh and spirit, discriminating between a fleshly hope which must perish, and that good hope through grace

which blooms with immortality even amid the wreck and ravages of time. May it be the gracious lot of Zion's worshippers within these walls to be kept from God-dishonoring errors, and blessed with an abiding interest in Him who, having once loved His people, loves them to the end. To the end of what? To the end of all their sins, sorrows, and sufferings, to the end of every temptation, trial, and tribulation, when He will land them safe in His own eternal glory.

We will now for a short time look at a few of the persecutors of the elect of God. In the first place, we see the great persecutor of our glorious Head — Satan. Turn with me to the declaration of God's sovereign decree, unbending purpose, and unchanging promise in Gen. iii. 15: "And T will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." This precious portion, looked at in the light of God, reveals the unceasing enmity of the devil against the Church of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the great and glorious Head. In the fourth chapter of Genesis you see a manifestation of the enmity and a developing of Satan's persecution of the Head through the members of the body. Remember this one thing: Satan does not persecute any child of God because of what that child is in itself, but because of the Christ of God set up in its affections by the sovereign power and gracious indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. God's Christ is the Object of Satan's hatred and enmity. Look at the blood-thirsty spirit of the reprobate Cain against the righteous Abel. Turn to 1 John iii. 9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." That is a glorious truth for sinners such as we are, who are troubled with sin, that hell-born plague of God's living children, and who confess it morning by morning, and evening by evening. Oh, what blessedness to know, by the teaching of the blessed Spirit, that though sinning, yet, in the Person of Jesus our adorable Surety, and in the possession of a new nature, we are free from all sin. Ay, as free as He *h* before the throne up yonder. "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. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not

righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Oh, say some of you *loving* creatures, we thought John was a very loving disciple — one who never indulged in such harsh language, and who suited his words to the weaklings and little ones. Who do you mean by the weaklings and little ones? Very often such terms denote cant and hypocrisy. There are those who are incessantly crying out for the testimony to be suited to *Feeble Faith, Halting Hope, and Limping Love*; yet, mark you, when these *little ones* have the opportunity, they launch out high-sounding words of defamation against both God's message and messenger. I have noticed and experienced this again and again, which causes me to be very cautious when I hear persons profuse in their profession of the possession of little graces. God knows it is far from the wish of my heart to wound the feelings of any of His tried and exercised children, but "*a burnt child dreads the fire*" and, having received many a hard knock from such as I have attempted to describe, I am very suspicious when I hear their winnings. But I must proceed. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Marvel not! Wonder not! But here is something at which we do wonder and marvel; the more religion a natural person has, being destitute of the love, grace, and mercy of God, and the greater persecutor that person must be. Destitute of the love, compassion, and pity of a covenant God flowing through the love, blood, and obedience of Jesus, a stranger to fellowship with Jesus in His humiliation, sufferings, and rejection, lacking the spirit of true submission and resignation to the Father's will; I say, the greater the appearance of religion, and the more intense will be the spirit of persecution against those who are called to the enjoyment of solid realities in a covenant ordered in all things and sure. But this is the only religion worth having. With it I am taught that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin for me, that without the obedience of Jesus there is no justification for a sinner so vile and so base, that without the regenerating grace of the Spirit I am

dead in trespasses and sins, and can neither see nor enter intelligently into the kingdom of God.

Those of you who are acquainted with the histories of God's people as recorded in the Scriptures of truth, from Abel down to John, know well that in every instance a persecuting spirit was manifested against them. Does one possess the gentleness of the dove? The hawk will pursue. Does another reveal the guilelessness of the lamb? Lions, bears, and wolves are sure to frighten and annoy; ay, and endeavour to devour. But, devour they cannot. Oh, what a blessed truth it is for you and me to know, by God-wrought experience, that Satan and his brood may chase and persecute the chosen and redeemed flock of Christ, yet they can neither hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. Not a child of the living God, whose feet are fixed on the sunny slopes of the heavenly Zion — not one whose face is turned thitherward, anxiously, earnestly, and longingly inquiring the way — can ever be lost. The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps their hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of Him and of His Son Jesus Christ. The tranquility and quietness which JEHOVAH has in Himself for tempest-tossed and troubled ones can never be ruffled or disturbed; no, not for a single moment.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Let us look at a few of them. Stephen, in his marvellous discourse before the Jewish Sanhedrim, testifies concerning Joseph: "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions" (Acts vii. 9,10). Look at Moses, the meekest of all men upon the face of the earth. He was persecuted by his own people even before his commission was declared. He was persecuted by Pharaoh in Egypt, and by the Israelites from the shores of the Red Sea to the moment he ascended the heights of Pisgah, there to breathe out his spirit into the hands of his God, and be honoured with such a glorious funeral as none ever had before or since. Buried by the hands of his God. Look at the persecution of Micaiah when he faithfully declared the

mind of the Lord in respect to Ahab, and Jehoshaphat's foolish alliance with him. Ahab, the servant of the devil, hated Micaiah, the servant of God, because of his faithful testimony. Every faithful minister of Christ says with Micaiah: "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kings xxii. 14). God-sent ministers cannot speak good concerning every one in their congregations; and because the testimony of the Lord from their lips exposes the hypocrisy of some, and the dead state of others, they must of necessity be exposed to persecution from such. Do not go away and say I have been leveling my shaft at any of you personally. Such is not the case; but if my testimony be from God, then I must be as God's mouth, separating between the precious and the vile — which separation the vile will not like at all. They cannot bear or endure the faithful wounds they receive from the friends of God. See! Micaiah stands forth, and speaking under the guidance and teaching of the Holy Ghost, prophesies evil concerning Ahab. Zedekiah smote him on the cheek. Micaiah the persecuted, bold in his God, foretells the ignominious cowardice and fate of the persecutor. Now notice the case of Jeremiah. On his receiving his commission from God, he received also the assurance that God would deliver him from the hands of his enemies; yet, from the very moment he opened his mouth in the Name of the Lord, persecution attended him; and if we can place any reliance upon ancient history, Jeremiah died at the hands of the persecutors of God's true Israel. With all this it is a mystery of mercy that the children of God, when blessed with a sense of His presence, can sing, amid the fiercest trials, —

"Not upon man is our confidence founded —
 Man is but mortal, the child of a day:
Trusting in Christ we shall ne'er be confounded —
 Christ is our Corner-Stone, Refuge, and Stay.
Rage as ye will, O ye portals of hell,
Safe in the Rock shall the ransomed ones dwell."

Now we must notice the treatment our blessed Lord met with at the hands of friends and foes during His sojourn in this wilderness world. At His birth He was persecuted and chased from lowly Bethlehem by the blood-thirsty Herod. When He opened His ministry as the great Prophet of the Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth, and declared God's discriminating grace and mercy, the religious multitude, filled with wrath, sought to take away His life. What did we sing just now?

"A pilgrim through this lonely world
The blessed Jesus past;
A mourner all His life was He,
A dying lamb at last.

Such was our Lord, and shall we fear
The cross, with all its scorn?
Or love a faithless, evil world
That wreathed His brow with thorn!"

Trace the lives of the apostles as they were sent forth to witness to the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They were persecuted at every step, and every one of them, with the exception of John, met with a violent death.

Now turn to that wonderful book, "The Revelation," not of John, but "of Jesus Christ" (chap i. 9): "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." Tribulation, temptation, and persecution encompass the pilgrim's path to glory. The child of God loves to understand the truth of this book in the light of his own experience, and not defer to the future that which God has designed for the present. See chap. xvii. 14: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." One of the titles given to our Lord is, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah;" but here, in His rejection and victories, He is revealed as the Lamb overcoming all

persecutors and enemies; "for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." You read in the twelfth chapter of the fierceness of the great red dragon against the Christ of God and His Church, which shows forth the intense hatred Satan and his brood ever display against the followers of the Lamb. But here, perhaps, a word of caution is necessary. There have been those who have very foolishly sought for persecution and a martyr's death, as if such were consistent with God's blessed Word. Is it think you? I unhesitatingly answer, No. Look at the case of our blessed Lord when Herod sought to take away His life. By God's warning He was taken away secretly into Egypt. See Matt. x. 22, 23: "And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.*"

When we take into consideration the awful persecutions which have taken place in the name of Religion, it is enough to make a man of common sense, who has a drop of the milk of human kindness flowing in his bosom, sick of the very word. Some of the most cruel, vindictive, and blood-thirsty acts that disgrace the history of the world have been perpetrated in the name of Religion. Look, for instance, at the persecutions the first Christians endured at the hands of the religious Jews, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Religion persecuting religion. No sooner is Christianity a name and a power in the earth than it begins to assert its claims to place and position among the masses of mankind. Christianity became fashionable; but where was the Christ of God to be found? Not in the great congregations except in name. Why, my dear friends, the Christ of God is hidden beneath the rubbish of Christendom in the present day. Christendom! What is it? A huge pretension of that which in innumerable cases it does not possess. Let me tell you that Christendom, with all its sects, schisms, and confederacies, is doomed ; but God's Christ, in union with all His members, will rise gloriously out of the midst of the ruins thereof. From the first working of the mystery of iniquity persecution has raged. You see this in John's third epistle: "I wrote unto the Church : but

Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church." Mark you, that is the very spirit of Popery, for which we have no occasion to go to Rome, or to any of the associations of that awful confederacy against the glory of God and against the liberties of men. Such a spirit is seen in all those so-called Christians who are striving for pre-eminence, place, position, and power, even under that device of the devil, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Those who are seeking for such by godless Acts of Parliament, or by the repeal of such Acts, are identified, wittingly or unwittingly, with anti-Christ, while the child of the living God, under the guidance and grace of the Holy Ghost, in union with the Despised and Rejected of men, can enjoy his high privileges as a citizen of Zion without the aid of Christ-ignoring laws and the uproarious godlessness of St. Stephen's.

The primitive Christians were persecuted by religious Jerusalem and Pagan Rome. The hills and valleys of Piedmont resounded with the cries and sighs of the saints of the Most High who were hounded to death by the blood-thirsty devotees of Papal Rome. But look at our own country three hundred years ago when the children of the living God were crushed under the iron hoof of spiritual usurpers. Come a little lower down in the religious history of this land, and you shudder to witness, even with the mind's eye, the persecutions which the Puritans endured at the hands of the relentless, but "most religious," Stuarts. And now, lest any of those who consider themselves the true descendants of the Puritans should be feeling for stones to throw, let them remember that the persecuted Pilgrim Fathers, who are held up as monuments of piety, as soon as they found their footing firm and good in the land of their exile and adoption, became the persecutors of those who questioned their rules and regulations. Let the hills and dales, moorlands and heaths of Scotland speak, let the spirits of the Covenanters testify, and, Oh,

what cruelty will harrow our very souls! But well may we cry, O Scotland, Scotland! Where is the glory which shone forth in the testimony of the intrepid Knox? Ichabod may be written upon thy pulpits. The glory is departed.

Worldly pre-eminence is the curse of Christendom. Sect will rail against sect, and denomination will persecute denomination, simply for the sake of appearing to be something in the earth. But how blessed it is to be led aside from this into heartfelt union with that meek and lowly One," who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23). It is a wondrous privilege to experience fellowship with Him in His sufferings and oneness with Him in His glory, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth, in a barn, a den, or in a cave of the earth, if need be.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Why are these blessed ones persecuted? For righteousness' sake. Did you notice that which I read for you in 1 Peter iv. 14: "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." And here is a word for the whole lot of us: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." You start at the insinuation that you may suffer as a murderer; but let me ask, How do you speak of people behind their backs? Always complimentary? Mark you this! It is not necessary to lay violent hands upon a person and thus take away his life to constitute murder. Oh, no! Evil-speakers, back-biters, murmurers, and complainers are cowardly murderers in God's judgment. I speak honestly before God, when I say that the Churches are harassed with such pests as these. Murderers are they who stab God's own sent ones in their character, reputation, and ability, who, for ought they care, may be cast adrift on a cold and heartless world to perish there. Yes, and all this is done under the cloak of *faithfulness to the Lord and His truth*. Is this a manifestation of union to the meek and lowly

Jesus? If it is, I don't want it, and I pray God to let us have less of it. See! "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." What is a Christian? An anointed member of the living body of Christ. Mark those words,

"For righteousness' sake." Consider this, in the first place, in respect to the imputed righteousness of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let a man stand up in the faith and fear of the Lord and fearlessly proclaim, that if a sinner is to enter into communion with God here, and into glory up yonder, he must stand — not in borrowed robes, for our God does not lend, He gives, He bestows, He brings, He clothes — in robes provided by Him who is the LORD our Righteousness, then the fleshly religionist will hate him and his testimony too. Look again : "A King shall reign in righteousness." To declare the righteous reign of a covenant God in Christ, that He has all men and things at His behest, that He has a right to take some to heaven and send others to hell, is the sure signal for persecution. You contend for righteousness in doctrine, and heretics will hate you; for righteousness in experience, and fanatics will fight you; for righteousness in practice, and even Calvinists will criticize you. Yes, if God make you upright in conformity to His mind and will in Christ Jesus, backbiters and busybodies, meddlers and muddlers, will be sure to persecute you. Well, you can afford to heed them not. The child of God, knowing his high calling of God and his security in Christ Jesus, can well afford to lie passive in the arms of his Master, while the dogs grow weary of their barking, the wolves of their howling, the serpents of their hissing, and the lion of his roaring. This reminds me of what a man once said to me concerning murmurers and complainers. Upon one occasion he was giving vent to his feelings of discontent, when he was rebuked thus: "See, Jem, my grandfather had a dog which would spend whole nights in barking at the moon when she was shining at the full. The old dog has been long dead, and the moon shines on still as clear and bright as ever it did." So, blessed be God, will the moon, the Church, which shines in the brightness of her

glorious Sun of Righteousness, continue to shine in the glory of the Father's kingdom when all the dogs have ceased their barking.

O what a glorious high calling is that of the child of God! Blessed with all spiritual blessings and in possession of a kingdom which cannot be moved. It is blessed, when men revile, to experience the sympathy of Jesus. Blessed, when men and devils persecute, to experience His preserving power. Ay, and we are blessed, when men say all manner of evil against us falsely, because we have a Friend at court who opens His mouth for His poor dumb children, pleads their cause, and maintains their right "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." It can't be done, cries blind unbelief; but precious, God-wrought faith does it. Look at the apostles after they were imprisoned and beaten for Christ's sake. Acts v. 41: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." Look at Paul and Silas thrust into the inner prison with their feet fast in the stocks. Acts xvi. 25: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." Look at our martyred forefathers, especially dear old Latimer as he encouraged his suffering companion in tribulation: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." How blessed it is for us to know that the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus, communicated to us by the power of the Holy Ghost, enables us to look calmly on when storms of distress and persecution rage horribly around us. Still further blessed to know, that if I am one of Christ's doves, when the hawk comes swooping down, it is only to chase me to His breast; if I am a lamb of His flock, the lion's roar will but frighten me to His loving bosom. When the enemy and avenger pursue, it is only that I may fly to the embrace of my God, and experience the glorious fact that Jesus is "my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort" (Psa. lxxi. 3). O, what blessedness! Sheltered by atoning blood. Sheltered by justifying righteousness. Sheltered by all-prevalent intercession. JEHOVAH JESUS my Shield and my exceeding Great Reward.

XLII. THE DEVIL, THE DOG, AND THE DELIVERER

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,
October 7th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

— Matthew xv. 22.

A STRIKING contrast is set before us in this very blessed and instructive chapter. The first part exposes the deceitfulness and depravity of man's heart, the second part reveals the love and affection of the heart of God's Christ. To superficial religionists, those who are not taught by the Spirit of the living God, these truths will be hateful. To ceremonialists, sacramentalists, and Ritualists, these are words of withering exposure. The axe of Divine truth is laid by an omnipotent hand to the root of the tree of error, superstition, and outside show. This tree flourished in the days of our blessed Lord and Master, and its fruits are abounding now. It will be for us this morning, in humble dependence upon the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, by the light which He throws upon His own Word, and the spiritual understanding with which He blesses the truly-taught children of God, to see and know

on which side of this picture we are represented. Where are we? Have we our portion with the hypocrites or with those who are Israelites indeed? The Lord Jesus Christ was a discriminating Teacher, and the disciple who has been made spiritually and truly honest before Him, loves to know his state described, though the description may be hateful and irksome to his fleshly nature. See how God declares to Jeremiah that the ministry of the Word should be discriminating and separating: "Thou shalt stand before Me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" (Jer. xv. 19). But here we find a greater than Jeremiah, ay, a greater than all the prophets combined. This is the Teacher sent from God, the Messenger of the everlasting covenant, the Expositor of His Father's will, and the Revealer of the secrets of all hearts. He speaks and hypocrites are confounded. He ceases to speak and those who are in possession of an honest and good heart of His own giving, cease not to ply Him with petitions and supplications. Here you see the difference between the mere professor and the true possessor. The Lord Jesus Christ can never say anything too bad in describing the living in Jerusalem to offend them, while the hypocrites in Zion will be enraged at what they consider to be the unmerciful and uncharitable words which flow from His lips, and from the lips of those who are taught and sent by Him. It is the mercy of those who are brought in true humility and self-abnegation to meet within these walls, and to experience the gathering power of God the Holy Ghost to the person of a precious Christ, to hang only on His grace-filled lips, be blessed with His counsel, and with those comforts which flow from His once exercised and sorrowing heart. It is our unspeakable privilege to see the truths of God's Word in His own light, and to receive them just as He reveals them, without any attempt to make them palatable to our fleshly taste, though the reception of them may scorch up every desire and determination arising from our wretched flesh.

"Oh, to be brought to Jesus' feet,
Though sorrows fix me there,
Is still a blessing: and how sweet

To seek His face in prayer!
Though sighs and tears its language be,
If Christ be nigh, and smile on me."

Now let us look at the contrast which appears in this chapter. From the commencement up to the 21st verse Jesus lays bare the hypocrisy of the Jerusalem Pharisees. Mark that! Jerusalem Pharisees, highly-favoured ones, privileged with all the advantages of the temple worship and service. They could consult the law of God each day, and almost every hour of the day, yet all they could do was to flatter themselves and find fault with others. This is the very essence of Pharisaism, and reigns almost on every hand in the professing Church now-adays. Think a little as to how you would like these titles attached to your names — Murmurers, Complainers, Faultfinders, Busybodies. See! The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." He answered them by asking another question, which was a peculiarity of our blessed Lord and Master. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" This was as much as to say, My Father's Word requires no human exposition or interpretation to make it plain or clear. "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Then, quoting from Isaiah xxix., He said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me." That is a testing word for us. How many of us have been singing this morning with our lips while our hearts have been cold and indifferent? How many here have been singing with a good understanding in the fear of the Lord, even without that glowing warmth and feeling we so much enjoy? Yes, I ask you, and may God Himself answer the question in an approving conscience, How many

of you have been favoured to sing with feeling and understanding that sweet hymn of dear old John Kent, with which we commenced this service?

"JEHOVAH hath said, 'tis left on record,
The righteous are one with Jesus the Lord;
At all times He loves them, 'twas for them He died,
Yet often He proves them, for grace must be tried."

Also that precious hymn of old John Berridge : —

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

How many of us, in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, can give our unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in these precious hymns? He knows I can in the very solemnities of my soul, and that without a shade of presumption. But let us proceed. "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me." Awful state! Awful condition! I was about to say, it is better for such to keep away from the congregation of the faithful; but I will not say so. How can I tell what design of mercy, what purpose of love, God may have toward some whose hearts are now as dead and hard as the nether millstone, and cold as ice itself? It is not for me to sit in judgment, or to speak unadvisedly of such; but I must, in faithfulness to my God, admonish, rebuke, reprove, and declare God's separating truth whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Man's religion springs from the flesh, has wholly to do with the flesh, and ends in the flesh. It is wholly occupied with outward things while the inward and spiritual are

simply ignored. Human tradition is hailed, while Divine revelation is hooted. Beautiful hands are seen at the table; but beastly hearts are hidden from the gaze beneath a mass of fleshly religious rubbish. The head is filled with zeal for outside show; the heart is simply "Enmity against God."

Jesus "called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand." The Lord will see to it that His own taught ones have an intelligent knowledge of Himself and His truth. He addresses Himself, not to their feelings, frames, sentiments, or traditions, but to their ears and understanding. Many are on the look out for *their feelings* to be fed and pampered; and if they are not indulged, their experimental gall is roused against faithful preachers of the Word; and this they call faithfulness and honesty. May God graciously keep us from all such. See! I have come across many in my time who have listened to the preaching of God's glorious Gospel for years, who, when asked a question or two in reference to it, have manifested no understanding in the things of God, and no comprehension of the truth. These appear to drag out a miserable existence, feeding on frames and sentiments, but ignorant of that blessed experience described in Col. ii. 2: "That their hearts might be comforted." There is feeling. "Being knit together in love." Where there is a knitting, there must be a mingling of pain and pleasure. "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding of the mystery of God (the Holy Ghost), and of the Father, and of Christ." You see a good understanding in the fear of the Lord is no mean mercy. "Hear, and understand." What? That Pharisees, Papists, Ritualists, and free-willers all lie when they say that defilement is contracted from without. Listen! "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The Pharisees were indignant after they heard this saying, and well they might, for in it the Lord Jesus Christ conveyed the appalling fact that their praying, praising, and preaching was one mass of filth and abomination in the sight of an all holy and sin-hating God. With the hammer of Divine truth and the rod of Divine judgment Christ smashes the whole superstructure of

ceremonialism, sacramentalism, sacerdotalism, and free-willism to shivers. He plucks up all these noxious weeds by the roots. Make a note of this!" Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." O what discrimination! Do you like it?" Let them alone." Very salutary counsel; but why should He say, "Let them alone?" Simply because of that which I have quoted from the prophecies of Jeremiah: "And if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." See! Take forth the precious, have regard to the precious, preach to the precious ; see to it that the testimony is such that the precious sons and daughters of Zion can feed upon, then the vile will be sure to take offence, because they are not noticed, and according to their deceiving insinuation, sinners are not preached to. Blessed be God, in Grove chapel none but sinners are preached to.

"To understand these terms aright,
This grand distinction should be known —
The' all are sinners in God's sight,
There are but few so in *their own*.
To such as these our Lord was sent:
They're only sinners who repent.

What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so.
New life from Him we must receive
Before for sin we rightly grieve."

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind-lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Peter asks for an explanation. And Jesus said, "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?" Ofttimes we are terribly afraid and greatly anxious in

reference to those we love, who are very near and dear to us by the ties of earthly relationship, on account of the worldly, sensual, and devilish influences which surround them. But think of this — If they had not worldly, sensual, and devilish natures within them, not all the influences that can spring from hell or from the seething masses of corruption around them could ever affect or hurt them for a single moment. Look at the Savior's solemn declaration!" But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." The child of God does not look around to see whom this painful testimony affects, or whose portrait is thus taken in the light of God's perfections. No! He sees himself, and mourns over his indwelling depravity. He feels and groans under the vile lurkings of every abomination and iniquity, and confesses that were it not for the sovereign power of JEHOVAH, these, which are ever on the alert, would break out in open sin and villainy. "These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man." Jesus here directs the minds of His disciples to that which God sees and condemns, not to that which man sees and approves. Now, as we are taught by the Holy Ghost to look at ourselves in the light of His perfections, as He shines into our hearts! Shines *into* our hearts? No! It is truly astonishing to notice the mistakes we are guilty of when quoting God's Word. Let us read the portion (2 Cor. iv. 6): "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." The light of God's lamp not only shines *into*, but it shines *in*. When this is the case we see ourselves just as we are — vile, black, filthy, and we can join with John Newton —

"Father, (since I can hardly bear
What in my self I see.
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy Lord, to Thee!"

The Pharisees came to Jesus to find fault with the outward acts of His disciples, with their unwashed hands, but were blind to the dirty state of their own hearts. It is wonderful to notice how the wretched Pharisees incessantly found fault with the followers of Christ, and how He in every case confounded the faultfinders and defended His own. It is our lot this morning, by the guidance of the blessed Spirit. to have respect to the state of the inner man — to beg of Him with whom we have to do, in the language of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any *way of pain or grief in me*, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24). As we are searched, and we see ourselves in the light of His glory, we are ashamed, ay, horrified; and as we are brought into experimental oneness with the Son of God. and feelingly possess a new heart, a soft heart, an honest and good heart, we are increasingly convinced of our utter vileness and filthiness, and cry to Him who alone can hear and answer,

"Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Now look at the contrast! Jesus, having laid bare the human heart, and fully proved that with all the religion in the world at its beck it is still far from God and deceitful above all things, turns His back upon the clean-handed but hard-hearted gentry which were of Jerusalem. Yes! He turns away from the temple with its services, ceremonies, ordinances, and divers washings, and goes in the way where a poor outsider, with a broken and aching heart, would seek to know the loving heart of a covenant God in Christ. "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." Let me direct your attention to the corresponding portion in Mark vii. 24, which to my mind has been very precious for more than a fortnight: "And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but *He could not be hid.*" Do you think that He can be hid now? No! no more than He could be hid from poor, tried, and tempted Jacob, when he looked into His face, saying, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me" — no more than He could be hid from the three Hebrews

amid the fierce flames of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace — no more than He could be hid from Daniel when He shut the lions' mouths — no more than He could be hid from Paul amid the darkness, storm, and tempest which beset the corn-ship of Alexandria, as described in Acts xxvii. 23 — 25: "For there stood by me this night the Angel of God, whose I am. and whom T serve, saving, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Oh, no!" He could not be hid" from the adoring gaze of the poor widow woman at the gate of Nain, whose son He raised from the cold hand of death. He could not be hid from Martha and Mary, no, nor from Lazarus either, when the command went forth, "Lazarus, come forth!" He could not be hid from His own elect in the set time of favour; but He was hid from those who were engrossed with outside washings, human traditions, carnal ordinances, and religious frippery. "Hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." Why? Jesus gives the only reason. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26). He could not be hid from this hidden one of Syro-Phenicia. With His back upon Jerusalem, and all its religion, He came to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon for the purpose of showing to His own Israel that His lost sheep were not confined within the narrow bounds of one nation, though that nation was highly favoured and distinguished by the name of Israel. He would reveal the sovereignty of Divine grace in proving that in every nation under heaven, that sinner, Jew or Gentile, that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. He would demonstrate the fact that they are not all Israel who are of Israel according to the flesh, that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28,29). See! "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29). Jesus will have His own to know that it is not by the outward observance of commands,

precepts, laws, or injunctions of God's Word, or of relationship to Abraham after the flesh, that their Israelitish origin, standing, and glory are to be experienced and enjoyed; but by the convincing, confirming, and comforting power of the Holy Ghost, the indwelling Teacher and Guide, they are brought to know their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We now come to notice the words of the text: "*And, behold.*" Whenever you see that word "*behold,*" you may rest assured there is something wonderful to be revealed, or, as one has quaintly remarked, "When you see that sentinel at the door, you may be sure there is something very precious within." "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." She did not come to the Lord with hands well washed and beautifully got up; but with a bursting, broken, and bleeding heart. She did not come to tell Him what a sweet time she had with her family at prayer that morning. She did not come to tell Him how glowing and gushing her love had been, how strong and firm her faith was found, or how confirmed and unshaken her hope was. Oh, no! She was like what many of His tried and tempted ones are now, who groan to Him in the bitterness of their spirit, "Lord, instead of peace I have great trouble; there is a devil in the house, and there was a devil of a row in the house this morning." What do you very proper and *pious* ones think of such creatures as these? Know ye anything of such an experience as this? It may be the lot of some who are within these walls now, to groan, not only because there is a devil in the house, but because devils have assailed you in every step of your journey hither. The fervent cry from your oppressed heart is, Lord, do appear for me in that precious Gospel chariot of Thine, and give me in the ministry of Thy Word some words of comfort and consolation for my wounded and bleeding heart. Give me to know, by the teaching of Thy blessed Spirit, that I am one of Thine, and that Thou art mine. Lord, remember my child, the grievously vexed, the devil possessed. Let the untruthful one experience the power of Thy truth, the foolish one

the power of Thy wisdom, the dishonest one the power of Thy faithfulness. Do cause the liar, the wayward, and dishonest one to experience the sweetness of Thy love, and the knowledge of blessed oneness with Thee in the Son of Thy love.

"*A woman of Canaan.*" Not a daughter of Abraham according to the flesh. Not one of the Israelites who were brought out of Egypt to inherit the Land of Promise; but one of those who have been set forth as the representatives of those who should be the troublers and tormentors of God's people throughout all time, as pithily described in that blessed hymn of dear old Kent's : —

"The Canaanite still in the land,
 To harass, perplex, and dismay,
Brought Israel of old to a stand,
 For Anak was stronger than they.
What God had designed they possessed,
 Supported and kept by His hand;
Yet, lest on their lees they should rest,
 The Canaanite dwelt in the land."

God had declared that the Canaanite should be driven out of the land; but here was one brought to know her right to the possession of the land of spiritual promise and covenant relationship. She was a Canaanite after the flesh, but an Israelite after the Spirit. An Israelite, indeed, who, in the face of discouragements, could fall at His feet and own His glorious sovereignty. She was one of the accursed race of Canaan, and, according to the law, "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But see! She is brought nigh to God with a cry in her heart for mercy, and a confession on her lips of the sovereignty of Him whose mercy she sought.

"*Have mercy on me, O Lord.*" Look at that cry; it is intensely personal, though the devil was grievously vexing the daughter —

not the mother. Ah, my dear friends, the misery of the daughter was the misery of the mother. The want of the daughter was the want of the mother. The sorrow of the daughter was the sorrow of the mother. The sins of the daughter were the sins of the mother. The devilishness of the daughter, the devilishness of the mother. Some of you ask, How can these things be? Don't ask that question; for if you know yourselves and are brought to the experience of God's sovereign mercy and covenant salvation, you will see your own sins, follies, failings, and falls brought to light again, to your shame and sorrow, in those of your children. Come here, my friend. Just give me thy confidence for a moment or two. Hast thou a wayward, weak, or incorrigible child? Where hast thou taken thy child this morning? Methinks I hear thee say, In the arms of faith to Jesus, though, through accursed unbelief, my arms are weak and weary. In the bosom of parental affection I have borne him to the mercy-seat and laid him there — not with so many words, nicely-rounded periods, or beautiful sentences, but in sighs, and groans, and agonies unknown to all the world beside. This poor woman of Canaan cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord." What a miracle of mercy! A Gentile dog, one of an accursed race, acknowledging the glorious sovereignty of King Jesus, while the wretched Israelites after the flesh, the Pharisees, priests, Scripture readers, and ceremonialists, hated, despised, and rejected Him. A poor outcast stranger came to Jesus and addressed Him as "Lord," and "Thou Son of David." Was that language suited to her Gentile lips? I answer, No! only to Israelites indeed. But mark! Underneath the words flowing from a Gentile tongue there were the groans, cries, and sighs of a spiritual, Israelitish heart. Look at the titles: "O Lord" — that expresses sovereignty; "Thou Son of David" — that acknowledges His Messiahship.

"My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." You who are parents, have you not those at home or abroad who are very near and dear to you, "grievously vexed with a devil?" On, what a legion of devils distress the homes of God's elect. Here are a few of them. A proud devil, a conceited devil, a lying devil, a dishonest devil, an ill-

tempered devil, a profligate devil. Oh, look at this! A daughter's devil is the cause of a mother's visit to the mercy-seat. It is no small privilege, though a very painful one, to besiege the throne with cries and sighs of parental affection to Him who hears in secret, and graciously leads His wayward children into His own right way.

"But He answered her not a word." Have you been there? I have trodden that ground for days, weeks, and months. Prayers and petitions have been presented, cries and sighs have ascended; yet no answer has been given, nor a word from His gracious lips. Satan suggested that it was time to give it up; but God's work cannot be left half-done. You may depend upon this, that faith repelled is faith strengthened, and prayer unheeded is prayer energized. Blessings delayed, while the suppliant lingers at the mercy-seat, will prove to be for the strengthening of faith, the confirmation of hope, and the increase of love. Sooner or later there must be the rich realization of the truth of this. Let me direct your attention to a few portions of God's most Holy Word, which may tend to illustrate this seemingly strange deportment of Jesus. Turn with me to John xi. 5, 6: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, *He abode two days still in the place where He was.*" Why does Martha's name come the first? Oh, say some, because she was the mistress of the house. There was a more significant reason than that. Martha is often blamed for her busy, bustling propensities; and those who are possessed of a Martha-spirit, do not receive many blessings from God's poor, short-sighted children. Oftentimes the reflections cast upon such are not in keeping with the spirit of the Master. See! The infirmities of Martha appear, but the weaknesses of Mary are withheld from view. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). "And when they had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love Him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged" (Luke vii. 42, 43). "Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus." Martha's name is first in order to show that those of Jesus' disciples who are lightly esteemed by men,

receive special attention from Him. Lazarus was sick. Did Jesus run with eager haste to the bedside of His dying friend? No! for we are told "*He abode two days still in the same place.*" Know ye not that when He came walking on the sea to His disciples, He appeared as though He "*would have passed by them?*" (Mark vi. 48). And who can forget the sweet narrative of His walk to Emmaus with His two disciples, when "*they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further?*" (Luke xxiv. 28). But they constrained Him to turn in and tarry with them. Have you never been in straits when He appeared to notice and bless every one of His friends but you? The plaintive language of Job well expressed your case: "*Lo, He goeth by me*" (Job ix. 11). It may be that some of you poor children of God in those pews imagine that He makes as though He will go further and not stay with you. You have cried, "When wilt Thou come to me?" but He remains in the same place.

"He answered her not a word." Why was this? That the importunate one may be still more importunate, that the praying one may be still more prayerful. But, we may look at this not only in reference to our spiritual experience, but in the every day concerns of life. You whose lot it is to walk the ever-fluctuating 'Change, who grapple day by day with the hard and grasping ones of the earth, in that very position which an all-wise Provider has placed you, and in which He has promised to uphold you, tell me, is it yours, when difficulties, dangers, and doubts press hard upon you, to cry to Him from the very depths of your soul's distress and helplessness? Ay, indeed it is; but somehow or other, His chariot wheels drag heavily, His voice is not heard, His help lingers, and He appears to be far away over the mountains and hills of doubt, fear, and unbelief. But, blessed be His holy Name, in His own time and way He will come; "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" (Isa. ii. 3). It is our blessed privilege, though we may be looked upon as a motley lot, to wait for the appearing of our only Helper and Deliverer, and to watch for the manifestation of His almighty power on our behalf. "But He answered her not a word."

And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, *Send her away; for she crieth after us.*" Why should the disciples urge such a request upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Various are the conjectures in reference thereto. We wonder not at the importunity of the poor woman, for she had a hard case to carry to the Friend of sinners, and one that would stand investigation by the great Searcher of hearts. She cried, and her cry was one of misery. She cried, and her cry was one of pressing necessity. Her's was a God-given necessity, hence her unabated importunity. The disciples were weary with this wail of woe, which caused them to long for the Master to send her away in possession of the blessing she so earnestly desired. Send her away with the assurance that her request is answered, that the devil is cast out of her daughter, and that she will find at home that peace and quietness which her anxious soul is seeking. Think of this in another light. "They besought Him saying, Send her away; *for she crieth after us.*" They did not say, "She crieth after *Thee*;" but "she crieth after *us*." It is an oppressive load for a disciple of Jesus, a preacher of God's glorious Gospel, to find himself in the midst of even an attached people who are looking up to him as though he had the ability to communicate the truth he faithfully and feelingly preaches, or to impart light and love, comfort and consolation, which can alone be done by the sovereign power of the Spirit of Christ. Many of God's children are troubled with this weakness, looking to the sent one instead of to the Sender. I have experienced the sin, the weakness, the folly of looking to the stream for instruction, comfort, and consolation, instead of to the Fountain, "the deep sweet Well of Love." My heart knows what it is to thank God for His own sent servants, from whose anointed lips He has carried words of life, love, and liberty to my thirsty, waiting, and anxious spirit; but He has taught me that not one of His sent messengers, duly commissioned and qualified by His blessed Spirit, is to be lightly esteemed. Hence it is my pleasure and delight to welcome to Grove chapel pulpit those in whom the image of the Master is seen, and in whose testimony His gracious voice is heard. In these words, "Send her away; for she crieth after *us*," there appears to me to be an

acknowledgment of creature-helplessness and a renunciation of fleshly power. It was as much as to say, Lord, Thou alone canst speak the healing and delivering word, we cannot. So it is with all the true disciples of Jesus whom He sends out with His message of love, grace, and mercy. These stand, and in spirit, if not in the very words of Hart, cry,

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore!
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity join'd with power;
He is able;
He is willing; doubt no more!"

God's own sent one loves to see the Father's glory in every word that drops from his lips. He longs for a precious Christ to be exalted in the affections of elect and called sinners, and for the blessed Spirit to be honoured in the experience of all those who hang upon his lips.

"Send her away." It is a marvellous mercy for us to know that neither the weakness of disciples nor the wickedness of devils can influence the Friend of sinners to send one of His poor crying friends away without a blessing. His loving heart embraces every tried and tempted saint with all its sorrows and sufferings arising from sin and Satan, and can never neglect, look over, or discard a single seeking soul whom the everlasting love of the Father, by the condescending love of the Spirit, has drawn to His sacred feet.

Our time has gone, and if He will graciously preserve and bless us until Sunday morning next, we will ask the guidance of His Spirit through the rest of this precious narrative.

To the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be unceasingly ascribed all glory and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

XLIII. THE DEVIL, THE DOG, AND THE DELIVERER.

% Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,
October 14th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

— Matt. xv. 22.

INSTRUCTIVE and encouraging to the spiritually minded and the spiritually enlightened are those wonderful contrasts which I endeavoured to set before you last Sunday morning from this very chapter. They are calculated to lead us to notice the conduct of those who are blessed or cursed with a Bible in their hands. That is a startling expression to some of you; nevertheless it is no more startling than true. The Bible in the hand with enmity in the heart is a curse indeed. A religious exterior with a graceless interior is an awful condition to be in before a just and holy God. Christ in apparent possession of the tongue, but Satan holding full control of the heart. Punctilious in attention to outward appearances, ceremonies, and duties, yet totally ignorant of the "inward washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus Hi. 5). Clean hands and a filthy heart. A pretty skin with a polluted soul.

Whited sepulchres filled with corruption, pollution, and death. A Bible in the hand, a text ready for every occasion, and suitable portions hung upon the walls; but total ignorance of the inward and spiritual meaning which is couched beneath the letter of Divine inspiration, and brought home to the hearts of God's elect by the power of God the Holy Ghost. Such is the unerring description of mere professors given by our blessed Lord and Master in the former part of this very instructive and heart-searching chapter.

As I told you last Sunday morning, He turned His back upon these fault-finding Pharisees, hard-hearted hypocrites, ready talkers, and apparently consistent walkers, "and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." This appears to be contrary to the design of His ministry and to the commission which the Father had put into His hands; for in Matt. x. 5, 6, we are told that Jesus sent forth the twelve, "and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now, if you will use your Bibles, you will see that our blessed Lord, according to Rom. xv. 8, was "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Jesus was sent to the Jews, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to the seed of Abraham; but here He appears to turn His back upon the whole of them, and departs with a longing heart to manifest His Father's mercy, and reveal Himself as the Salvation of God to a poor Gentile dog, to one of those very persons against whom the Jews had, in their head-knowledge of the letter of God's Word, an abiding antipathy. Yet, in this very act, the Lord proves that His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. Here is a path that no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye — that is, the keen perception of the unclean professor — hath not detected. As the lightning makes its way with its irresistible power through the murky and dark cloud, so the grace of our God will have free course and be glorified in the most unlikely spots. Innocency and purity in the person of Jesus will find a place in the midst of depravity and pollution, yet contract no defilement thereby.

"*Then Jesus went thence.*" He turned His back upon the temple, priests, sacrifices, ceremonies, and ordinances, and goes into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." You see, this poor woman had left a devil in the house that day, and she knew very well that none could effectually deal with that devil but Omnipotence itself. In the Man of sorrows she saw the Sovereign Lord of all. In the Despised and Rejected of men, the Eternal and Mighty God, at whose behest all things in heaven, on earth, and in hell do exist. She acknowledged this at the commencement of her request. "Lord" — this signifies Ruler and Sovereign. "Son of David" — this views Him as the promised Messiah. Now Messiah, acting according to the letter of God's Word, could have nothing to do with one outside the boundaries of Israel. "He answered her not a word." This was a trial of her faith, and under the peculiar circumstances a severe one too. As I told you last Sunday morning, and it is a marvellous truth — a truth which was demonstrated in the experience of more than one anxious, sorrowing, and broken heart within these walls — the sins of the child are the sins of the parent twice told; the misery of the child is the misery of the Spirit-taught father or mother. Is a child of mine vexed with a devil of any kind? I am humbled to the dust in knowing and feeling that *that* devil was first in me. The transmission of all corrupt and carnal dispositions is from parent to child. This we have seen from the Saviour's teaching in this very chapter: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Some here may think themselves not so bad as all that; but as assuredly as Jesus was the Truth, and spake nothing but the truth, so you will find it sooner or later. Yes, the very moment an outburst of temper, folly, or weakness is shown by the child, there is a corresponding feeling of anger and wrath in the parent who has transmitted these infirmities. "Who can understand his errors?" "But He answered her not a word." Why? To whet or sharpen her spiritual appetite, to continue her importunities

at His sacred feet, to draw forth the earnest longings of her oppressed spirit in gracious pleas and petitions. See!

"When God inclines the heart to pray,
He hath an ear to hear;
To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."

He delights to hear and accept the sweet music of prayer and supplication as it flows from the spiritually-exercised hearts of His weary and heavy-laden ones. He loves to see tears of His own giving as they flow from the eyes of His sin-burdened, Satan-hunted children. Hence, "He answered her not a word." I need not ask, Are there any such here this morning? There is one in the pulpit. He knows all about it. He knows what it is to knock, and wait, and watch; but, No answer. The face of the throne of grace is covered with a cloud of sin, and doubt, and fear. There is a stone on the well's mouth. Yet my sour can sing —

"Oh! Christ He is the Fountain,
The deep, sweet Well of Love!
The streams on earth I've tasted" —

Mark that! It does not say, I am tasting, but,

"I've tasted,

More deep I'll drink above.
There to an ocean fulness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

It is our blessed privilege to know something of that expressed in a verse of that beautiful poem which appears not in our hymn book —

"With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted with His love;

I'll bless the Hand that guided,
I'll bless the Heart that plann'd,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

Yes, it is our blessed privilege to thank and praise Him for "the dews of sorrow" as well as for the luster of His love which shines so brightly amid the sweet sympathies of His once sorrowing but ever-loving heart.

"And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." I would rather judge this request of the disciples charitably than otherwise, and cannot think it arose from a disinclination on their part to attend to her importunity, as from a painful sense of their own inability to yield her any help. They had been taught again and again that effectual means lay in the hands of Jesus only. They had to be taught almost incessantly the precious lesson contained in the oft-repeated words, Bring it to Me! Bring him to Me! Bring her to Me! Bring everything to Me! There is a very precious illustration of this in the history of Joseph (Gen. xli. 55). "And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, *Go unto Joseph.*" So every spiritual blessing, every covenant mercy we enjoy, must come to us at the command of JEHOVAH the Father, by the power of JEHOVAH the Spirit, from the hands of JEHOVAH the Saviour. Oftentimes when the command is issued, Go to Jesus, the poor child of God is sensible of so much helplessness that he cannot go. Why not? His knees are feeble and won't carry him. His hands hang down and he cannot lay hold of Him. But love must triumph, grace must reign. This is a glorious experience of the tried and tempted saints of the Most High, when they feel their

incompetency to take a single step, Jesus comes just to the spot of His poor disciple's necessity and gives him a gracious lift out of the deep in which he was sinking, and encourages him with the blessed assurance that He has provided, and will provide for him all through his earthly pilgrimage, and secure to him at last an abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom above. The disciples' entreaty, "Send her away; for she crieth after us," was as much as to say, "Send her home with the assurance that all will be well when she arrives there. Instead of a vexing devil let her be comforted with Thy smile brightening her abode. Instead of a heart throbbing with her sorrows, give her to experience that Thy joy is her strength. "Send her away ; for she crieth *after us.*" Mark that! "*After us.*" Much of this spirit prevails in the present day. After the pulpit, after the parson, after the preaching; but "not after Christ." Pulpit and parson worship is awfully prevalent; but God will cleanse His people in His own way from all their idols.

We now come to a very blessed and interesting portion of this narrative. "But He answered and said, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the home of Israel.*" We may look at this in two ways. "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say" — and may your judgment be according to the infallible touchstone of Divine truth — God's written Word spiritually expounded. See! It was a positive, real, and spiritual fact that Christ was sent to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But who are the lost sheep of the house of Israel? We cannot see anything of the nature of sheep, or any evidence of their being *lost* in those Pharisees, hypocrites and ceremonialists who considered themselves to be of the house of Israel because of descent from Abraham according to the course of natural generation. Did our blessed Lord treat them as belonging to the house of Israel, or as His own loved but lost sheep? The concurrent testimony of the Scriptures of truth is against such a fleshly theory. When John the Baptist saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he by the Spirit saw something vastly different to the appearance of lost sheep in them, and thus addressed them: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to

flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. iii. 7 — 9). The teaching of John by the Holy Ghost was this, Do not arrogate to yourselves those blessings, mercies, and privileges which God has made common to His own elect people, whether these be amongst the descendants of Abraham after the flesh or those "Gentiles upon whom His name was called," who must be brought from their wanderings to Himself by His irresistible grace.

You must remember the glorious grace which shines forth from that precious genealogy of Christ given in the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel. The names of three kings are left out of this tree, and three others are brought in. Who are they? Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. Ruth! A Moabitess, concerning whose race the law said, they should not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever. But, blessed be the Lord, here she is, though a Gentile dog —

"Grace had put *her* in the number
Of the Savior's family."

According to the bitter spirit of the carnally-minded Jew, Ruth must go to hell; but according to the sovereign love and favour of Israel's covenant God, she is bound indissolubly in the bundle of eternal life, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and now mingles her praises with those of the glorified before the throne. Oh, how glorious is the grace that shines throughout the whole of that remarkable chapter, though oftentimes we pass it by with the thought that it will be unprofitable to read the list of names contained therein. Unprofitable? Never! Here we renew our acquaintance and association with our old friend and sister the Canaanitish harlot, and praise God for the grace which left her not to perish. My dear friends, every Word of God is pure, and running underneath the seemingly dry and uninteresting portions of Divine revelation are the streams of life and eternal love. The lost sheep of

the house of Israel are God's elect people scattered abroad in the midst of a naughty world. To these Christ declared He was sent to seek and to save. There, at His feet, He saw one of them who, according to the flesh, could claim no kindred with Israel, but, according to the Spirit, was an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile.

Look at this in another light. Notice the emphasis on the word "*but*." "I am not sent *but* unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He appears to say, Do not think I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel after the flesh, or that the infinite grace with which the Father entrusted Me is *but* for them. It is for all those whose names are in the book of life, all those upon whom the everlasting love of My Father was fixed before the foundation of the world. To these am I sent, and not one of them shall perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. To the sheep, not to the goats, was Jesus sent. Look at one or two of the characteristics of sheep. Innocence. Gentleness. Simplicity. The sheep is about the most silly creature in all creation. They are imitators, acting not so much from instinct as from example. A precious truth lies beneath all this. The sheep of Christ act not graciously from any movement of the natural mind, but from something done for them and in them. Does not this lead the mind to 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 *man* pluck them out of My hand." I wonder why our translators should have put the word "*man*" there. See! It is, "neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Neither shall any devil, or any number of devils; any sin, or any number of sins; any influence, or any number of influences, either worldly, fleshly, or infernal, can pluck a sheep from the hand of the faithful Shepherd.

"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."

See Ezekiel xxxiv. 30, 31: "Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, saith the Lord GOD." Chosen, redeemed, preserved, and provided for by the Good, the Great, and the Chief Shepherd. He goes before to lead, guide, guard, and provide for them, and each shall be taught by Him to say from a feeling heart, "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Psa. xxiii. 1).

But see!" *Lost sheep.*" You read of these in many portions of God's blessed Book. Psalm cxix. 176: "I have gone astray like a *lost sheep*; seek Thy servant." Isaiah liii. 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jer. 1. G: "My people hath been lost sheep." See Matt, xviii. 11 — 14, and Luke xv. 4 — 7. But especially notice 1 Peter ii. 25: "But ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Look at that word "*returned.*" Peter does not say ye have, but "*ye are returned.*" The language is intensely passive, in keeping with the experience of all those who are guided by the skilfulness of the Good Shepherd's hands. I might multiply passages in reference to this, but look at that confession at the commencement of the service in the churches and chapels of the Establishment this morning: "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." That is Scriptural and experimental truth as flowing from the exercised hearts of the living children; but it is a huge lie as falling from the lips of intoning, jabbering, parroting, and whining hirelings.

"How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heav'n are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus' blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?"

The words "*Lost sheep*" from the lips of the Master inspire the poor woman with sweet encouragement. Clean-handed but hard-hearted hypocrites might taunt her by raising dispensational barriers between her and Israel; but nothing could rob her of the conviction that she was one with the "*lost sheep*." Her's was a pressing case, and the faith and confidence which the Good Shepherd had wrought in her could not be destroyed. God-inspired importunity can never be discomfited. In the cries and entreaties of lost sheep, the Good Shepherd's heart has wondrous sympathy. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, *Lord, help me.*" In these three words she confessed, "Lord, I am a lost sheep — a wandering sheep — a silly sheep — a miserable sheep. I am one of the very characters Thou hast described. Have mercy upon me!" It is marvellous to notice — shall I say? — the electric thread of spiritual communication and sympathy existing between the loving heart of Jesus and the sorrowing spirit of this poor woman. Does He speak? He gives a spiritual understanding with the words. Does He hint at His mission to the lost? Lost sheep experience an intelligent apprehension of His mind. If He speaks of the house of Israel, though there may be those about me who are more highly favoured and more deeply taught, I look to Him with the eyes of faith and spiritual understanding; and as my ears catch the words which proceed from His gracious lips, I feel assured He means them for me. When He speaks of *the lost*, a chord is struck in my heart, and I cannot refrain from crying, Lord, that is me. When He speaks of the foolish, my chastened spirit responds, He means me. When He describes the wavering, the weak, and the weary, I feel it must be me. Does He paint me as black as Satan, and as filthy as a hog? I find no fault. I know it is the truth, and, bowed in lowly adoration before Him as He reveals Himself in His lovingkindness and tender mercy, I cry, "*Lord, help me!*"

Let us look at these three precious words: "*Lord*" — a glorious person. "*Help*" — a gracious link. "*Me*" — a pitiable object. Did you notice that gracious link? Just note it down, for it is one of God's own "*loops of blue.*" What does that mean? See! A loop connects, joins, unites. Blue is the colour which speaks of heaven, and God, and home. Look at the heavenly union expressed in this precious though short petition. A miserable sinner clinging to a merciful Saviour. Her misery was caused because she had a devil in her house. We in our shortsightedness sometimes imagine the devil has full possession of the earthly house of this tabernacle; but this can never be. When once the devil is put out of possession of the house by the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ, he can never get possession again. According to your feelings some of you may be saying, That is not my experience. To such I say, May God graciously lead you to rest in His Word as sweetly applied by His good Spirit to your hearts. See Rev. xii. 10: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." And they overcame "him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." But while the accuser is cast down, and the devil is cast out, we shall not be ignorant of his devices. His buffetings will cause us to cry out, *Lord*, in Thy glorious sovereignty, *help*, in Thy marvellous mercy, *me*, a poor sin-stricken, devil-distressed suppliant. The time would fail me to enumerate the portions of God's blessed Word which crowd upon my mind in which the help of JEHOVAH-JESUS is revealed. What is help? Aid, assistance, healing, prevention, supply, *deliverance*. Blessed be God, all these we have in Zion's Deliverer. Look at Asa in 2 Chron. xiv. 11. He cried unto the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee." Have you noticed how Hezekiah renounces all help but God? 2 Chron. xxxii. 8: "With him (Sennacherib) is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our

God to help us, and to fight our battles." This is brought about by the convicting power of God the Holy Ghost. See how he speaks to the heart: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help" (Hosea xiii. 9). Satan, the world, and the flesh will suggest there is no help for thee in thy God; but He who has begun the good work will finish it, and the children will be found crying, "Help, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalm xii. 1). "Be not Thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste Thee to help me" (Psalm xxii. li>). "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake" (Psalm lxxix. 9). How blessed it is to know that God, in the person and work of Jesus, has made full provision for every necessity and every cry of His poor children. In Jesus I find all that I can possibly require for my soul's salvation, and all that God can give. See! He says, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty" (Psalm lxxxix. 19). In the person of Jesus, God is united to poor, helpless sinners, and teaches them by His blessed Spirit to confess, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm cxxi. 2). Have you ever noticed that precious testimony in Psalm liv. 4 *I* — "Behold, God is mine Helper: the LORD is with them that uphold my soul." You will see the marginal reference is to Psalm cxviii. 7: "The LORD taketh my part with them that help me." Who are these helpers, and how do they help? See 2 Cor. i. 11: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us." This is Godwrought, God-inspired, and God-indited prayer. O what a mercy to be found not seeking to have dominion over each other's faith, but to be helpers of each other's joy (2 Cor. i. 24). All this spiritual help is in union and communion with Christ. Am I sin-burdened *I* The Sin-Bearer is my Helper. Am I distressed with the weight of my transgressions? The Obedient One is my Helper. Am I troubled with that foul spirit of unbelief? Through my tears I cry to my only Helper, "Lord,

I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix. 24). Am I oppressed because of coldness and listlessness in prayer? "Likewise the Spirit also 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" (Rom. viii. 26). Glorious Helper! Gracious help! Help in the covenant. Help in Jesus — nowhere else.

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Do I groan under the conflict which rages within between the law of sin in my members and the law of God in my mind? Is my cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Helper, the Deliverer, is sure to appear, and cause me to cry with a spirit of adoring gratitude, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. vii. 24, 25). Holpen with such help we may well encourage each other with these words, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv. 16). There is many a soul within these walls this morning experiencing the need of help. Such are in possession of that precious loop which fastens poor sinners to the Help of the helpless, a precious Christ.

Now look! She meets with another seeming rebuff. "But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Dogs! An expression of supreme contempt. Look when you get home at the many places in the Word where it occurs. Under the law the dog was an unclean animal and must not be brought into the house of the Lord. David on one occasion appealed to the kingly position and magnanimity of Saul, the persecutor, thus, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea" (1 Sam xxiv. 14). When lame Mephibosheth was brought into the presence of David, with true humility he acknowledged his unworthiness to enjoy such an honour, thus, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon *such a dead dog as I am?*" (2 Sam. ix. 8). When Shimei cursed David, Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, said 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" (2 Sam. xvi. 9). The term dog in many places of God's most Holy Word is used to describe the vilest characters. In one place it means the devil. Psalm xxii. 20: "Deliver my soul from the sword: my darling from the power of *the dog*." In the 16th verse the persecutors of God's people are thus pictured, "For *dogs* have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me." Turn with me to Isaiah lvi. 10, 11. False teachers are represented as *dumb dogs* that cannot bark, and *greedy dogs* which never have enough. In Matt. vii. 6, the reprobate are set as a caution to God's elect. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." Here we find ourselves sitting with the disciples listening to the injunction of the Master, not to display that which has been spiritually and Divinely communicated before the gaze of carnal and unregenerate men. Just notice those two awful Scriptures:

"BEWARE OF DOGS" (Phil. iii. 2).

"WITHOUT ARE DOGS" (Rev. xxii. 15).

In the answer of our Lord to the poor woman her faith was cast into the furnace; but being genuine, heaven-born, Godwrought, it stood the test. She was classed with the dogs of whom the children are called to beware. Unbelief would reason thus: As a dog I cannot count upon the notice of the Master, nor upon association with those who sit at His table and hear Him say, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Faith, which ever worketh by love and attended with true humility, was willing to take its place with the Master's dogs under the table, out of sight. This woman took no word as harsh from the lips of so gentle and loving a Master as Jesus ever shows Himself to be. Look at her answer: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." Our translators do not give us the full meaning, nor the depth of reproach, contempt, and weakness couched beneath that expression which they have rendered "*dogs*." The simple meaning of the word is, "*whelp*." Her faith was willing to take the lowest place if Jesus

would only speak the word. She seems to say, Lord, it is perfectly true. Thy judgment is just; yet Thou art full of grace.

I wish you to notice two very significant words in her reply to the Lord. The first is "*Truth*." Here she acknowledged the right of Jesus to say of her, and do with her, as He thought fit. The second is "*Yet*." Here she declared her desire to share in the love and affection of His heart. "*Truth*" is faith's Amen to God's judgment. "*Yet*" is faith's plea for God's mercy. "*Truth*" is the confession of the condemned. "*Yet*" is the cry of the child. "*Truth*" renounces all idea of merit. "*Yet*" receives everything from God's hands as the expression of His sovereign love. "Truth, Lord;" I deserve to be left without the gate, and to have written up against me wherever I go, "Beware of that dog." But, Lord, a living dog is better than a dead lion, and Thy life in me is evidenced by the abhorrence I have to the dog-like propensities of my nature, and the depravity of my heart. Lord, surely I must have Thy life or I should not love Thee, nor mourn because I cannot love Thee more, nor long for Thy sweet company, to sit at Thy feet and to be lost in Thy love." Is this the experience of any here this morning? See! God-wrought faith cannot be beaten off. The faith of God's elect is that which overcomes the world, and defies the devil and all his brood. Oh, the blessedness of that "*Yet*." "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." Lord, I know Thy children must first be fed, but don't forget *Thy dogs*. Look at the humility of the woman! Content to be called a dog. Look at her modesty! Thankful to pick up crumbs. Look at her importunity! She would not be put off.

Listen to the words of the Deliverer: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Here I wish you to notice the difference in Jesus' language when speaking to believing Jews, to that addressed to believing Gentiles. "O thou of little faith," to those who were His, and Israelites according to the flesh; but to this Gentile dog, "O woman, great is thy faith." Turn to Matt. viii. 5 — 13. Here you see the faith of the Gentile centurion. He said to Jesus, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but

speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Lord, if I have this authority, surely Thou, who art the Sovereign Lord over all things, before whose word devils and diseases fly, canst "speak the word and my servant shall be healed." "When Jesus heard, He marveled." Here is a wonder of grace! The Christ of God marveling at the faith of His own creating. "He marveled and said to them that followed, Verily." That is God's own Amen. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, *no not in Israel.*" *Great faith* in those who were accounted *dogs*. *Little faith* in those who were looked upon as *sheep*. Oh, my dear friends, if any of you have been led heretofore to trust in your religious connections, may it be your blessed privilege to experience the breaking down of all barriers, and to enjoy sweet communion with the eternally-loved flock. In Christ there is no partition dividing, no veil separating, but blessed oneness of heart. All in Him unite in praising Him as Saviour, Helper, Shepherd, Healer, and Deliverer, yea, All in all.

"Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Grace reigned. Faith triumphed. Barriers were broken. Devils defeated. Dogs defended, and the grievously vexed one delivered. May it be our gracious lot to enjoy sweet communications from Him and blest communion with Him, sit at His sacred feet and delight in the sympathy of His loving heart which ever flows to His despised ones, and in His covenant mercy which He manifests to outcasts vile and base, to dogs, but not dead ones. O ye humble souls who cry for His mercy, ye modest ones who are thankful for His crumbs, ye importunate ones who linger at His feet, as assuredly as mercy is treasured up for you in Him, He will see to it that you are brought into the blessed realisation of the same.

Gracious Deliverer command Thy blessing for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake. Amen.

XLIV. THE PREDESTINATION, PATRIMONY, AND PRESERVATION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, On Sunday Morning,
January 10th, 1875, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from Me."

— Jeremiah iii. 19.

VERY precious are the Gospel or Evangelical promises which the Holy Ghost has bequeathed to the Church and people of God in this chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy — a chapter which shows forth the wayward nature and wandering condition of all God's children when left to themselves, and in striking contrast thereto, the unfailing mercy and inexhaustible patience of Israel's covenant JEHOVAH. Yes, here we have a rich display of His gracious dealings with them in all their varied wanderings, failings, imperfections, and falls: how He restores them when fallen, saves them from the deep pit of corruption, and delivers them in His own way and time from bondage and vile slavery, bringing them into the glorious liberty of His children, and into the enjoyment of His lovingkindness and tender mercy.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the literal, temporal, or natural circumstances under which Jeremiah wrote this portion for the comfort of the captive Israelites, to give them a little consolation amid the suffering and oppression surrounding them at that very time; but, in humble dependence upon the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at the various displays of JEHOVAH'S love, mercy, and patience during a period of His people's wandering from Him — nay, more — when they were living and acting in direct opposition to His mind and will concerning them. After some faithful and painful descriptions of what they were in themselves, He positively declares He is married unto them, that He will bring them one of a city and two of a family to Zion. Listen to this gracious promise : — “And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” In infinite wisdom and magnanimous mercy He secures their return to, and abiding in Him, and their full possession of the inheritance promised to their fathers, where they shall enjoy an immunity from trouble, trial, and from danger.

I. — Dwell upon the first, a very important word — “*But.*”

II. — The mind, will, purpose, and pleasure of JEHOVAH — “*I said.*”

III. — The Father's gracious question — “*How shall I put thee among the children?*”

IV. — The Father's unspeakable gift — “*And give thee a pleasant land.*”

V. — The child's privilege — “*Thou shalt call Me, My Father.*”

VI. — The child's everlasting security — “*And shalt not turn away from Me.*”

1. — This short, but important word “*But*” is truly wonderful as seen in its connection. If we go through the world, we find man has his buts, ifs, peradventures, and perhapses in profusion, each manifesting opposition to the great and glorious JEHOVAH. Yet all His dealings are in accordance with His own Divine pleasure, His

sovereign will, His unerring decrees, His unalterable predestination, His predetermination, ere the worlds were framed. All is fitly framed in covenant. Now, when God declares the counsel of His will, poor, puny, proud man is sure to spring up with his accursed "but." Whensoever God appears in the manifestation of His unerring sovereignty, the devil will question His right to the exercise thereof, and cast his slur on JEHOVAH'S immutability. The essence of human nature is to question His right to do as He will with His own, yet it is gloriously true that all the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." What is the meaning of repentance here? Simply, He cannot change His mind. "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Listen again to that glorious twenty-third of Job: — "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." "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. 35). Look also at Psalm cxxxv. 6: — "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places." "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psa. cxv. 3). Now, this is the God that I love to worship and adore, and I grieve because I cannot worship, love, and serve Him as I would.

The "*But*" of the text is God's all-glorious and all-gracious "*But*." It appears after a painful description of what His people are in themselves — idolatrous, adulterous, incorrigible. We find the same in those precious portions — Nehemiah ix. and Psalms lxxviii. and cvi. God's "*But*" is always proof against the *but, if, perhaps, or peradventure* of Satan, or of all His foes combined, t is JEHOVAH'S — "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," meeting and defeating Satan's accusations in the court of conscience. This blessed "*But*" meets the weak and weary child of grace in his failures, falls, wanderings, and divergencies from the straight and narrow path. It is the voice of pure, electing love, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in

it." Now, why does this "*But*" appear here? If we look through the chapter we shall see the declaration of JEHOVAH'S great mercy, and the vile whoredoms of Israel and Judah. Notice the seventh verse: — "And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me; but she returned not." What! say some, if God calls, is there power in the creature to resist His will? Say, rather, such is the utter helplessness of the creature, that he is perfectly unable to obey God's call. When His covenant command goes forth, He carries His word by the power of the Holy Ghost to the heart of His child, and as one has well said, "God's commandings are God's enablings." The call and the command are nothing in themselves, and when JEHOVAH sees His call despised by one of His own; when threatenings, promises, entreaties prevail not, He will come Himself and turn His child from the paths of perversity to those precious privileges which abound in the Son of His love.

God's. "*Buts*" are so glorious, that I love to linger over them. Let us just look at one in the seventy-eighth Psalm. His people are woefully described. They sinned, they believed not, they flattered Him with their lips, they lied unto Him with their tongues, their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. There we have the creature side of the picture. When JEHOVAH appears, not in flames of wrath, and death, and hell (Oh, no), His glorious "*But*" stirs the swelling and surging tide of rebellion and enmity, and He richly displays what a glorious God He is. "BUT He, 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. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

II. — The mind, will, purpose and pleasure of JEHOVAH, conveyed in the words, "*But I said.*" Further on in the text He repeats the words thus, "*And I said.*" Why is this? Because He will show forth His marvellous patience; and though His children manifest ignorance, dullness, and indifference, yet He will, as He is wont, "*teach them again*" (Mark x. 1). He repeats His lessons to His

scholars because of the repeated and reiterated accusations of Satan in the court of conscience, because of the treachery, deceitfulness, and wretched depravity of our hearts. Oh, how oft we wander from Him in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire! See how the Psalmist cries in his experience of these things: — "I hate vain thoughts." He knew how hateful and irksome they were, and therefore hated them. Oh, my friends, it is a blessed thing to know that these vain thoughts are only lodgers!" How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (Jer. iv. 14). Blessed be the great and glorious name of our covenant. God, He will see to it that the Testifier, the Witness to His truth, shall oust all these vain and troublesome lodgers which distract the minds and disturb the quiet of all His children.

"But I said." When God speaks in covenant His word must be accomplished and His will be done. We have this demonstrated in creation: — "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm xxxiii. 9). Balaam, that wretched soothsayer, who had the Spirit of God in his lips, but the devil in his heart, said, "Hath He not spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers xxiii. 19). Yes, hell may threaten, the devil assault, the world persecute, vain thoughts arise, and perplexing providences annoy, yet Israel's God is the same to Israel still. Now, says JEHOVAH, this is My people, though Satan declares the contrary, and her enemies wag the head and exultingly cry, "Is this Zion whom no man seeketh after?" The world, the flesh, and the devil may argue: — Can it be possible that God has taken such pains with this obstinate, stiffnecked people whom the kings of the earth have led captive at their will? God replies : — Yes, these circumstances, and the varied trials and temptations of My covenant people are all in accordance with My purpose and pleasure. They must be brought down in. self to experience their corruption and depravity, and see and know what a God I am in their salvation and deliverance therefrom.

"*But I said.*" God seems to turn in upon Himself away from the rebellion and ingratitude of His people to His covenant of grace and glory treasured up in Himself for His own poor captive Israel. He cannot deal with them as they are in themselves, for He is of purer eyes to look upon iniquity, and, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." This glorious God spoke in covenant before the worlds were made; in Himself He found a way for His mercy; and now, by the irresistible power and gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost, He expostulates with His child and says : — "How shall I put thee among the children?" This brings us to consider,

III. — The Father's gracious question — "*How shall I put thee among the children?*" To look at this question apart from the covenant purposes of JEHOVAH is to engage in a labor of vanity and vexation of spirit, but to behold it in the light of His covenant relationship with His people, is both profitable and precious. Who are the children? The children are the elect of God. If by the Holy Ghost we can trace back the covenant love and grace of the Father to its super creation glories, then, before time was, He broke forth from the solitudes in which He dwelt and selected a people to Himself, a people predestinated to the adoption of children, a people near to Himself. Ah, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from the womb of His Divine purpose He brought forth an innumerable company of elect children who should be distinguished as the travail of the soul of His own dear Son! This is all done, not from a necessity of His nature, but by the sovereignty of His will. He set up His own true, proper, and eternal Son, the Firstborn or Chief among many brethren, as His First Elect, and in Him He beholds a family eternally and gloriously complete. In this glorious transaction, JEHOVAH, in His infinite wisdom and consummate skill, drew the plan of His people's glorification in which was secured their redemption, pardon, justification, regeneration, acceptance, and eternal preservation. See how this is stated in that glorious eighth of Romans: "For whom He did foreknow, He also

did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn 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 you! It is not as it appears with the *italics*, "*to be conformed*;" but "conformed to the image of His Son." With God all is in the present tense, and as He is One Eternal Now, One Ever-present, so all is ever-present to His gaze. So we see all His people predestinated to the adoption of sons. Predestination an eternal act, adoption an act in time. What is adoption? To take the child of another and treat it as one's own. Did God do this before all worlds? Nay! His elect ones were everlastingly His, according to the declaration of the God-Man in His precious prayer on the behalf of His elect brethren: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." So JEHOVAH'S sons and daughters are His by His sovereign decree, according to His everlasting purpose; and though all fell in Adam, and are possessed of a corrupt nature and a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, yet He comes down to them, and, by the power of His Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, brings them out of the lost family of Adam the first, and gives them an experimental standing in the elect, redeemed, justified, and (in the eye of God) glorified family of Adam the Last. See! We are not His simply by adoption; but by true, spiritual regeneration: "Of His own will begat He us." Thus we are the eternally-predestinated, truly-begotten, spiritually-regenerated, and graciously-adopted children of God. The Lo-ammi of the past is ours no longer; for "in the place where it was said unto us. Ye are not My people, there are we called the children of the living God." Underlying the ruins of the fall, God's pure, white, silver line of election runs, and in time it must appear by the sovereign, new-creation work of God the Holy Ghost. Ah! this is gloriously true! Satan's purposes all frustrated, his works destroyed, his purposes rendered ineffectual, elect brands are plucked from the eternal burnings, and cleansed, clothed, and crowned, they stand gloriously complete in Christ their Head. Look at that description given of the redeemed family with the Lamb of God on Mount Zion in Rev. xiv. 4, 5: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they

are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God." In the world they are bespattered with the filth and mire of sin, and oft sink deep in the pit of corruption; but God's judgment concerning them is: "They are without fault before the throne of God." The cry of each and every one is, "I am black ;" but the voice of the Best Beloved whispers in tones of silvery sweetness, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." In the matchless perfections of a precious Christ all His people stand gloriously and eternally complete.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" This is a question put to a person: intense individuality is thus set forth. How shall I put *thee*?" Here we see God dealing personally with the waiting heart of His child. And mark! He alone does the work: "How shall I put thee?" This blessed relationship originated in the mind of JEHOVAH, and it is by His will and power, without our aid, acquiescence, or activity, that we are put among the children. Arminians and free-willers understand not this, they would have us believe that they are the authors of their own existence; but the child of God spiritually taught knows that he is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13). No freak in nature can make a man the chooser of his own father, and nothing but a miracle of grace can bring a poor lost sinner to see in the great and glorious JEHOVAH his own God and Father in the Son of His love. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," is the confession of elect, redeemed, and regenerate souls; and they know full well that He must carry it on and finish it to the day of Jesus Christ. Let us look at a portion or two where the rich and magnanimous grace of our God shines forth most gloriously. Go to Ephesians ii. 1: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin, wherein in times 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. 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." Did you notice that expression — "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind?" We cannot half comprehend it: there is a fulness of abomination and a depth of depravity couched beneath it that devils would almost be ashamed to own. But look at that title, "*children of wrath.*" Does this refer to God's wrath? Never! He loves with an everlasting love. But see! "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. iv. 15). When the law comes home, it reveals the depravity and enmity of proud human nature. It proves me full of wrath, and my mind to be "*enmity against God,*" Let us transpose the order of these words from "*children of wrath*" to "*wrathful children.*" Do you say that is far-fetched? Look at that title in verse 2: "Children of disobedience." Whose disobedience is that? Surely not God's! Such an idea is presumptuous and blasphemous. The *disobedience* belongs to the children, so does the *wrath*. They walk by nature in disobedience and enmity against Him. "But!" Ah! here we have one of God's glorious "Buts!" "*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." No matter how corrupt, depraved, or dead in sins the child of God may be, because of the everlasting, unalienable love of the Father, because of the superlative worth of the person, work, and intercession of the Christ of God before the throne, he must be sought, brought, and taught to know and delight in his position and privilege as a child of the Majesty of heaven. Look at JEHOVAH'S rich and sovereign grace as opened up in 1 Cor. vi. 9 — 11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators:" then comes an awfully black catalogue: "And such were some of you: BUT ye are washed, *but* ye are sanctified, *but* ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." None but a covenant God and Father could work such wonders of grace and mercy.

"*How shall I put thee among the children?*" Well, now, my dear friends and brethren in Him whom our souls love, if God dealt with us as we are by nature, as we are in ourselves, or according to our

frames and feelings, among the children we can never be put. I have not a particle of sympathy with those who would build up their sonship on their fluctuating fancies, feelings, and frames. Oh, no! Christ in His glorious person and work is the only foundation for a poor "tossed with tempest and not comforted" child of God to rest upon. If I begin to look at what I am, what I have been, what I have felt, what I have enjoyed; where is it? Before the chilling blasts of temptation, and perplexed with the varied and intricate circumstances around me, I should utterly fail were it not for the supporting arm and loving heart of my never-failing God and Friend. Who can tell how oft he offendeth? God's Ephraim may wander and go on frowardly in the way of his heart; but Ephraim's God is still the same, and beyond the limits of His love, he can never roam. The Father expostulates: — "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). Look how Ephraim's wanderings and changes are depicted in that glorious book of Hosea! Yet JEHOVAH'S patience is not worn out. He 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; the Holy One in the midst of thee" (chap. xi. 8, 9). Ephraim merits damnation; but God will neither damn nor drive him from His gracious presence. No! He will open up the treasures of infinite affection to wean him from sin and self, and as though He knew not how to be gracious enough He still cries: — "What shall I do unto thee?" Blessed be His name, He will bring all His Ephraims into sweet experimental union with Himself, bless them with the possession of all spiritual blessings in Christ, and give them to know what it is feelingly to be put among the children.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" Don't you see how He does it in the case of the prodigal son? In that beautiful chapter,

Luke xv., He describes the lost sheep, the lost silver and the lost son. The silver lost, the sheep wandering, the son wayward. In the lost son we see an Ephraim indeed, such as is described in that beautiful allegory of Hosea, and in Jeremiah iii. The father divides unto his two sons all that he is and all that he has — "HIS LIVING." What could he give more? The elder received as much as the younger. Ah! my dear brethren in Him, this parable shows us that we cannot keep what grace is given to us, but blessed be God He keeps it for us. The younger son spends all. He is in want, destitute; but the time must come when Ephraim must say: — "What have I to do any more with idols?" Yes, every idol God will utterly abolish, and Ephraim will thoroughly hate. The Father's mind has gone forth, and it shall be accomplished: — "From all your idols will I cleanse you." In want and destitution young Ephraim remembers his father's house, his father's board, his father's bounty, his father's heart! He says, "I will arise and go to my father (father, though in a far off country), 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." The father heard all that. The son arose, and when he was yet a great way off! How far? "A great way off!" He couldn't see the father, but the father could see him. Ah! There is the beauty of the new covenant verities! Do notice the activities of the father! The father saw him. The father had compassion upon him. The father ran. The father fell on his neck. The father kissed him. That kiss of unalterable affection broke open the fountains of the great deep, and the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Nothing concerning service now. The father's kiss had chased away the spirit of cold legality, and the sweet Spirit of adoption fulfilled in his experience the predestinating purposes of eternity, giving him to realize the blessedness of that truth, <1 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" (Gal. iv. 6, 7). Blessings upon His Name, He is the same kind loving God still, and His kiss is as warm and precious to-day as it was in the days of old.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" How? I will run after thee. I will embrace thee. I will allure thee with the kisses of My mouth. My arms of mercy shall shield and protect thee, though thy brethren may look on and wonder, and object to such marvellous grace. Elder brethren, with their deep experience and consistent walk, may question the right of their younger relative; but JEHOVAH will overcome all with the blessings of His house, the bounty of His board, and the love of His heart. Look at the gracious answer of a covenant God: — "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." "*All that I have.*" The robe of everlasting righteousness to clothe thee, the fatted calf to feed thee, and the ring of everlasting love to secure thee. "How shall I put thee among the children?" Blessed be God, he knows how and when to do it. None but He, a covenant God, can accomplish this, and He will do it until the last elect child that shall tread these dreary wilds of sin and death shall be brought home to the ingathered family and ushered into the realms of everlasting and uninterrupted felicity.

IV. — The Father's gracious gift — "*And give thee a pleasant land.*" A wondrous spiritual meaning is couched beneath these words. They have reference to the allotment of Palestine or the Promised Land to God's covenant people Israel. He declares by Hosea, in that marvellous prophecy:— "I have called My son out of Egypt." First, in bringing His ancient people from Pharaoh's yoke. Second, in the return of our blessed Lord, the Holy Child Jesus, from Egypt, where He had been sheltered from the wrath and vindictive fury of Herod. Third, in the call of all the members of His mystical body out of the Egypt of this world. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of Exodus we have a marvellous description of the Lord delivering Israel from Egypt. By Migdol and Baal-zephon, and in the straits of Pihahiroth He guards them, through the depths of the Red Sea He guides them, and amid the wilds and intricacies of the desert He marches and countermarches them, to the borders of their inheritance He brings them, and promises to conduct them into their long-looked-for home. He will be eyes to them, but, no! They will

judge by the sight of other eyes than God's! Spies are appointed to go before them. They go, they return, and their report of the land so distresses and distracts the people that they determine to stone their leaders. In Numbers xiv. we have a pithy and beautiful description of the conflict between free-grace and free-will in the wilderness. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, rent their clothes as they beheld the miserable effect produced by the lying report of the rest of the spies concerning the land, and with a boldness which nothing but sovereign grace can give, they confront the whole "company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceedingly good land. 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." These two men had simple reference to JEHOVAH and His promise: — "*If* the Lord delight in us." Tin's "*if*" is not one of doubt, hesitancy, or condition; but an evidential one. No question as to His willingness or ability to bring them into and give to them the land, or to the sons of Anak preventing this. Oh, no! Where God has a delight, there He will accomplish all His schemes of mercy. He will bring us into the land. He will give it to us. He will do all. See how clearly Moses declares the sovereignty of God in this matter : — "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of those nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that He may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand, therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Dent. ix. 4 — 6). Now, then! If the Lord graciously brings into the land of spiritual promise and Divine revelation, the land of covenant blessings and Gospel liberty, it is not because of what we are, or because of what we have done; but simply and solely because of His covenant

purposes in the Son of His love. This is a pleasant land! A land abounding with glorious promises, cheering prospects, peaceable habitations, quiet resting-places, and sure dwellings. Canaan of old teemed with its milk and honey, oil and water; but sin, the curse and death were found therein. In this pleasant land of covenant settlement and Gospel grace, righteousness, blessings, and life abound. In it, there is no condemnation; from it, there is no alienation. God has been truly favourable to this land, and glory dwells therein. A glorious land when opened up by God the ever-blessed Spirit: the Sun of Righteousness shines with healing in His wings, and showers of blessing come down in His season. The voice of the Beloved is heard, leading His bride away from the cold, dark regions of spiritual death, bondage, legality, and corruption. "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 beauties, graces, and excellencies of the Spirit), the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land" (Song of Sol. ii. 10 — 12). "*Our* land." The land of spiritual promise, Divine revelation, and Gospel liberty. And who is the Turtle? God's Spirit. God's Holy Dove. God's Carrier-Pigeon, who comes with sweet love-messages, warbles melodious love-songs in longing hearts, and reveals the loving, faithful heart of the Bridegroom to the waiting and adoring bride. Is it not a blessed, a glorious privilege to know that the true understanding of God's blessed Word and all means of grace are in the hands of God the Holy Ghost?

Not only have we a pleasant land, but a "goodly heritage of the hosts of nations." "All things are yours," is the sum of the inventory of the Christian's possessions. The wicked live for the sake of the Church. They are God's sword. God's battleaxe. God's hammer. God's rasp. God's file, for the polishing of His elect. Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba serve JEHOVAH'S purpose of love to His Israel. Moab must prepare a covert, a cradle, a couch for God's outcasts, and He will compel them, by a mysterious necessity, to provide bread and water, ay, wine and royal dainties for the refreshment of His people. Why did

God create the earth? To build His Church upon it, and when the building is complete, what about the scaffolding? Terrible truth! Marvellous sovereignty! All destroyed!

V. — The child's privilege — "*Thou shall call Me, My Father.*" Our covenant God will see to it that all His elect and blood-bought sons and daughters are brought to acknowledge and know Him as Father. Yes, and well may we, when blest with so glorious a privilege, sing with dear old Dr. Hawker : —

"'ABBA, FATHER,' Lord, we call Thee,
Hallowed name from day to day;
'Tis Thy children's right to know Thee,
None but children 'ABBA ' say."

Oh, my soul, thy covenant God and Father alone can speak the reconciling word, melt thee down at His feet, and bless thee with the rich and overpowering sense of His paternal affection. As the blessed Spirit of adoption moves within, sweetly witnessing to the Father's love and faithfulness, and testifying of the Savior's love, blood, beauty and bounty, a little "bubbling up" is known and felt, and the child dares to be free in the presence of the Majesty of heaven, and lisp, "My Father." Call this presumption? Blessed, precious presumption! Lord, bid me to presume. This is the earnest of the Spirit, the gracious foretaste of that eternal rest, peace, and felicity which awaits us beyond the flood. And now look at His glorious promise of —

VI. — The child's everlasting security — "*And shalt not turn away from Me.*" No, blessed be God, "they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of the Father's hand." But it may, and has been said: "Though none can pluck them out of His hand, yet they have the will to go out." Will or no will, *out* they shall never go. Listen!" And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn

away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, *that they shall not depart from Me.*" Ah! Look here, my poor, weak, and timid brother or sister! Brighter hopes and sweeter encouragements meet our view: "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good." That is the God that my soul truly loves! And when I feel the gracious movements of His blessed Spirit within my heart, then I can bow down and worship before Him. Look still further: "And I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart, and with My whole soul." Not a half-hearted God! But One who goes about His business and His glorious work unreservedly and fully, for the building up and establishing of His sons and daughters in the everlasting covenant of His grace. If David could say of Jonathan: "Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women," what must be love of an immutable God? Failings, frailties and falls attend the children all along the wilderness journey. Can He give them up? Can they depart from Him? Never! Absalom's rebelliousness wrought no change in the love of his father David; and can it be that David is greater than his God? Oh, no! From the sight of His eye, from the reach of his long, strong, powerful arm, from the love of His heart, an eternally-loved child can never stray.

Dear child of God, look up! Thy Father, thy Friend awaits thee in glory, and as assuredly as He is there, so thou shalt be there also. A Man, thy Brother, is on the throne, and has secured a place for thee; and if thou art blest with the faintest testimony of the Spirit, and a sight of God's Christ allures thy poor heart heavenward and homeward, and thy desire is to now more of His will, see more of His beauty, and view more of His excellencies, where He is, high in the heights of glory, thou must for ever be.

May JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Spirit, abundantly bless us!
Amen.

XLV. INTRODUCTION INTO GRACE AND GLORY.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
October 21st, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

— Romans v. 2.

EVERY precious cluster of new covenant truths from the land of spiritual promise is set before us in the portion I have read for our meditation this morning, which has been laid upon my mind and endeared to my heart through many blessed and spiritual associations connected therewith. I doubt not that many of you will find a responsive Amen in your hearts when I tell you that God has made it very precious to my soul in connection with certain spots, certain persons, and certain seasons of heavenly refreshing with which God has graciously blessed me. I know it has been brought home to my heart with such preciousness and power, that memory must lose its seat before the sweetness thereof is entirely obliterated. Forgetfulness oftentimes seizes our minds; we are like leaking vessels, and retain but little of the savour of that Name which is above every name. Yet here is our mercy, our forgetfulness is but the opportunity for the display of one of the offices of the ever-blessed Spirit, that of

Remembrancer, in the understanding and affections of God's forgetful and short-sighted children.

A few weeks ago it pleased God, in the riches of His grace and goodness, to take me to that spot which many weary pilgrims have found to be a retreat for spiritual rest and refreshment, Dulwich House. Here I sat under the shade of a wide-spreading oak in sweet fellowship and spiritual intercourse with our brethren William Rolleston, George Davis, and Horace Hummel. Experiencing a little inflowing of love and light from above, I said, "We will go and see a daughter of the King." A few minutes more found us in the room of this princess of royal blood. There she lay, a bedridden one for forty-two years. No grandeur here; but grace and glory, peace and joy, beaming in that dear creature's face. We received a hearty welcome — such a welcome as caused us to see each other according to the form of the children of a King (Judges viii. 18 — margin). We sat, and proved afresh one of the mysteries of Divine experience in the hearts of God's living children. All feeling had departed, and my heart, which a few moments previously bounded with life and love, was now cold and still. I had not a word to say. At length the fire burned, love was triumphant, light was bestowed, life was experienced, and liberty sweetly enjoyed. I had a blessed manifestation of the truth that the Father hath put the times and the seasons in His own power (Acts i. 7). It was a time of love, a season of refreshing had come from the presence of the Lord. The whole five of us were blessed with a heart-glowing assurance of our oneness with the Son of God's love, our standing in His glorious perfections, loved with an everlasting love, clothed in the spotless righteousness of our Surety, and accepted in the Beloved. We were all animated with the same spirit of love — love flowing from the person of our incarnate God through His most precious wounds and blood. The fire was kindled, then spake I with my tongue, ay, and with my heart also. I read the first part of Romans v. God gave me such a pouring out of precious truth that caused our hearts to melt and mingle into one. Glory was in her soul, it shone in her face, and

flowed from her lips in accents of adoring gratitude. Such a season of consolation and joy I rarely experience.

A few Saturdays ago, my friend and brother Ebenezer Carr and I were walking out in that locality. At the corner of the lane, I said, "Shall we first call upon Mrs. C? or turn in close by here to see one of God's jewels?" He answered, "Let us go there, by all means." We went, and were received just as she could receive any who loved the same Lord. I asked for a Bible, but my spectacles were missing, so my companion had to be Scripture Reader. This was no small honour that God had thus thrust upon him, to minister to the spiritual consolation of one that belonged to Christ (Mark ix. 41). He read Psalm xxxiv. Look at its commencement: "I will bless the Lord at all times." Mark well its conclusion: "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." Oh, my dear friends, look at those precious words, "I will bless the LORD at all times." In the day of prosperity when the sun is shining brightly on your path? Yes; but not then alone. See!" *At all times.*" In the day of adversity when dark clouds lower, like that when Job experienced the loss of all his possessions and severance from his children by violent means. Then he was not forsaken of his God, but could confidently cry, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job i. 21). Look at the last clause of that precious Psalm: "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." What a glorious declaration! "Shall not be desolate." See! The time may be near when many of us shall sing in plaintive strains,

"When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark, and friends are few,
On Him I lean, who, not in vain,
Experienced every human pain;
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears."

You may rest assured of this, it is a blessed privilege to be isolated from the world to enjoy communion and fellowship with a precious Christ.

Last Friday but one, our old friend Davis said to me, "Miss Saunders is very low and near the end of her journey. She is anxious to see you. You had better go at once." I was very soon at her bedside. She was conscious, but could not articulate. I knew not what to say; but He knew.. I said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." She opened her eyes wide; she saw me, and I believe she saw something more. I said, in a subdued tone, "Everlasting love! Everlasting life! Everlasting righteousness! Everlasting glory!" My knees were bent, not from any fleshly effort, but in blessed and hallowed oneness with the spirit of that dear, departing saint. The next day, Saturday, at 1.30 p.m., her best Friend, her loving Saviour, graciously took her home to Himself without a sigh or a groan. According to the world's judgment she had passed forty-two years of privation; but she accounted them forty-two years of spiritual fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings and consolations.

Last Friday afternoon, in the order of God's providence, our friend and brother George Davis was honoured to commit to the dust all that was mortal of her, with the firm and abiding assurance that her ransomed spirit was at that moment enjoying uninterrupted and unmingled happiness in glorified union with her covenant Head. I have thus endeavoured to explain to you the circumstances under which this precious portion has been laid upon my heart to speak from to you. Here it is, and may we, in pure dependence upon the Spirit's guidance, find a little food and comfort for our souls.

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Notice first of all, these words in connection with those immediately preceding them, as set before us in the word "*also*." "By whom *also*

we have access." Look at the grand and glorious truth which the Holy Ghost by the apostle gives us in the first verse. Mark it well, but not according to the punctuation of our English translation. See! "*Therefore being justified,*" not, "Therefore being justified by faith," though that is a precious truth, but not the truth of this portion of God's Word. "Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Why do I thus punctuate? Because of the construction of the whole passage, for taking the latter part of the previous chapter in connection with the first part of this fifth chapter, which it really is, we find the statement, "Now it was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Here we see Jesus "delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God" into the hands of wicked men to be crucified and slain. Delivered to work out a perfect obedience to God's law, without which, justification would have been an utter impossibility, and to render to JEHOVAH, in His agonies, bloody sweat, and sin-atoning death, that perfect satisfaction demanded by His righteous law and unbending justice. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the Father's seal upon His perfected salvation. It is the Father's image and superscription upon the pure fine gold of Christ's finished work. It is the Father's declaration of His acceptance of the Surety on the behalf of those for whom He lived and died, and of their acceptance in Him. The resurrection is the assurance of God that every member of the body of Christ stands in Him as having done all that He has done. It is glorious for me to know, that though I deserve nothing but eternal damnation, not only for the sins of my unregeneracy, but for the sins I have committed since first He gave me to experience His rich, free, and sovereign grace; yet, I stand before Him as having done all that Christ my Surety has done. To think that in Him I stand justified, accepted, perfect, and complete, fills the mind with wonder, love, and praise. Christ having accomplished the will of His Father in the presentation of His perfect obedience and all-atoning sufferings, was raised by Him

from the dead, received with great triumph into His kingdom in heaven, and there He stands in unchanging union with His Church, the one object of His Father's ineffable complacency and delight. Of Him the Father appears to say, There stands the full expression of My eternal love and affection. In Him My soul delighteth to see all the elect and redeemed ones given to Him before all worlds. As He is in resurrection-life and beauty before My face and in My affections, so are they. In Him they stand, and shall stand perfect and complete in the face of all hell's opposition, the enmity of the world, and the incorrigibility of their wretched, rebellious flesh. What think ye of so glorious a Gospel as this *I* "Raised again for our justification." In the contemplation of this vast and glorious truth the apostle says, "Therefore being justified." "Therefore," my brethren, beloved of God, who are brought into experimental oneness with the Son of the Father's love, who are washed from all sin in His precious atoning blood, and whose only hope of justification and acceptance with the Father is in the person, obedience, blood, and resurrection of the Accepted One. "Therefore being justified." How? See!

"It is God that justifieth" (Rom. viii. 33).

"Justified freely by His grace" (Rom. iii. 24).

"Justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9).

Justified by His obedience (Rom. v. 19).

Justified by His resurrection (Rom. iv. 25).

Justified by His faith (Gal. ii. 16).

Justified by His Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 11).

Did you notice Rom. v. 19? "For as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Let Wesleyans and those heretics who approach very near to the truth, and who can talk much of the righteousness of God, look at this precious portion: "*by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous*" Oh, what a glorious truth! Justification by the obedience of Jesus. But some will inquire, Have we not justification by faith? Certainly we have; but it is justification by the faith of Christ. See Gal. ii. 16: "Knowing that a man is not justified

by the works of the law, *but by the faith of Jesus Christ.*" That is faith! "*By the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.*" That faith wrought in me, well suits me, and I want no other. Thus I am justified by the Spirit, and the evidences of my justification are those good works which God fore-ordained that I should walk in them.

"Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God." We know, to our grief and shame, that we were enemies to God; but He hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. Look at the 10th verse of this chapter: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "We have peace with God." Peace in the covenant (Ezek. xxxiv. 25). Peace through the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20). Peace in the work of His righteousness (Isaiah xxxii. 17). Peace with God, not by anything of our own, but wholly of God from first to last. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." See how careful the apostle is at every point that no Arminianism or free-willism shall find a place in this gracious work, those, with what we may call mongrel Calvinism can find no admission into this glorious superstructure of Divine revelation. The only reason why we have peace with God is because Jesus our Head and Representative "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." But here we read, "*by faith* we have peace with God." Through the faith of the Head communicated to the members we have peace, introduction, and communion with God, and not by faith, hope, striving, praying, or any endeavours of ours, but wholly through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"By whom *also* we have access into this grace wherein we stand." Did you notice that connecting link? "*Also.*" This is a loop of heavenly blue which blessedly unites all blessings with the Blessor, and a justified state with the right and privilege of leaning upon the aim of Jesus and entering into the presence of His Father and ours. Was He delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification? Then we must be justified, we must have peace with

God, and all through Him. Ay, and more too. Listen!" By whom *also* we have access into this grace wherein we stand." "*By whom.*" Let us dwell upon these precious words, and may His good Spirit give us a right understanding and comprehension of them. Look at Rom. viii. 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Mark that, in Christ Jesus, not *from, toward, or about*, but *in* Christ Jesus. Here I am a free man standing in glorious oneness with Him. Delivered from the authority of darkness. Liberated from the captivity of Satan. Freed from the dominion of sin. This is not my experience every day of the week, nor every moment I stand in this pulpit; but it is so when God sweetly leads my mind into the enjoyment of that liberty wherewith Christ Himself makes His people free. "*By whom.*" The child of God as led by the Spirit of God does not say, I have access by my faith; but by the faith of Him. He does not say, By my prayers I find acceptance with Him; but by the intercession of my Great High Priest. He does not say, By my sweet singing I enjoy communion with Him; but by Him who said, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." He does not boast of his striving; but humbly acknowledges the energizing of the blessed Spirit within. O what a marvellous mercy it is for me to know that all I am to God, with God, and before God is by Jesus Christ in covenant, crucifixion, and communication. Mark well those precious words of Montgomery's,

"O Thou *by whom* we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray."

Let us now look at a few portions of God's blessed Word which will illustrate these two precious words, "*By whom.*" Turn to John x. 9: "I am the Door: *by Me* if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." The Lord Jesus Christ is the Door. The Door of what? The Door of hope, the Door of faith, the Door of salvation, the Door of grace, and the Door of glory. He does not

speaking of our believing, obeying, or doing as the Door to any spiritual privilege we may enjoy. No Door but Christ. See!

"NONE BUT CHRIST! NONE BUT CHRIST!"

"By whom also we have access," or introduction into the experimental possession of every benefit through grace to glory. Look at the dying thief entering Paradise with nothing but His Savior's arm to lean upon, and the bosom of God to nestle in. O how blessed to be weaned from everything but Jesus, to find Him all and self nothing, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. and feelingly confess with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalm lxiii. 25). All those who know, and are satisfied with, Christ as the Door, "shall go in and out and find pasture." Mark! He shall *no out* as well as *in*. How is this? Sometimes I am brought into the presence of my God with my heart bounding with gratitude and thankfulness to Him for His great goodness in graciously lifting me out of my wretched self and carnal surroundings into the third heaven of spiritual privilege; but I know I must go down again to the thorns in the flesh and to the buffetings of the messenger of Satan. Oh, these buffetings! Knocked hither and thither, I scarcely know whither, when, with my spirit overwhelmed within me, I cry with a little confidence, "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job xxiii. 10). God's sheep are oftentimes driven out by Satan, their own wretched lusts and imperious tempers. Yet blessed be His name,

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

Turn with me to John xiv. 6. Thomas. Poor, unbelieving Thomas! Not the only unbelieving Thomas that an unchanging Jesus has taken in hand. Thomas saith unto Him, "Lord, we know not whither

Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Jesus had been speaking some sweet things to them. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Ye highly-favoured and everlastingly-loved ones, "Let not your heart be troubled." This is a Divine command to all the election of grace; and when God the Spirit speaks it home with power to the heart, all trouble is banished from the mind. "In My Father's house are many mansions." You see it is My Father's house, therefore your Father's house. The house of My God, therefore the house of your God. "If it were not so I would have told you." O what a gracious and patient Teacher our Jesus is. Those of us who are spiritually and Divinely taught, thank and adore Him for His patience, and bless Him for His kindness, consideration, and care. He says, "If it were not so I would have told you." As much as to say, Everything necessary for you to know I will teach 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, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas starts at this declaration, and says, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Turning to Gen. iii., we see the way to God blocked up by sin and death. "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" (Rom. v. 12). 'he very moment a child of God is brought by the Holy Ghost to see, feel, and know himself as a law-condemned sinner, he sighs for pardon, he seeks for forgiveness, and longs for the Presence and favour of that God against whom he has sinned, 'he way is blocked, how can he enter? Sin stares him in the face, who shall remove it? The law curses, who can silence it? Justice threatens, who shall satisfy it? Look at Gen. iii. 24: "So He drove out the man, and He placed at the East of the garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." O what a precious truth! Man driven out of the garden of earthly delight and pleasures into the new and living Way to the Tree of Life which blooms in the midst of the paradise of God. Look at those blessed words, "*He*

placed," as in a tabernacle. This speaks of the God-Man who as such tabernacled among us (John i. 14). "*Cherubims,*" the messengers of redeeming love, who ever point to Jesus as the only way to the Father. "*And a flaming sword*" which, having sheathed itself in the heart of the Surety of the covenant, now turns every way to keep, or guard, not to stop up, the Way which the vulture's eye can never see, nor the lion's whelps tread, nor the unclean walk therein. Here the redeemed walk at liberty, guarded and defended by the very sword they once dreaded. In the path of life the living children delight to walk through the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved. In the way of love the eternally-loved ones walk with Jesus. Why is this? Because Zechariah's precious prophecy is fulfilled: "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 bow upon the little ones" (Zech. xiii. 7).

"The way, the glorious way to God
Shines in His bleeding side;
From every stain of sin that flood
Shall surely cleanse His bride."

"*By whom.*" Look at that precious epistle of blood theology, the epistle to the Hebrews. Chapter ix. 11, 12: "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands — that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Did you notice that?" By His own blood." That precious, atoning blood, every drop of which was shed for His eternally-loved people. By it He entered into the presence of God for us, and there He stands as our Head and Representative in all the glory and perfection of accomplished redemption, *and so do we*. The Father looks upon Him with ineffable delight and sweet complacency; and in the experience of the power of this precious fact, we may well sing with John Newton,

"But since my Saviour stands between
 In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
 When I approach to God.

What wond'rous love, what mysteries
 In this appointment shine;
My breaches of the law are His,
 And His obedience mine."

In Jesus by His precious blood we are brought into the presence of the Father. In Jesus by His perfect righteousness we enjoy our standing there. Grace shines in the sinless life of Jesus, from the manger to the cross, from the first sigh of His infant soul to the last cry upon earth of His triumphant spirit, "It is finished." What was finished? Satisfaction for sin. Obedience to God's law. Redemption from sin, Satan, and self of all the elect of God. Our Surety has gone into heaven and entered into the presence of the Father to plead for His own, and there He ever lives to make intercession for them. See! Elect, redeemed, and regenerate ones are brought to the experience and enjoyment of all this, though, through the devil's worry and the cares and anxieties of this time-state, they oftentimes know not what to pray for, or how to pray as they ought; but the mercy is that up yonder, before His Father's face, He opens His mouth for the dumb, and pleads the cause of His poor and afflicted brethren who find sweet access with Him by His precious blood, perfect obedience, and prevailing intercession. We have access by Him in the glorious doctrines of His blessed Word, which He so graciously expounds and explains to our hearts. He must be the Teacher of the doctrine and the grand Object upon whom my faith, hope, love, and delight concentrate and are fixed. When His Spirit makes the doctrine precious, and gives me to experience my interest in the covenant blessings it contains, when He makes Christ Himself glorious in my soul's esteem, then my Christ, who is God's Christ, is the First, Last, and All in all of my salvation, experience, and life down here.

"By whom also we have access." What are we to understand by that word, "access?" Some imagine that it is simply a way opened by Christ to the presence of God, that He has done all that could possibly be done to give them a clear course, and now, if they are to be participators in the blessings of God's salvation, they must do their part, believe, repent, pray, and I don't know what. Well, such rubbish as that wont do for me. I love faith, precious faith. I love prayer, precious prayer, as much as any poor mortal in creation, and mourn my felt lack of the spirit of both; but I find not in them my access secured into the presence of my God. Here you have the truth of the text: "By whom we have *introduction*." That is a precious word! You know what it means. It is to be brought into the presence of the Majesty of heaven by One who has the right by birth, station, and standing. Such an One we find in Jesus. The Father will have all His children brought to Him by His own dear Son, their elder Brother and gracious Saviour.

You all remember that pleasing and instructive incident in the life of Esther, when Mordecai pressed her to lay the case of her persecuted and threatened people before the king. To enter into the presence of the king unbidden was contrary to law. How could she enter? Listen to her own words. Esther iv. 16: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." She went. She found favour. She obtained her request. Are any of you in this state before God this morning? You know that to enter into His sacred presence is contrary to the law, yet you must enter. A Divine necessity impels you, and you feel comfortable nowhere away from Him; without the joys of His salvation you are miserable, without His presence which is life you are dead indeed, and the language of your very heart is, "I will go, although it is contrary to the law, and if I perish, I perish." That sounds like Antinomianism! Well, blessed be God, in this respect every graciously-accepted child of His must be spiritually an

Antinomian, for he enjoys every mercy, not according to the law, but through the rich, sovereign, uninfluenced grace of God in Christ Jesus; and thus blessed, whatever the law may say, he can never perish. Perish shall all the designs of Satan. Perish shall all the schemes of hell. Perish shall all the enmity of my corrupt nature. Perish shall all my doubts and fears. But in Christ, though a lowly suppliant at His feet, I can never perish. Precious security! Gracious introduction! Blest acceptance! In the person of my glorious Surety, my dear Redeemer, my loving Saviour, my Next-of-Kin, I hear the Father say, "I knew that thou wouldest be a transgressor from the womb; but I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." O how blessed it is to hear our best Friend say, "Come with Me ;" to feel the grasp of His loving hand; and then to be taken into His affectionate bosom and carried into the presence, to the bosom, to the heart of our covenant God and Father in Him. Access in Jesus! Introduction in Jesus! Confidence in Jesus! See Eph. ii. 18: "For through Him we both (elect Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Turn to 1 Peter iii. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God.*" He says. "*Them also I must bring*" (John x. 16). The Good Shepherd will not trust His work out of His own hands. He loves His sheep too well for that. Precious Jesus! Thou art more than a match for my heart. Thou didst come to me and give me a gracious lift out of sin and self into Thyself and into the house and home of Thy Father. By Thy precious blood, Thy glorious righteousness, Thy prevailing intercession, Thy blessed Spirit, Thy Holy Word, Thine own self, we are brought to the throne and heart of Thy God and ours.

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace." Have we faith? It is "by Him we do believe in God" (1 Peter i. 21); for He has graciously taught us that without Him we can do nothing (John xv. 5). By Him faith is wrought in us. By Him we are brought to the throne of grace, and into the enjoyment of the grace of the Father which He has bestowed upon us in the Son of His love. See how the Baptist speaks of this in John i. 16: "And of His fulness have all we

received, and grace for grace." Grace given is God's pledge that we shall have more abundant supplies. What is grace? The free, unmerited, uninfluenced favour of our covenant God flowing through the Son by the gracious power of the Holy Ghost to you and to me. Electing grace! Redeeming grace! Forgiving grace! Justifying grace! Upholding grace! Preserving grace! All for nothing, and never to be lost. We may and will mourn because of our insensibility, but Jesus will take care of every grace which the Father entrusted to His charge for us. In the possession of this grace, Satan will distress, but he never can destroy.

"This grace wherein we stand." Are we good soldiers of Jesus Christ? Not all the powers of earth, and hell, and sin can ever bear us down. No shaft from hell, no shot from Satan, no fiery dart from the wicked one shall ever reach an eternally loved child. See Eph. vi. 13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having overcome all* to stand." As spiritual worshippers, we stand on Zion's sacred mount where no weapon that is formed against us can prosper. As servants of so kind and loving a Master, we stand and watch the look of His eye and the beck of His guiding hand. Look at Rom. v. 9, 10: "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Look at that! What a blessed standing! Justified. Reconciled. Saved! Saved by His sin-atoning death from damnation* Saved by His interceding life from every danger. Saved from all doubts, fears, and perplexities. Saved from hellish unbelief and accursed indifference, from indwelling corruption and from Satan's assaults, from deceit and violence, from every sin, suffering, and sorrow. Saved because He ever lives to make intercession for us. Now look at that glorious eighth of Romans. In Christ no condemnation. From Christ no separation. Let us read those bold, soul inspiring, God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, devil-defying challenges of Paul. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that

condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 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."

"We stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Have you seen a dying saint?

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

This was the blessed lot of the highly-favoured one whom I introduced to your notice at the commencement of this discourse. She was afflicted and bedridden for forty-two long years. Long, long years ago, thirty or more, it pleased God to bring her under the loving notice of that dear, but now glorified, saint, Thomas Lett. From that moment God honoured him in blessed oneness of spirit with his dear wife, as the almoner of His bounty and the channel of His precious sympathy to dear Miss Saunders. She was well cared for by our friend and sister Mrs. Lett, whose blessed privilege it was to close the eyes of this eternally-loved one in death. God thrust honour upon me in carrying me sometimes to her bedside where I never heard a murmur from her lips; but sometimes as I read to her from the blessed Book, and spoke of the beauties of the King and the glories of His kingdom, she would stop me thus: "O, Mr. Bradbury, I cannot bear much more. Glorious! My God is so good to me. My heart is full of His love, almost to bursting. O God, Thou art so kind and [loving to me." She's gone! May we in glory meet her.

Gracious Lord add Thine own blessing for Thine own name's sake.
Amen

XLVI. THE BEAUTY, BOUNTY, AND BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Tuesday Evening,
November 6th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever."

— Psalm xlv. 2.

IN the preface to the Psalm before us we see two statements, one very *precious*, the other very *pernicious*. That which is precious appears in the words, "*The majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom.*" A high honour is thrust upon us as we are led to see and glory in Christ as our anointed Prophet to instruct and counsel our hearts in the covenant verities of our God, our anointed Priest who by His death has made full atonement for our sins, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and whose hands and heart are ever full and ever open to bless us, and who on His glorious throne reigns as a glorious Sovereign over all things for us. That which is pernicious crops out in the statement, "*The duty of the Church and the benefits thereof.*" *Duty* in connection with Divine blessings to me is a hateful word, thrust in by Satan, associated with unprofitableness, failure, and damnation. This you will see by turning to Luke xvii. 10 : — "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are

commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." Here we are given to understand that the end of our duty is unprofitableness, and unprofitable servants shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. We may now look at that portion in Eccles. xii. 13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of man." Do you notice the word *duty* is given in italics, and really ought not to be there? Read the words thus: "*this is the whole of man.*" What is the whole of man? To "fear God and keep His commandments." Whoever could or did do these? None but a precious Christ. He was heard in that He feared. He was accepted in that He obeyed. Duty may please legalists and merit-mongers; but the true-born child of God loves to read his privileges in the blood and obedience of his Surety and Saviour.

The verses containing what is falsely styled "*the duty of the Church*" are the 10th and 11th: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." Here the Father speaks in His own covenant command to, I will not say His daughter-in-law, but His daughter-in-love, the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife. His gracious word is willingly obeyed as she stands beauteous in His beauty. Beauty elsewhere she has none. See Psalm xc. 16, 17: "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." All that we have, and all that we are, with acceptance before Him, is but the expression of His love, and yet man is so blinded that he will make an exhibition of his own driveling duty and deadly doing; and contend that his duty demands the great JEHOVAH'S notice and admiration.

Such wretched rubbish as this we have, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, renounced. We count

all things but loss, and dung, and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and it is our privilege to dwell upon the precious truth revealed in this Christ-exalting and soul-inspiring Psalm. The sweet Psalmist of Israel is here represented by the Holy Ghost as taking a heart-cheering view of JEHOVAH-JESUS, Zion's glorious Sovereign, and the Husband and Head of His bride, the Church. He says, "My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." Look at the margin: "My heart *boileth* or *bubbleth up*." Life communicated and love shed abroad in the heart cause it to flow out in expressions of praise and adoration. "The things touching the King" engross the whole attention, monopolize the whole vision, and absorb the whole soul. Here he dwells upon the unrivalled excellences of Jesus' person, the splendor of His victories, the equity of His reign, and the brilliancy of His court. The bride is revealed, and to His all-seeing eye she is all glorious within, while her clothing is of wrought gold: —

"Betrothed in love, ere time began,
His blood-bought bride with Jesus see;
Made by eternal union ONE,
Who was. and is. and is to be;

She is loved by Him with an everlasting love, saved in Him with an everlasting salvation, and adorned by Him with unchanging beauty. The worst word He has for her is, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." Look at that last clause of this verse, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." What is a pen? A passive instrument in the hand of a writer. Of itself not a thought can be communicated; but in the hand of a ready writer it becomes a power. Who is the Ready Writer of this portion? God the Holy Ghost, who writes most precious truth, not upon tables of stone, but upon the fleshy tables of the heart, according to the covenant promise given in Jeremiah xxxi. 33, 34, and quoted by Paul in Heb. viii. 10 — 12, and x. 16, 17: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after these days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their

minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." I like such writing as this. Without it the tongue is dead, no prayer, no praise, no preaching; but as moved by the Holy Ghost, prevailing prayer ascends, powerful preaching abounds, and acceptable praise is presented to the King. Blessed be God, the joy of our heart is the sight of Jesus in His unchanging oneness with His Church and people. Let us look at the words of the text in the light of that precious division which was given unto me long years ago.

I. — JESUS' Beauty — "Thou art *fairer* than the children of men."

II. — Jesus' Bounty — "*Grace* is poured into Thy lips."

III. — Jesus' Blessedness — "God hath *Blessed* Thee for ever." What a glorious subject! The beauty, bounty, and blessedness of Jesus.

I. — Jesus' Beauty — "Thou art *fairer* than the children of men." The natural eye and carnal mind discover no beauty in the person and work of the one Object of our affections. He Himself could say in the prophetic language of David, "I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalm xxii. 6). With a Spirit-guided eye Isaiah testified of the reception Jesus would meet with in the days of His flesh, and the estimation He would receive at the hands of His brethren after the flesh. See Isaiah Hi. 14: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." What was our own estimate of God's Christ before the blessed Spirit revealed His beauties to our adoring hearts? It is described in Isaiah liii. 2, 3: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. 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." Such we confess with shame and confusion of face; and now, were it not for the enlightening grace and quickening power of God the Holy Ghost, we should never behold or appreciate the peerless beauties of Emmanuel, God with us. During His sojourn here upon earth He was hated and reviled. He humbled Himself. He was sent in the

likeness of sinful flesh to experience the enmity and scorn of a cold and cruel world, the rage of devils, the awful load of His Church's sins, and the dreadful sufferings so richly deserved by us. He renounced all comeliness that we might be comely. He appeared to be all sin that we might appear sinless. We will now notice —

1. *The beauty of His innocence.* As we survey ourselves in our origin, birth, and behaviour, we see depravity, deceitfulness, and death. In Adam I sinned. "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm li. 5). My best actions are but splendid sins when seen in the light of the sinless perfections of my Saviour and my God. Where is innocence to be found? Not among the myriads of Adam's sons and daughters. Look on every hand, and in trade, commerce, politics, and religion, you will see deceit, double-dealing, and duplicity. But how blessed it is to turn away from all this to contemplate and delight in the Father's display of spotless and unsullied innocence in the person of His own dear Son, He who is our God and Lord became our Brother and Companion. Bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. This could only be accomplished by a miracle of pure grace. Some of you remember those words of thrilling import, "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." To the lowest parts of the earth (Psalm cxxxix. 15), to the deepest depths of sin and defilement, He descended, and yet contracted none. His advent was announced in the startled ears of the lowly maid of Nazareth. See Luke i. 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that *Holy Thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." According to the order of natural generation it was impossible for a holy thing to be born of woman; but according to the order of miraculous grace, "the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a Man" (Jer. xxxi. 22). The Holy Child Jesus was born, and no such marvel was ever witnessed before by heaven, earth, 'or hell. John declares, "*In Him is no sin*" (1 John iii. 5). He was born of a poor sinful woman, yet knew not a taint of her sinful nature. From Bethlehem to Calvary He passed through the

thick, murky atmosphere of sin and pollution, but contracted no defilement. He sat in a Pharisee's house, while "a poor vile sinner" washed His sacred feet with her sinful tears; He touched the dead, the lepers, the halt, and the blind; innumerable sins were laid upon Him; but not a shade of sin was ever found in Him. Sins were imputed to Him; but none imparted. Iniquities were laid upon Him; but none infused. Look at that glorious statement of Paul in 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He hath made Him sin for us *who knew no sin*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Made sin, reckoned sin, dealt with as sin, suffered for sin, and yet "*knew no sin*." This demands the admiration, approbation, and appreciation of our inmost souls. See! A Man, a real Man, an innocent Man, a perfectly sinless Man associating Himself with some of the vilest of our race, descending to earth's deepest degradation, and yet not marred, soiled, nor sullied. This must of necessity be that He should atone for our sins, work out for us a perfect righteousness, and carry us home to glory and to God. With wretched natures like ours we could neither obey God's law nor satisfy its demands; but He did both, and now in the highest heavens He appears for us. "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26). Yonder He is in the perfection of humanity and the glories of Deity; the Man who knew no sin, the Man who took away our sins, the Man, our God, God in human flesh, representing us, making intercession for us, and sending His blessed Spirit to assure us that where He is we must be also.

2. *The beauty of His righteousness.* In this we see that which earth never possessed before He came — that is, a perfectly innocent Man, perfectly obeying the righteous and holy law of God. Commissioned by the Father, and qualified by the perfection of His Divine and human natures, He delighted not to do His own will, "but the will of Him that sent Him" (John vi. 38). See how He declares this to His disciples at the well of Samaria: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). He came to glorify His Father, to live in perfect conformity

with His Father's mind, and in unswerving obedience to His Father's holy, righteous, and spiritual law. His life from Bethlehem to Calvary reveals a righteousness which makes a sinner just. In the face of the hellish opposition and earthly questionings, He wavered not until He could shout with a loud voice, to the glory of God the Father, and the consternation of all hell, "IT IS FINISHED." At His birth Satan looked on with envious and malicious eyes, and sought, in the destruction of the infants at Bethlehem, the frustration of the purposes of eternal love and the utter failure of the Work of Jesus' spotless righteousness. The temptation in the wilderness gave demonstrative proof of Satan's weakness in seeking to mar the fair beauty of Christ's perfect obedience. In all the dignity of His sinless nature, and in the full consciousness of the perfection of that work which the Father gave Him to do, He could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 13). He looked a host of Satan's brood in the face and asked, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John viii. 46). The devil himself, who was a liar from the beginning, contrary to his nature, was compelled to witness to the holiness and righteousness of the Christ of God (Mark i. 24). Look at Pilate. His unjust judge reiterates, "I find no fault in this Man" (Luke xxiii. 4, 14, 22). Pilate's wife sent unto him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man" (Matt xxvii. 19). The righteousness of the dying Saviour was the confidence and joy of the dying thief, "This Man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke xxiii. 41). The centurion who had the charge of His crucifixion, when he saw what was done, "glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man" (Luke xxiii. 47). That is a precious Scripture where Peter by the Holy Ghost declares, "*He did no sin*, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter ii. 22). The testimony of Jesus concerning Himself is all of a piece with the rest. See John viii. 29: "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). In anticipation of the end of all His sufferings, and in the full assurance of the possession of an obedience spotless and pure, He could look up into the Father's face, and without shrinking say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me

to do" (John xvii. 4). O how blessed it is to be privileged to see the very beauty of JEHOVAH in the matchless righteousness of Jesus. Here He appears fairer than the children of men. In every thought of His heart, every look of His eye, every word of His mouth, every action of His body, we behold God-like perfection, and all combining to form that glorious robe of righteousness in which the whole election of grace stand everlastingly accepted before the face of the Father. JEHOVAH is well pleased for Christ's righteousness' sake. The law is magnified in the obedience and death of the Surety of the covenant. His work is honourable and glorious, and "His righteousness endureth for ever" (Isaiah xlii. 21; Psalm cxi. 3). He speaks, "I bring near My righteousness" (Isaiah xlvi. 13). "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans iii. 22). This is the clothing of wrought gold in which the bride of Jesus appears all glorious (Psalm xlv. 13), the best robe in which elect sons find sweet acceptance (Luke xv. 22), the beautiful garment in which the daughter of Zion appears beautiful in the eyes of her King (Isaiah Hi. 1). All those who are sick of themselves and their vain attempts to work out a righteousness of their own, are glad to join in with the Psalmist and say, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalm lxxi. 15, 16). In the experimental possession of this righteousness we can sing with joyful confidence, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah lxi. 10). This makes the heart "*bubble up*" with thankfulness, and cry with adoring gratitude, "*Thou art fairer than the children of men.*" We will now notice —

3. *The beauty of His lowliness.* Here we are lost in wonder, love, and praise. The great and glorious JEHOVAH became a despised and lowly stranger. He, whose dwelling was the heights of glory, descended to the lowest parts of the earth, ay, and lower too. To the

deepest depths of that damnation, richly deserved by us, He wended His weary way. Though He was the Upholder of all things, yet as a lowly babe He was upheld upon His virgin mother's breast. Though the Possessor of unsearchable riches, yet for our sakes He became poor indeed. Earthly princes, and heirs of perishing kingdoms and coronets are cradled in pomp and luxury, while military guards are ever ready to defend with their lives the life of one so cared for; but the Holy Child Jesus knew no such kindly care. He said truly, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20).

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Thy prayer;
The desert Thy temptation knew,
Thy conflict and Thy victory too."

The whole life of Jesus was an unceasing testimony to the truth that "He pleased not Himself." This appears as He takes His place among His contentious disciples, and says, "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). But the beauty of His lowliness is seen in His matchless meekness. Let come what would, He "did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets" (Isa. xlii. 2). Devils derided Him, men maligned Him, pietists persecuted Him, disciples deserted Him, yet, "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23). What know we feelingly of such meekness as this? We may well hide our heads in shame as we contemplate the beauty of Jesus' unparalleled meekness. New beauties rise at every step. His lowliness is seen in the marvellous patience which ever characterized Him. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7).

"From sinner and from saint
He met with many a blow."

His enemies hated, persecuted, and murdered Him; but in the face of all this, lamb-like patience possessed His soul, and the hardest word which sprang from His parched lips and broken heart was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 24). Look at His friends, how they misunderstood, denied, and forsook Him, yet He had not for them one upbraiding word. In the hour of His deepest distress His Father's cheering smile was hid from Him, but this hindered not the expression of the nearest and tenderest relationship — "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt, xxvii. 46). O, how wonderful and beautiful this patient grace appears when contrasted with the amazing ingratitude and rebelliousness of those whom His love has saved! We will just glance at —

4. *The beauty of His love.* In covenant before the worlds were framed, He identified Himself with His people, who in time should bring upon Him all their sorrow, pain, and woe. In contemplating this subject, as taught and enlightened by the Spirit of love, our hearts are overwhelmed with the revelation of such vast and unsearchable grace! What have we to bring to Him? What can we bring to Him? We bring naught but sin; He gives us His salvation! We bring Out shame; He bestows on us His beauty. We bring our emptiness; He fills us with His grace and glory. It is a marvellous mercy to be privileged to sing with the living elect, —

"Long ere the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on His sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love."

For them He left His own bright home of light and purity to pass through these dark regions of darkness and depravity. Under the veil of sinless flesh He hid the immaculate beauties of His Godhead, and

in simple, child-like love to His Father, and disinterested, uninfluenced love to His people, He spent a life of loving obedience to the law, and affectionate service to the objects of His Father's choice. In every act of His obedient life, in every look of His compassionate eye, in every step of His toilsome pilgrimage, His love is graciously revealed. Love inspired Him to associate with the vilest wretches out of hell that He might allure them to Himself, and bring them to share all the beauties of His person, and the glories of His Father's house. Love caused Him to groan, and sweat, and bleed, and die under the load of those sins which His sinless and sensitive nature hated and abhorred. Love led Him to grapple hard with sin, Satan, death, and hell, to experience the hidings of His Father's face, and to triumph over all His people's foes. In love He speaks to, and encourages His sorrowing, doubting disciples: "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9). In love He gave Himself for us. In love He died for us. In love He sought and found us. In love He washes, clothes, and crowns us. In love He holds us fast, and will not let us go until all the purposes of His love are fulfilled in us. Ah, my dear friends, it is no mean mercy when we feel our hearts glowing and flowing with love for each other before the throne of grace — "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"(Eph. iii. 17 — 19).

"On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, Be rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally."

None can fully and truly unfold the rich and rare beauties of our Emmanuel. The Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of truth has put all

nature under contribution to illustrate and bring to light the beauties, excellences, and glories which are treasured in the God-Man. In majestic grace, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He tears down all obstacles which lie between His loved ones and the enjoyment of the love of His heart. In patient, uncomplaining love, as the Lamb of God, He bears away all the sin of an elect world. In peerless beauty He blooms as the sweet rose of Sharon, and richly perfumes the desert air where weary pilgrims wander. As our hearts are fixed upon Him we may well sing —

"Jesus, in Thee, my soul's delight,
What matchless beauties tempt my sight;
Compared with Thee, the solar ray
In shades and darkness dies away."

We are now brought to notice, briefly,

II. — Jesus' Bounty — "*Grace* is poured into Thy lips." In that precious word, *grace*, we have included all that God is pleased to bestow upon elect and ransomed mortals here below. Grace is the spontaneous outflow of the love of His heart to those who never could deserve it, never could earn it, and who must have been left to perish everlastingly, but He would not, nor could not allow of such a thing. See! In Him, according to the riches of the Father's grace, they were chosen before the foundation of the world, and He has engaged that each chosen one shall know this from His own grace-filled lips. In Him they have redemption through His blood, and from His lips of purest grace they shall hear the precious truth, "I have redeemed thee, thou art Mine." The bounty of Jesus is according to the good will and pleasure of the Father, as seen in Eph. i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Is it not a marvellous mercy to know that our portion and inheritance in Christ Jesus is inalienable? Blessed *in* Him then in the purpose of the Father, we are blessed *with* Him now by the power of the Holy Ghost. Before all worlds the Father put into His heart the very words

that should drop with honeyed sweetness into the anxious spirits of His tried and tempted brethren. See how He declares His commission in John xii. 49: "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." Notice how He gives an account of His faithful service in this matter to His Father in John xvii. 8: "For I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." The enjoyment of every covenant blessing must flow through the once broken but now rejoicing and sympathizing heart and gracious lips of our most glorious Christ. None can speak forgiveness to sin-distressed souls but He who was distressed with the burden of their sins. None can speak rest to the sin-burdened suppliant but He who found no rest until He had borne all the sins of His elect ones away. Blessed be God, His delight is to speak forgiveness to the Spirit-convinced sinner, peace to the contrite, rest to the weary, and joy to the mourner in Zion. Do you not remember how, when He read and preached from Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, to the multitude in the synagogue of Nazareth, they "all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth?" (Luke iv. 22). But mark! The very moment He began to deal out the distinguishing and discriminating truths of God's electing and predestinating grace they tried to break His neck.

It is an unspeakable privilege in spirit to attend Him as He wended His weary way through these lowland scenes of sin, condemnation, and death, especially when in seclusion He speaks words of life and love to the anxious heart of a poor sorrowing sinner. Look at the wonder and astonishment of the poor Samaritan woman as words of covenant bounty fell from the lips of the weary Stranger like refreshing dew upon her heart which had become parched with lust and sin. Delighted with His beauty, enriched with His bounty, and cheered with His blessedness, she forgot all about her errand, and went into the city, crying, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29). In the Samaritan

sinner sins abounded; but in the sinner's Friend grace did much more abound, as revealed by the gracious words which flowed from His blessed lips. Turn with me to John viii. 1 — 11. Here we behold His bounty beaming in every word He addresses to the fallen sinner before Him. His fair beauty shines most gloriously as He receives a fallen adulteress to His heart. Scribes and Pharisees bring to Him the poor woman with the rod of Moses threatening her with condemnation and death. Jesus takes the rod from their graceless hands, and with it wounds their fleshly piety, and chases them from His gracious presence. He turned to the poor woman and said, "Woman, where are those 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." Mark well that precious incident to which I have before alluded, recorded in Luke vii. 36 — 50. Jesus sat at meat in a Pharisee's house. A woman who was a sinner (which simply means that she was a poor, common waif and stray) came weeping, and washing His sacred feet with her tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head, and anointing them with precious ointment. The Pharisee looks on in astonishment at the sight of a filthy sinner embracing a

gracious Saviour. He unto "whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid," knew what was passing in Simon's mind. He told him of the creditor who forgave two debtors, saying, "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon was condemned and convinced. O do notice the gracious words which must have filled the sinner with comfort and the Pharisee with confusion! "And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to

whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He saith unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Is not that graciously glorious? His grace-filled lips drop love in life and death. On the accursed cross, when His heart was broken with reproach, and His tear-dimmed eyes sought the smile of His Father's face, when disciples deserted and devils distressed Him, even then words of grace were not lacking when the prayer of His dying companion greeted His ears, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." These words carried life love, light, and liberty to the heart of this lost but grace-crowned malefactor, who, leaning upon the arm of Incarnate Love, entered the glory which grace had designed for him. There Jesus ever lives. There Jesus ever intercedes for all those who know no other way to the Father but by Him. In the days of His flesh He prayed for His own, and could say, "Father, I know that Thou nearest Me always" (John xi. 42). We cannot forget that precious Scripture which displays the magnanimous grace and bounty of Him who ever has a good word for His poor, erring disciples. I allude to 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." The gracious Friend of Peter knew all his weakness and the power of the devil over him, therefore His ever-prevailing petitions unceasingly ascended on his behalf, while words of gracious encouragement cheered and confirmed his sorrowing spirit. Now, in the heights of glory the Friend of sinners ever lives, and from His grace-filled lips ever flow all prevailing petitions for bounties rich and rare to gladden the hearts of poor dumb children here below. The beauty and bounty of Jesus are wonderful! His grace is marvellous indeed. Well may the heart that's ravished with such glories cry, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" (Song i. 2). We can only glance at —

III. — Jesus' Blessedness — "God hath *blessed* Thee for ever."
Blessed with all spiritual blessings before all worlds, with which to supply all the necessities of His needy ones.

Blessed with the full confidence of the Father when all the grace and glory of the covenant was entrusted in His hands.

Blessed in the possession of a people given to Him by the Father, redeemed by His blood, and quickened by His Spirit, who shall praise and bless Him through a long eternity.

Blessed with the sight of all that the Father gave to Him coming unto Him, and each person, gift, and grace contributing to swell that flood of eternal blessing which shall ascend from the hearts of all those who owe their all to His love, blood, and obedience.

"The whole creation join in one
To bless the sacred name
Of Him that sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb."

HYMN SUNG BEFORE THE SERMON.

There's not a ray of glory known
Around the great JEHOVAH'S throne,
Which my Redeemer does not wear,
Proclaiming His own Godhead there.

The Father's glories, all Divine,
In Jesus meet, in Jesus shine;
Expressly like, and truly One,
Is God the Father, and the Son.

All power and wisdom, love and grace,
Are seen in our Immanuel's face;
All glorious in the Father's view,

The Brightness of His glory too.

The fulness of the Godhead dwells
In Jesus, and heav'n's chorus swells
With Hallelujahs to the Lamb,
While saints on earth adore His Name.
Joseph Irons.

XLVII. THE DAYS OF THE UPRIGHT."

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
October 28th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"The LORD knoweth the days of the upright."
— Psalm xxxvii. 18.

THE preface to this Psalm tells us that "*David persuadeth to patience and confidence in God, by the different estate of the godly and the wicked.*" But it is ours to know something vastly more important than that; for those whom God commissions to be persuaders are not persuaders of men. This is a wonderful mystery of grace not to be understood by the carnal mind which is enmity against God, nor to be comprehended by the natural understanding which looks upon the revealed things of God as arrant foolishness. The mystery is this. Every God-sent minister of Christ is a God-persuader. Not man-made ministers, not those who are neatly got up and ready for every occasion; but God-made and God-sent ones in whom the Christ of God is revealed, who experience, feel, and mourn over their helplessness and utter inability to persuade any mortal of the truthfulness of God's Gospel of free and sovereign grace. If it were possible for a faithful minister of Christ to deal out the truth of God with the eloquence of a seraph and with a voice as loud as the trumpet of doom, he would utterly fail to convey a single word of comfort or consolation to the waiting and longing hearts of

those who experience their deadness, mourn over their barrenness, yet who hope in His mercy, and who are thankful for those consolations which abound alone by Jesus Christ. In the experience of this, Paul cried out, "And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 16); but by the grace and indwelling of the Spirit of his Lord and Master he could confidently say, "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). Turn with me to Gal. i. 10: "For do I now persuade men or God?" God to be sure. Paul was a God-persuader. He was a prevailer and prince with his God. It is a truth too deep for human minds to fathom and too high for human perceptions to soar, that, while none can graciously persuade elect and redeemed men but God, none but God can truly persuade elect and redeemed men. These not only plead with and persuade Him before the mercy-seat according to that precious testimony in Jeremiah xii. 1: "Righteous art Thou, O LORD, when I plead with Thee: yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments ;" but in the declaration of His truth, in the preaching of His own most glorious Gospel, the power of His arm is communicated, the love of His heart flows forth, and the tenderest sympathies of the God-Man are revealed to anxious and longing hearts. It is thus He meets with His people in their deepest necessities, temptations, and tribulations, giving them to experience gracious lifts out of themselves and from their wretched surroundings. See Gen. ix. 27: "God shall *persuade* Japheth." That is God's truth. He shall persuade His people, and His people shall persuade Him. Read the preface to the Psalm after this manner: "*Christ persuadeth to patience and confidence in God.*" It is He who graciously teaches His people, by the power of His Spirit, that no patience, no peace, no true enjoyment can exist apart from Himself.

Let us look at the Psalm: "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." That sounds very precious as it comes home to the heart with a little sweetness, and we fondly imagine that we shall be able to live in keeping therewith. How long think you? A week? A day? We may foolishly imagine that these evil-doers, evil-speakers, and haters of

God, who have been as so many thorns in our side, shall trouble us no more, therefore, we will not fret. No, no, we will not fret, for here is an admonition from God Himself, therefore we will cast all despondency and repining aside, and soar away far above all doubts, fears, anxieties, and cares. Having our hope, faith, and confidence in God, we need not fret, but lift up our heads with joy and go on our way rejoicing. Wait a bit. Not so fast. Look here. Psalm xxx. 6, 7: "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled." How does your trouble manifest itself? Mine is in fretfulness because of evil-doers, and repining because of evil-speakers. Ah, my dear friends, I know what it is to rise in the morning with a sweet and placid disposition, and with a firm determination to spend the day in peace, quietness, and sweet serenity, every word of my lips spreading love and joy in the ears of all with whom I came into contact, and every look of my eyes conveying gentleness, kindness, and forbearance. But God knows all about the issue. Weakness, want, and woe characterize every day's history when a poor child of God promises himself such sweet seasons as these. It is our mercy to know that those who have no changes fear not God (Psalm lv. 19). According to the logic of Divine inspiration, we who have our changes fear God. We change from joy to sorrow, and from sorrow to joy; from expectancy to despondency, and from the very depths of despondency into the rich enjoyment of our interest in those covenant blessings treasured up for us by our God and Father in a precious Christ.

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." O, some may say, that is an Arminian text! There is not a shade of Arminianism about it. In it we have a display of gracious sovereignty to the tried and tempted children of God, who trust in Him because they have been taught the folly of trusting any other. See!" Do good." How? By the power conveyed in this covenant command, the power of God's indwelling Spirit. Just look at the verse again: "Trust in the LORD, and do good: *so* — "Mark! that word "*so*" is not in the original. It is not, "*so*," or

because thou art a truster or a good doer, thou shalt dwell in the land; but, I command thee to trust, therefore trust thou must. I have ordained thee to do good, therefore do good thou must. I have designed that thou shalt dwell in the land, therefore neither men nor devils shall dispossess thee. I have promised that thou shalt be fed, therefore I will cause thy bitterest enemies to feed thee, and the weakest and most unlikely instruments to sustain thee. Look at the various declarations which He gives concerning His own trusting in Him, delighting in Him, committing all to Him, resting in Him, being silent from all murmuring in Him, ceasing from self and lying passive in His hands. But the time would fail me to enumerate the various spiritual blessings set before us in this glorious new covenant Psalm. Do notice the winding up of it. After declaring the awful end of all transgressors and wicked workers, the Holy Ghost by the Psalmist says, "But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him." Now, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of His good Spirit, without whom I cannot speak a word of either profit, instruction, or comfort to your hearts and understandings, let us dwell upon the portion I have read by way of text; and it is a precious portion.

"The LORD knoweth the days of the upright."

We will notice,

- I. — The character — "The Upright."
- II. — The changes — "The Days Of The Upright."
- III. — The LORD'S knowledge of both — "the LORD

KNOWETH THE DAYS OF THE UPRIGHT."

I. — The character — "the Upright." What are we to understand by the term, "The upright?" A man is spoken of as being upright when integrity, honesty, and straightforwardness characterize his daily

walk and conversation. I cannot consider a man upright who is on the look-out to steal a march upon another, or one who is ever ready to take a mean advantage of another in business or any other transaction. But let us ask, and seek to answer the question, How many such upright persons do we meet with in these days? In Church, State, Parliament, pulpit, or in pew! How many upright in the solemn presence of God who can look every person they meet in the face without fear of shame or confusion? O what a mercy it is to be blessed, not only with the Spirit-taught knowledge of transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed; but in whose spirit there is no guile, no reserve. It is blessed to be delivered from the power of that scourge, a double tongue, and from the dominion of that curse, a double heart. It is really a luxury to meet with those who say what they mean and mean what they say both in the presence of God and in the presence of those with whom they come in daily contact. Ah, my dear friends, we find in sinner and in saint the old spirit which characterized Jacob, a determination to make the best of every opportunity without any respect to the mind and will of a heart-searching and reins-trying God. This is wretched human nature asserting itself. Selfishness dwells in the heart, and is oftentimes irksome in the experience of the children of God. One lately looked into my face and said, "Oh, that the Lord would deliver me from that spirit of selfishness which so besets me! Selfishness in listening to His own Word." You may depend upon it, the mantle of selfishness is tightened as it were around many of God's poor children, who live in isolation far away from communion with the living members of the one body.

Where are the upright? As we look through the pages of God's blessed Word we find this solemn declaration: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29). What does that last clause mean? Simply that the deceitfulness of man's heart is such, that if he has not a way ready made to his hand to sin against God, he will invent one. A man left to himself can do nothing but deal deceitfully with the God of heaven and earth. Look at Gen. i. God made man in His

own likeness. Look at the third chapter. Man is fallen. Turn to the iv. Murder manifests his fallen state. Go to the v. The transmission of a sinful nature from father to son — “And Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.” Turn to the 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.’ Mark that. Evil, without a redeeming feature or a compensating quality. Always evil, cannot be any other than evil. It is so corrupt and depraved that man can never improve it, and so base and abominable that God will never mend it. What do you think about it? It is an awful picture of poor, proud human nature, of mine in the pulpit, and of each of yours in the pew. From the moment of our birth to the present time, self-conceit, self-assertion, and self-determination have been the make-up of our natural lives. In the cradle, on our mother's breast before consciousness dawned, we manifested the perversity of our wretched nature, when hunger was not satisfied, and want not gratified. Have you never witnessed the peevishness and temper of the little one at the breast? Certainly you have, and in these exhibitions we see ourselves. But these are only the early buddings of the corrupt seed of sin and iniquity. What then must the full fruit be? Look at the youth of the present day. On every hand we see self-importance and pride manifested. I would now speak advisedly, for no man living loves more to see young men sitting under the ministry of God's Word than I, and I do not wish to speak a word to wound any one without cause; but the majority of young men speak and act as though they were in possession of all the sense in the world, and all the old men were so many fools. Now, leaving this painful part of the subject, let us ask ourselves the question, According to the teaching of God's Word and Spirit, and the experience of our own hearts, what are we in ourselves? I answer unhesitatingly, Anything but upright. Where then are the upright?

The Lord in His rich and sovereign mercy brings before us in this portion of His most Holy Word a lot of persons who in His purpose, in the person of His Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, are upright before Him. Uprightness, pure and perfect, is manifested in

the only upright One that ever lived upon earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was upright in His nature. Upright in His engagements. He is upright in every office He sustains — upright in every service He renders to God and man — upright in every commission He received from His Father's hand — upright in every act of obedience to His Father's law — upright in every communication of love to the hearts of His people — upright in the declaration of condemnation to all out of Himself. Our blessed Lord is truly the only upright man we know. His testimony is — “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me” (John xiv. 30). Blessed truth! The devil could find nothing crooked or perverse in the person, thoughts, desires, looks, words, or actions of our adorable Emmanuel. He could look the Pharisees in the face and demand, “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John viii. 46). He challenges devils, hypocrites, and the whole world to find any want of uprightness in Him. Under the approving smile of His Father He could say, “I do always those things that please Him” (John viii. 29). In the works of Jesus, the Father beholds the things that are equal (Psa. xvii. 2). In them all is straight, upright. Every movement of His heart was upward, homeward, Godward. Every desire of His mind was away from Himself to His Father and ours. He was oblivious to His own happiness and peace, and in the midst of persistent persecution He sought the glory of His Father, and the eternal good of His people. Self-renunciation characterised the whole of the faithful service of the Servant of the covenant of grace. As we are led by the Spirit to gaze upon this upright One, and to survey the uprightness of His walk and conversation, we are abashed, we are ashamed, and confusion of face is ours in feeling our own vileness. See 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.” We bow before Him and confess, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness though we have rebelled against Him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God to walk in His laws as He set before us” (Dan. ix. 9, 10). Yet our rejoicing is this, There is no unrighteousness in Him, and His righteousness is ours.

Again I ask, Where are the upright? Take a glance at the Establishment of this country with its clergy so-called. The majority of its ministers are Arminians to the backbone, who have subscribed to free and sovereign grace Articles. Yes, these have bent their knees before their bishop, and in the presence of God swore by His existence that free-will is a lie, that predestination and election are inspired verities; but the very moment they open their mouths in a pulpit their declaration is, that freewill is a truth, and predestination and election are Satan's lies. Such a state of things leads us to Micah vii. 4: "The best of them is a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn edge." But why speak thus of the Establishment? Because I mourn over its desolations, caused by the grievous wolves within her. What about Nonconformity? Just as bad, if not worse. Go to your structures with statues raised to the memory of good old Puritans, and you will hear nothing of the truth enunciated by such men as Thomas Goodwin and John Owen. K it were possible for these men to appear in your Nonconformist halls and pulpits, the Nonconformists who profess to be their successors would be their greatest persecutors. Let all such think of Matt, xxiii. 29 — 31. Where then is uprightness? You may seek for it in vain in sacramentalists and sectaries, and find it in none but those who in the person of Christ are brought to experience their uprightness and perfection in Him. It is a marvellous mercy to know that what the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to do, He did it not for Himself. His obedience, sufferings, wounds, blood-shedding, and death are for every lost and ruined sinner who, by the work of the Holy Ghost, is brought to experience his sinfulness and unrighteousness, and who can say before God, in the thrilling solemnities of his soul, "For Thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great" (Psa. xxv. 11). It is a glorious Gospel mystery sweetly revealed to the living in Jerusalem, that Jesus did not sin for His people, and all His good doing or uprightness is set down to their account. See 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom." "*Made*" in the Father's eternal purpose. "*Made*" in His precious promises. "*Made*" in His counsel,

covenant, Word, and oath. "Made," not only in the person of Jesus, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." Look again at 2 Cor. v. 21: "For He hath made Him sin for us;" not *to be*; but, "He hath made Him sin for us." Not merely a sin offering, but SIN, and dealt with Him as such, "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In the person of a precious Christ the righteousness, right-doing of God is ours. Is this the truth of God? He says so. See Jer. xxiii. 6: "And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And Jer. xxxiii. 1G: "And this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness." His uprightness mine! Mine by imputation, and mine by impartation. Mine by the blessed communications of His indwelling Spirit, according to Rom. viii. 4: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Notice those words, "*Fulfilled in us.*" Righteousness wrought out for us, and righteousness fulfilled in us. See! JEHOVAH'S purposes are concealed in His promises, and revealed in His precepts. Our failure in obeying the precepts is followed by prayer for the performance of them, and none can express the joy which is experienced when the precept Fulfiller is revealed by the blessed Spirit. Every God-breathed prayer is for that which God designed to give. He designed a righteousness for me in the perfect obedience of His own dear Son, and this I want bringing home to my heart by sovereign power, and nothing short of this will satisfy me. This is Christ in me, my Hope, my Righteousness, my Uprightness. In Christ the child of God is upright, and his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. He is a partaker of the Spirit, and a participator in those covenant blessings which a gracious Father treasured up in Christ Jesus for him. By the indwelling of the Spirit there is sweet communion with the great Three-One. Mutual comfort and consolation exists between the Head and the members, between the Christ of God and the favoured sinner in whom He is formed the Hope of glory. Some of you may be sighing and saying, Ah! that is taking high ground. Well, my dear friends, I advise you

not to take any ground at all. It is vastly better to wait until you are brought into lawful possession of the land of uprightness through the blood and obedience of Jesus, by the teaching and guidance of God the Holy Ghost. I assure you from the experience of my own heart, which harmonizes with the experience of God's people as recorded in His Word of truth, that every inch of the land of spiritual promise will be contested by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Each day in the presence of my God I find Satan at my right hand to resist, the flesh to burden, and the world to ensnare. My head is bowed. My heart is melted. My eyes overflow with those refreshing tears which He alone can give me. I know what it is to wait for peace; but instead of this the conflict thickens, and my enemies appear to carry everything their own way. Well, the God of peace will never forsake His own to the wrath of Satan. He will teach them what that means, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places" (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18).

Ofttimes the living children of God, instead of experiencing the blessed possession of uprightness, find all their ways perverse and crooked, while their only cries are, Lord save us! Lord help us! There may be many here this morning who are questioning their possession of uprightness. I would ask such, Has God compelled you to be honest before Him? Can you tell Him how good, and obedient, and circumspect you have been during the past week? Can you appear in His courts this morning to praise Him because you have never wandered from His ways nor lost sight of Him since last we met together? Such questions as these are enough to make you sick! Oh, no! say you; I came here this morning worried by Satan, burdened with a sense of the deceitfulness of my heart, harassed with ten thousand temptations, and with my spirit broken under a deep sense of my base ingratitude and forgetfulness of my best Friend. Cheer up, old friend, such lessons as these are not learned in poor Nature's school. Thy confession is God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, Spirit-honoring, creature-humbling, and is a blessed

evidence of thine uprightness before Him. The honesty of thy spirit, and the uprightness of thy new nature, cause thee to seek His face to render unto Him a clear account of all that concerns thee and Him. See! Hast thou been doing business on thine own account to discover that failure and insolvency have attended every effort? Then thou hast been led to make a clean breast concerning all thy matters, and to render a full confession to thy gracious Creditor and heavenly Friend, saying, Lord, Thou knowest I would not keep back anything from Thee, however humiliating such may be to me. Men who lack uprightness in trade fear to meet their creditors, and shrink before their scrutinizing gaze. So it is with all hypocrites and mere professors; they hate the searching eye of God, and shrink from the society of those whom He has made honest before Him; while His poor, broken-down child, mourning over his complete bankruptcy, says, Lord, here are my books ; here is my heart; "search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of pain or grief in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24).

Other evidences of uprightness we see in affection to God's Christ and loving attachment to God's truth. Where are we at this very moment? Do we love any other Saviour but God's Christ? Would we be saved in any other way than that revealed by God Himself in the person and work of His own dear Son? No! In all honesty we can say, We would rather perish than His great glory should be thus tarnished. Let me ask, Has the piercing eye of JEHOVAH searched the very depths of your heart's deceitfulness, depravity, and devilishness *I* Ay, you answer; but there is something better than that. His eyes, which are as flames of fire, have pierced deep down into all the necessities, sorrows, and perplexities of my spiritual nature, and by the alluring of His love He has brought me to experience some sweet interest in Himself. It is blessed to hear Him, with whom we have to do, saying, Thomas, William, Ann, or Mary, lovest thou Me? Turn to John xxi. 15 — 17: "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" What does that mean? One would say, Lovest thou Me more than the rest

of My disciples? Another would say, Lovest thou Me more than thou lovest thy companions, thy fishing, and thy fish? Well, be that as it may, Peter's heart was touched, and, with child-like simplicity, he looked the Master in the face, and said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee." Has He not questioned you and me thus, Lovest thou Me supremely? Lovest thou Me more than the wife of thy bosom, more than the husband of thy love? Lovest thou me more than the offspring of thy body, the children of thy heart's affection? Canst thou leave father, mother, husband, wife, children, houses, and possessions, for My sake and the Gospel? Ah, my dear friends, you know that these are searching, testing questions; but blessed with the sealing of the Spirit and the sweet experience of His love, though husband may be near and dear as your own heart, and wife may be the very idol of your eye, children may entwine themselves around you, yet, in the presence of a heart-searching, sinner-stripping, but sinner-loving Christ, you can say in the uprightness, honesty, integrity, and sincere love of your heart, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I do love Thee." See how this is expressed in Song i. 4: "The upright love Thee." (*They uprightly love Thee* — margin). The children of God all stand upright in the *purpose* of the Father, in the *person* of the Son, and by the *power* of the Holy Ghost. Upright, as their eyes and hearts are directed upward to the one Object of their spiritual affection, glory, and delight, and as they bless His holy name for His covenant declaration, "The LORD knoweth the days of the upright." We now notice —

II. — Their changes — "The Days Of The Upright." This expression indicates that the upright, in the midst of the changes and turmoils of this troublesome world, are never long at one stay. This life is a pilgrimage, here to-day; but where to-morrow? This life is a voyage, becalmed yesterday, tossed with tempest to-day, and what to-morrow? I wish you to notice the words of this part of the text — ay, the very letters — for it is remarkable how many of God's children, in trying to quote God's Word, oftentimes unintentionally misquote it. I know something of this feelingly. I remember the days that are past

when, in receiving a little correction concerning the misquotation of certain portions of the Word, my pride was wounded, and my old man was indignant to find that any one should call into question my superior knowledge of God's most Holy Word. Well, Thomas has had many a rap on the knuckles since then, and a few more will do him no harm. Some of you may take this home with you, and ponder over it. Look at Deut. xxxiii. 25: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is astonishing to notice how oftentimes that letter "s" is omitted. The portion reads not "As thy day," but "As thy days," because God's people enjoy not one continuous stream of sunshine here below, night succeeds day, and day succeeds night. What is a day? A space of time limited and governed by the rising and setting of the sun. We see this in Gen. i. 16, and Psalm civ. 19, 20: "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." God's children have their nights, and dark ones, too, which are succeeded by precious days of resurrection-power and restoring mercy. That is a dark and dreary night when Sinai's dreadful gloom forebodes destruction and damnation; but the appearing of the sin bearing Surety brings light, and peace, and sweet deliverance. Nights of affliction will cast their shades around us; but we are cheered with the blessed assurance that joy cometh with the morning. There are nights of trial which lonely pilgrims must experience during their journeyings through the wilderness. Sad and dreary nights of temptation will come, in which Satan and his brood will appear to have everything their own way; but the day succeeds the night, when the Sun of Righteousness arises over the spiritual horizon, darting its bright beams of light, love, joy, and peace upon those who have experienced perplexity, privation, and distress.

"The days of the upright." What kind of days are these? There are days of adversity, as we read in Eccles. vii. 14 : "In the day of prosperity be joyful, and 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 this is both temporal and spiritual. In

nature and in grace we experience alternate prosperity and adversity. Ofttimes adversity abounds in gloomy fear, arising from a disordered imagination; for I believe that many of the children of God suffer more from anticipated evils than they do from the realities they meet with day by day. Days of adversity are experienced when Satan tempts, the world frowns, the law curses, God's face is hidden, and the mental energies are paralyzed. Yet there is a secret something within which strives to rise above all these. That is a day of adversity

"When sins and fears prevailing rise,
And fainting hope almost expires."

But God will never forsake the work of His own hands. Fainting hope, though apparently expiring, shall cry,

"Jesus, to Thee I lift mine eyes,
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires."

There are also *days of evil*. Look at dear old Jacob when asked by Pharaoh, "How old art thou?" He answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Gen. xlvii. 9). Evil days when Satan appears nigh at hand and God in the far distance, when the children of the devil abound and the friends of Jesus are few, when communion with the saints is desired, but earthly, sensual, and devilish influences, surround us, when we would do good, but evil is present with us. All these days are in the hands of our covenant God, and it is our mercy to know that He knows all about them. The day of our birth and the day of our death are in His grand design. The day of our spiritual birth and the day of our departure for Emmanuel's glory land. We will now glance briefly at,

III. — The LORD'S knowledge of the upright and their changes, as stated in the words of the text — "The LORD KNOWETH THE DAYS OF THE UPRIGHT." What do we understand by the word

"*knoweth?*" It is a precious word. It includes the predestinating purpose and never-failing providence of God over His elect and redeemed people. It is my mercy to know that in the covenant of grace and council of peace the Father knows me, the Son knows me, the Spirit knows me. The Father knows me in His *purposes* of love. The Son knows me as the *purchase* of His blood. The Spirit knows me as a trophy of His *power*. The Father knows me as His child, and pitieth me. The Son knows me as His brother and sympathizes with me in all my sorrows. The Spirit knows me as His scholar, and teaches me. What more can I wish for? We sang a precious verse or two in one of your homes the other night which thrilled through the hearts of a few of us who were present. I can speak for myself. Hymn 583: —

"Sure the Lord thus far has brought me
By His watchful, tender care;
Sure 'tis He Himself has taught me
How to seek His face by prayer.
After so much mercy past,
Will He give me up at last?

True, I am a foolish creature,
And I've sinn'd against His grace!
But forgiveness is His nature,
Though He justly hides His face.
Ere He call'd me well He knew
What a heart like mine would do."

He knew all about it, and made ample provision for every necessity. This is the truth which I wish you to understand: God's knowledge of His people is that of appreciation and approbation. Whatever they do, or wherever they wander, He will not despise them, He cannot discard them. Are they sinful? He will save them. Are they lost? He will seek and find them. Are they fallen? He will raise them. Do hypocrites and proud professors annoy them? He will encourage and comfort them while their enemies shall skulk away from His

withering glance. Tell me what that mother's feelings are who sees the son of her womb in the midst of perverse and crooked ways. Can ye not read anxiety and care in the furrows of that father's face whose wayward and wandering child is far away? But all this is naught to the care and concern of JEHOVAH over His children. See! "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."

The knowledge of our God is that of tenderest sympathy. We are surrounded with suffering and sadness; but know little, precious little, how to sympathize with the sufferers and sorrow stricken ones. Yet see! High in the heights of glory God in our nature stands. From His glorious high throne — which is a sanctuary for His people — He looks, and as He beholds His down-trodden, distressed, and disconsolate brethren, His heart of love leaps to them, while the right hand of His power brings them gracious deliverance and encouragement. What kind of days have you passed through during the past week? You who have been compelled to face the stern realities of life. You who have had to grapple with the grasping, grinding, and overreaching ones of earth. You who have groaned to make both ends meet and tie. You who have met with disappointment and failure in your just and righteous struggles. You can tell me something about dark and dreary days. Well, bless His ever adorable name, we know they were according to His foreknowledge, and in each of them His eyes of love were over us for good, His heart of love was with us in purest, tenderest sympathy, while His consolations were not lacking.

He knoweth the days of the upright, for which we bless and praise His glorious name. Amen.

XLVIII. "ETERNAL INHERITANCE"

A Sermon

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

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Their inheritance shall he for ever."
— Psa. xxxvii. 18.

EXCEEDING great and precious is this declaration flowing from the exercised heart of the Psalmist, by the gracious inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for the instruction, encouragement, and confirmation of the tried and tempted people of God, during those cutting, biting, and withering experiences which they are called to pass through while in this wilderness world. We seek a little consolation when our tried spirits bend beneath the pressure of tribulation, and find passing relief in turning away from earth and earthly things. Have you ever noticed that act of Hezekiah described in Isaiah xxxviii. 2?" Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD." What does that turning toward the wall suggest to your hearts? I will tell you what I know and feel as I read it,

"When other helpers fail and comforts flee,"

all created streams are dried up, there is no help for me but in the covenant, and even that is nothing to me without the presence of the glorious Covenantee, He whom the Father has given as a covenant

for the people, in whom all covenant blessings are treasured up, and from whom all covenant mercies flow. To turn one's face to the wall away from everything and everybody, with nothing to look at but the wall, is not very comforting or encouraging. But these extremities are His opportunities for the deliverance of His people, when, out of the blank which meets the anxious gaze, One like unto the sons of men appears, saying, —

"I feel at My heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near Me, My flesh and My bones;
In all thy distresses thy Head feels the pain;
Yet all are most needful; not one is in vain.

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

The first part of the verse in which the text appears reveals such a gracious God as this. "The LORD knoweth the days of the upright." He knows all about the peculiar seasons they experience. He is fully acquainted with all their sorrows. O Jesus!

"As Man, a Man of sorrows, Thou
Hast suffered every human woe,
And, thus enthroned in glory now,
Canst pity all thy saints below."

All the peculiar circumstances, temptations, trials, and troubles, and all the comforts, joys, and pleasures are in His gracious hands. It is a great mercy for me to know that with the rest of His elect I am known to the Father in His *purpose*, to the Son in His *passion*, and to the Holy Ghost in His *patience* with us. JEHOVAH in His Trinity of Persons knows all concerning me. It matters not how deep the despondency, how dense the darkness, or how dreadful our doubts may be, the Lord knows all about them. In Jesus "we have not an

high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv. 15, 16). May we, in prayerful dependence upon the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at the truths of the text, and may He grant unto us spiritually-enlightened eyes, that with firm faith and abiding confidence, they may be fixed upon Christ whatever may be the shaking or shattering of our surroundings. It is settled in the Divine counsels that everything with which we are surrounded must be shaken, to prove the reality and genuineness of the work of God in us which must and shall remain. Look at the text —

"And their inheritance shall be for ever."

Two points present themselves —

I. — The lot of the upright — "THEIR INHERITANCE."

II. — Its duration — "SHALL BE FOR EVER."

I. — The lot of the upright — "THEIR INHERITANCE." These Persons I endeavoured to describe to you last Sunday morning. *I* we look at a person according to his descent from Adam the first, we shall see no uprightness in him. If we look at a man with a religion of his own acquiring, though it may be very Scriptural, and readily proved by chapter and verse, a religion in which can be traced out a Scriptural experience, but not wrought in and wrought out by the Holy Ghost, that man's heart is not upright in Him. The religion of such a character can only puff him up and make him think himself to be something when really and truly he is worse than nothing. But that which is brought home to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, causes us to know and feel that we are in ourselves base, corrupt, filthy, vile, and undone. My dear friends, I speak what I know, and testify of that which I have seen, handled, and felt. It is this which makes me nothing before Him. Here this proud self must fall, and Jesus Christ in the glory of His person, the love of His

heart, the perfection of His righteousness, and the all-prevalence of His intercession, must be all in all. The upright are only to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, who was the only perfect man that ever trod this earth of ours. God at first made man upright with a mind straight, sincere, upright; but when left to the freedom of his will, he fell from his uprightness. The mind in its creation was like its glorious Creator — a trinity. A healthy mind is composed of understanding, memory, and will. From the *understanding*, flow, or are created, thoughts, ideas, plans, designs, and schemes; but what are these if *memory* be not there to hold, retain, or redeem that which the understanding has created? And what are the understanding and memory combined if the *will* which executes, works out, and applies that which the understanding has created and the memory holds, be wanting? Thus you see the *understanding*, the *memory*, and the *will* form a healthy and evenly-balanced mind. When we look at man as he came at first from the hands of his Creator, upright, his mind, left to the freedom of its will, was soon imperfect. The understanding was darkened, the memory defective, and the will devilish. The understanding will produce any amount of error, the memory will retain heaps of evil, and the will manifest naught but enmity against God, so that man left to himself can do nothing but wander from God or war against Him. Well then may we ask, Where are the upright to be found? In the covenant purposes of JEHOVAH united to Him in eternal and indissoluble oneness with the great and glorious Covenantee. Look at the precious declaration in Rom. viii. 29, 30: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn 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." See also Eph. i. 3 — 5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Are we holy and without blame before God? Only in Christ Jesus. His holiness is ours. Of God He is

made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, and we are thus accepted in the Beloved (1 Cor. i. 30; Eph. i. 6). Having such a Sanctification as this, I grow daily in a deeper sense of my utter unworthiness, and I am taught to abhor with an intensity of loathing that figment of Satan, progressive sanctification. Is it possible for a child of God to be more acceptable to Him at one time than another? Ah, my dear friends, you may call it Antinomianism if you like, but I will tell you where I have got to: It is not by moral and spiritual progress that I am made acceptable and pleasing in His sight, for I find the more I grow in grace and the more I experience retrogression altogether. The more precious Jesus becomes and the more hateful I am in my own estimation. Oh, bless His name, ye elect and redeemed people, for such bright manifestations of His mercy. The greater sinner I am by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in my soul's experience, and the brighter and clearer is the revelation of His grace; or, if I may be allowed the expression, the more I am qualified for the manifestation and revelation of His salvation in me. Do not go away and say I am giving the reins to licentiousness. For I have not a shade of sympathy with those who are found in the prayer meeting on Friday and who spend their time in the tap-room on Saturday. Those who are brought into blessed association with a precious Christ, while they experience their own vileness, they hate it, and loathe themselves because of it. To them, Christ as God's salvation and sanctification becomes increasingly precious, and association with the world more odious.

"The upright." As I am brought into the understanding of my uprightness in the person of Christ, I long for brighter realizations of it by the solemn and sovereign power of God's indwelling Spirit. I not only want to know that I was sanctified by the Father in Christ before all worlds, that I am a new creature in Christ Jesus, that I can never be more loved by the Covenant-Three than I am at this moment, but that He who ever lives before the throne for me, lives in me the Hope of glory. When I am indulged with the blessed enjoyment of this through the instrumentality of the Word of God

and the Agency of His blessed Spirit — wait a moment! I do not like that word *agency* in regard to God the Holy Ghost, though it has been used by many good and gracious men when speaking of the One who executes and applies JEHOVAH'S will as His Servant; well, when thus indulged by His gracious witnessing and sealing, I can sing with joy unspeakable —

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast,
What love can Thine transcend?
Since Thou Thy lot with me has cast,
Indwelling God and Friend."

The proud professor and impudent pietist who soar aloft in the regions of a religious and spiritual Utopia cry out, How can you claim uprightness when you join in those petitions and confessions day by day which declare you to be "miserable sinners," and that the load of your sins is intolerable? How can you with any sense of consistency lay claim to uprightness? I answer, My uprightness is in my Head, who has taught me to confess the honest truth concerning myself before Him. But that was your confession twenty years ago! Yes, and if God preserves me so long, I shall confess it twenty years hence with deeper intensity of spirit than I do now. It is a blessed privilege to know and to have that experience set before us in 1 John i. 7, where he says, "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." Not simply a thing of the past; but a gracious privilege of the present. Once washed, clean every whit (John xiii. 10). Yet there is the perpetuation of that washing in the experience of every living child of God until the last sigh is heaved from the anxious bosom, as expressed in that declaration, "*cleanseth* us from all sin." Look again: "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Do you notice that personal pronoun, "*we*?" "*We*" who walk in the light as He is in the light. "*We*" who have fellowship one with another. "*We*" whom the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin. "If *we* say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ;"

but" If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is faithful and just to His covenant engagements, to His promises, to Himself, to His Son, and to His people for whom His Son suffered, bled, and died. In approaching the God of all grace with the confession that we have sinned, that we do sin, and that in ourselves we are nothing else but sin, we throw ourselves wholly upon His faithfulness and justice, which, with all His other attributes, are engaged to secure our forgiveness; forgiveness flowing through the wounds, love, blood, and righteousness of our Surety and Saviour. In confessing our sins to Him as sinners we appear before Him in the simplicity of child-like faith and confidence, and uprightness is thus manifested in the clearing of our breasts to Him. See! Here is the question: How many of us within these walls this morning can set to our seal that God is true in the declaration of His purposes of grace, of the uprightness of His people in the Son of His love, of the power of the Holy Ghost in bringing them near to Him in blessed and hallowed communion, and of His preserving and protecting grace vouchsafed to them in all places whither they may be drawn or driven in the wilderness? I ask, Who can set to their seal that God is true in these things? for to all such He gives the gracious assurance couched beneath the words of the text: "Their inheritance shall be for ever."

"Their inheritance." What are we to understand by the word *"inheritance?"* That which is held by right of descent from ancestors, that which is received by nature from a progenitor, or that which belongs to us by hereditary right. This word is of frequent occurrence in God's blessed Book. In one place we see that God has an inheritance in His people, in another that the people of God have an inheritance in Him. Here we see that between God and His people there is mutual possession in each other. Turn with me to that well-known portion, Deut. xxxii. 9: "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." This leads us to the contemplation of that people in whom JEHOVAH'S affection is eternally fixed. He owns and acknowledges them as His own inheritance by reservation, redemption, and regeneration. His own,

not because of what they have done, thought, experienced, or enjoyed, or anything they may do; but they are His own peculiar property and possession because of His eternal, uninfluenced, unchanging, and invincible love, the love which was ever fixed on them, as you find in the next chapter, 3rd verse: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand." Notice the change of persons here. The Father loved the people of His choice. "All His saints are in Thy hand." In whose hand? In the hand of Christ the responsible One, the Surety of the everlasting covenant. "And they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words." Every one of them shall be educated and guided by Him. Thus we see God has an inheritance in His people. This is revealed in a marvellous light in that precious portion, 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 for the acknowledgment 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.*" The saints! Who are they? The separated ones. A saint is one who was separated, selected, elected, or reserved by God in the councils of eternity to redemption, regeneration, grace, and glory. Thus you see in the very word "*saint*" a Divine necessity laid upon us to preach the truth of God's eternal election of a people to Himself. Is it not wonderful for poor worms of the earth, poor vile sinners, hell-deserving rebels, to know for a certainty, and to have a blessed assurance with the Spirit witnessing within, that they form a part of that inheritance in which God's riches in glory shall be eternally and unceasingly displayed? Look at that precious declaration: "*The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*" It is too glorious for finite minds to comprehend. We must wait until we get home to fully realize it. Am I a saint, a sanctified one? Am I a sinner saved by rich, free, and sovereign grace? Have I the faintest interest, feelingly and experimentally, in the blood of the everlasting covenant by which a sweet sense of forgiveness flows into my soul, and I am brought to enjoy the delights of His presence? Then I have the assurance that I am a saint, a sanctified one, an elect vessel of mercy, a child of God. And I also find it

blessedly true in my heart's experience that I am a spiritual son of Levi, separated from the world by the application of precious blood to my ear, thumb, and toe (Ex. xxix. 19 — 21). O what a wondrous mercy! I am not my own, I am bought with a price. My *will*, my *works*, and my *ways* all belong to the Lord. Every part of my body washed in atoning blood, therefore separated from the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and claimed by God for His worship and service. This causes me to sigh and groan for deliverance from the power and pride of my wretched self. O, this accursed self! which requires and insolently demands so much attention from every one who is so short-sighted as to repose any confidence in it. If lordly self is not attended to, it will soon manifest its tart and temper. But see! When there is a blessed realization of these truths of covenant love bedewing my soul, and giving me to know that "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me," then I know my separation from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and also what that means, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and 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. 19, 20). There is something more than the touching of the ear, the thumb, and the toe with precious blood, and claimed by the lawful Owner thereof, the Lord Jesus Christ; for the Holy Ghost, by His gracious anointing and sealing, takes possession of my heart, and sets God's Christ upon the throne of my affections, so that I can say,

"Dear suffering Lamb! Thy bleeding wounds
With cords of love Divine,
Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee,
And linked our lives with Thine."

But sometimes He hides His face, and then we are not quite so jubilant. We may be like the poor woman with the devil in the house, not able to do more than sigh out, "Lord, help me;" but what a mercy it is for us to know that those

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

"Their inheritance shall be for ever." What is the inheritance of the cold Calvinist? The five points with which he will contend with any wretched Arminian that crosses his path. But the living child of God who has had the truth burnt into him in the furnace of affliction, and has experienced many a seeming rebuff from the Master, loves to hold communion with Him in secret, and though treated like a dog or a whelp, will pursue its entreaties with, "Truth, Lord, but the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Lord, I am willing to be a whelp, if I am only Thine, Thine in covenant, Thine in communication, Thine in communion. I love to catch sweet crumbs of hope as they drop from Thy table, for these precede rich crumbs of assurance and feasts of heavenly and spiritual joy. Blessed, precious inheritance the saints possess in JEHOVAH; God my Father! God my Saviour! God my Companion! God the Father for me in sovereign, free election; and amid the varied scenes and changes of His providence. God the Son for me before the throne as my all-powerful Advocate and never-failing Friend. God the Holy Ghost in me with groanings and wrestlings which can never be uttered, and with comforts which can never be expressed. It is the realization of this which causes me to say, "The Lord is my inheritance." Look at that which is so blessedly set before us, and which we cannot repeat too often (Eph. i. 3): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him: in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Read over at your leisure this precious chapter, for in it JEHOVAH appears as the inheritance of His elect, redeemed, and regenerate people. The first part reveals the Father with all His covenant blessings. The second part from the 7th verse reveals the Son with

all the fruits of redemption; the latter part reveals the Spirit, with all the family privileges and comforts. The Father is full of blessing to His children. The Son is full of blessing to His brethren, for whom He suffered, bled, and died. The Holy Ghost is full of blessing to all those in whom He dwells, and whom He also brings into the understanding and experience of that glorious truth, "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). Thus we see that the inheritance of the children of the living God is God Himself, God, in all the purposes of love; God, in all the promises of life; God, in all the perfections of light, is an inheritance to all His eternally-loved family, "and their inheritance shall be for ever." Let us turn to a few portions where the word inheritance occurs, which may help us a little in understanding this precious truth. See Deut. xii. 10: "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit." Here we see possession is a sure effect of inheriting; as also Numbers xxxiv. 2: "When ye come into the land of Canaan (this the land which shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan, with the coasts thereof)." Turn to Psalm lxxxii. 8: "Arise, O God! judge the earth; for Thou shalt inherit all nations." This inheriting is by the subduing power of God's ever-blessed Spirit bringing His own to know His property in them and their inheritance in Him. See also 1 Cor. xv. 50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." That is, they shall not come into possession of these things, because they have neither right nor title to the same. You all remember the case recorded in the Gospels of the young man who came running, kneeling, and asking Jesus the question, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" In this question we have a contradiction in terms. There can be no *doing* to inherit. A person must be a relative to be an heir, and an inheritance must be possessed hereditarily. A sinner is an inheritor of the kingdom of God and of God Himself because he was related to God before ever he sinned. God is his by donation. He comes into experimental possession of God by spiritual birth, in which he has

“eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus i. 2), “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter i. 23). Now look at 1 Peter i. 3 — 5: “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, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Know ye anything of this? Begotten again to an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, which is God Himself. Then, is not heaven the inheritance of the saints? Certainly. Why? Simply because where God is, that is heaven to His own people. Tell me where God is not, and that is hell upon earth to me, a spot that I would shun with all the abhorrence my new nature can command. Tell me the place where God in Christ reveals Himself, and that spot can only be reached through penury and privation, through floods and flame, I long to be there. Satan and some of his brood may sneeringly suggest, Oh, then you have more faith and courage than other people! I answer, No, I have not, for a greater coward does not live in all creation than I when left to myself in the face of obstacles, persecutions, temptations, and troubles. Why then do I speak so decidedly? Because the life of God in the feeblest child in the family of JEHOVAH, or in the weakest lamb in the Good Shepherd's flock, longing for home, and heaven, and God, must come into full possession of the inheritance. “The sealing of that Holy Spirit of promise is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1. 13, 14). The life of God must rise to its own level. “That which is born of the flesh,” and all religion springing from the flesh, must end there. But notice the words, “*reserved in heaven*” This teaches me that JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God in Christ, my inheritance, is reserved in heaven for me, and there I shall enjoy Him in undisturbed security through an uninterrupted eternity. It is blessed to know by the teaching of the Spirit that as assuredly as I

am now in possession of His witnessing in my heart, so assuredly shall I stand accepted in glory. In the sweet contemplation of this, Toplady could sing so blessedly,

“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.”

Can you sing that? Can you express your thoughts in those precious words without emotion, or without the sigh for wings like a dove that you might fly away from all the storms of time, far away above the murky clouds of doubt, and fear, and unbelief, to be eternally at rest with Him?

"Their inheritance." Let us notice a few of the very many blessings and bounties, privileges and immunities which God's children enjoy in Him their inheritance and lot. Look at Hannah! There was not much exuberance of spirit manifested by her when she prayed with her lips moving; but speaking not a word. This you see in 1 Sam. i., but turn to the second chapter, 6 — 8: "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." What do you think of that? Poor, dunghill worms which many of us feel ourselves to be, by the power of rich and sovereign grace lifted out of the stench and corruption of the dunghill of sin and self-sufficiency to inherit the throne of glory. 'i Kings and priests by blood." Worms, yet heirs. "Heirs of God." God is our inheritance. "Joint-heirs with Christ" of that which He at this very moment holds in inalienable possession for us, even God in

all that He is and all that He has. God on His throne of grace and glory reigning over all things for His Church. "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary" (Jer. xvii. 12).

"Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure."

God on the throne of His glory is the Defense of His people. From His throne all the glory of His covenant, salvation, righteousness, flows to His own, and by His sovereign power all things in Christ Jesus are made ours. Here I am reminded of the various portions in this Psalm xxxvii. See! "The meek shall inherit the earth." "He shall exalt thee to inherit the land." What land? That bounded on the North by Syria, on the South by Idumea, on the East by the Jordan, and on the West by the Mediterranean? As we consult history we may well shudder in reading of its sins, its follies, and its judgments. Yet in the days of Solomon, according to that glorious Psalm lxxii., it was a type of that peace and prosperity which all the heirs of grace experience in the land of covenant promise. All the promises mine? Yes, for by them we are made partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter i. 4), that land of Divine revelation and covenant relationship where clusters of spiritual blessings abound. See Isaiah lx. 21 — that precious chapter which some want to rob the Church of; but the Head of the Church will see to it that all who are His, and therefore Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, shall not be spoiled of their inheritance in it. "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." But look still further. Prov. iii. 35: "*The wise shall inherit glory.*" All the glory which the Father gave to the Son for His people in whom He will be eternally glorified belongs to all those who are made wise unto salvation in the person of the Wisdom of God. Now turn to Prov. viii. 21: "*That I may cause them that love Me to inherit*

substance; and I will fill their treasures." Here we have something substantial, something upon which needy sinners can lay hold, something upon which weary pilgrims can rest. Some inherit wind (Prov. xi. 29); while others inherit folly (Prov. xiv. 18); but our God has made over to His people in Christ Jesus substantial realities, an inalienable inheritance, an immovable kingdom, and all, not one hair's breadth away from Himself. Isaiah !xv. 9: "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an Inheritor of My mountains; and *Mine elect shall inherit it*, and My servants shall dwell there." This is the only place in God's Book where Christ has the title, Inheritor. It is in this Inheritor that all the election of grace are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Him they inherit eternal life, and rejoice in the possession of all the promises of God which are Yea and Amen in Him. That is a glorious portion, Matt. xxv. 34: "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Look! The people of God are inheritors of the throne of glory, inheritors of the kingdom of God, inheritors of indefectible grace, inheritors of exceeding great and precious promises, inheritors of eternal life, inheritors of all needful blessings. Look at that glorious title,

"HEIRS OF GOD AND JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST."

There is another portion to which I must draw your attention. Numbers xviii. 20: "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy Part and thine Inheritance among the children of Israel." At your leisure read the whole of that string of references found in the margin. "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Now whom do you serve? The apostle says, "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24). Christ is our tabernacle. "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us" (John i. 18). God is our inheritance

in whom, with whom, by whom, and for whom we serve the Lord Christ. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (Rev. xxi. 7). O what a glorious inheritance! God, and all things with Him. See 1 Cor iii. 21 — 23: "All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life." What kind of life? Natural and spiritual. Natural first, and then brought to experience spiritual life in union with Jesus who is the life of His own. "Or death." Death on your fleshly hopes and expectations. Death on all your long-cherished schemes of earthly joy and peace. Dead twigs in the nest you have been so nicely feathering for yourself. Death in your family, your husband, your wife, your child — all this yours. Why? To give you to know that JEHOVAH is your inheritance and your All in all. "Or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." For how long? Notice,

II. — Its duration — "shall Be For Ever." Do not we sigh and cry, Lord, let us abide in the experimental possession and spiritual enjoyment of Thee *for ever*? but He says, No, I have appointed the day and the night for thee ; in the darkness I will guard thee, and in the light I will guide thee; in the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness thou shalt rejoice in the enjoyment of My mercy, and amid the gloom of desertion and dejection thou shalt learn the preciousness of that covenant promise — "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. xxx. 18). "*For ever*." In striking contrast to the possession of Canaan by the Jews which was only temporary. God is the eternal Inheritance of His people, promised to them in Christ before the world began, preserved for them in Christ throughout all time, and presented to them by Christ in all its grandeur, beauty, and glory when time is no more with them. This fills the heart with joy and peace when all things else are fading. Does the poor frail body tremble and totter? It is our mercy to "know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). Do tribulations increase? By the teaching of the Spirit we can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"

(2 Tim. L 12). Do temptations annoy? Our life is hid with Christ in God and naught can touch it there.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

XLIX. CONFIDENCE IN EVIL TIME.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning,
November 11th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time."
— Psalm xxxvii. 19.

THE persons spoken of under this personal pronoun "they," are described by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Ghost throughout this very precious Psalm, and especially in the words of the verse preceding the text, as "the upright." Upright, as Jehovah beholds them in the glass of His decrees. Upright, as He sees them in the perfections of Jesus. Upright, as they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. As the Spirit of Christ is experienced by us, and the mind which was in Him is in us, we "give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of [is dear Son" (Col. i. 12, 13). It is a high privilege to experience that which the Holy Ghost by the apostle states further on, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in His sight" (Col. i. 21, 22). It is one thing for us to talk about these things, but quite another to know them for ourselves

by the teaching of the blessed Spirit. We may boast of our knowledge of Divine sovereignty as it is revealed in the Scriptures of truth; but what know we of the sway of Emmanuel's sceptre of love in our daily walk and conversation? Having our enmity to God and His truth slain by the revelation of Incarnate Love, our perverse wills brought into sweet subjection to the reign of His grace, we know by Divine teaching that uprightness is lacking in every part of our wretched nature; yet we have it in the person and work of Christ, who is blessedly revealed in us. Christ in the Book of God is glorious, but Christ in the heart of a poor vile sinner exceeds in glory. That Christ, who graciously became one with us in our flesh, having made Himself one with us by the indwelling of His Spirit, now brings us to realize His sovereignty and omnipotence in the utter renunciation and denial of self in every point and particular of our standing in His sacred and solemn presence. Can it be that we are in possession of uprightness when the experience of our heart is a constant lack of the same? Yes, we have it in Him who ever stands upright in the presence of the Father for us, and reveals Himself to our longing and waiting hearts by the Holy Ghost. We have not a particle of uprightness, spiritual honesty, godly sincerity, or true simplicity but that which is communicated directly from our Head. An, my dear friends, it is a marvellous mercy to be brought in true simplicity to the feet of such a gracious and glorious Christ, who in covenant acknowledged us as His own, and on Calvary's tree claimed us as the purchase of His blood. Now, in the glory of God the Father, He sees our worthless names in the print of the nails, and sends His blessed Spirit to witness with our spirit that we are the redeemed and eternally-loved children of God. Blessed with such communications through His own glorious Gospel we can sing —

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing,
Nor fear with Thy righteousness on
My person and offerings to bring;
The terrors of law and of God

With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

I know some will say, What a presumptuous fellow! when I declare that a child of God down here experiences a happiness as genuine and as real, though not so full, as the very saints in glory, when he is blessed under the melting power of God's Gospel, and with the sweet communications of JEHOVAH'S Spirit, with which they would not part — no, not for ten thousand worlds. Here we see the elect are upright in Christ and upright in spirit by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the Lord knows all about them, their days, their circumstances, their sorrows, their suffering, and their sins. He brings these things to their remembrance, and gives them to know that they are but the working of all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. There is marvellous and mysterious grace in the knowledge that all things serve Him, and that the devil, all the evil, all the corruption, all the disorder, and all the sins in the world are working together in the purpose and providence of God for the display of His glory, the exaltation of His Christ, the honour of His Spirit, and the eternal joy of every member of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The Lord knoweth the days," hours minutes, and moments, "of the upright." Look! here is a blessed truth which has dwelt with me for many weeks. It is one of those sweet and precious portions of which I once heard an old minister say, "*They come courting me.*" I like that kind of courting. They come whispering in one's ear, nestling in one's bosom, warming one's heart, and will not be put off. It matters not how much the devil may question their right to court and to comfort us, for greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. There is greater power in Him who came to put away our sins than in all the sins that trouble and perplex us. The "*all might*" of the Holy Ghost is more than a match for all the sins that He brings to light in our consciences, or that we can commit. It is a mercy to know that when the devil comes down in great wrath, apparently to drive the life of God out of us, Jesus appears in greater

love in some precious portion of His Word, which He brings with power for the comfort and encouragement of troubled and tempest-tossed spirits. This is the portion: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts i. 7). Some of you — Why should I say, Some of you? Why not, Some of us? Myself with the rest *i* Well, we think if we could only put away from us these doubts, fears, sins, sorrows, unbelief, and accursed indifference, and enter in to abide in the sunshine of His presence and the sweets of communion, how blessed it would be. But our Father sees it is not good for us, and yields not His prerogative to our hands, but teaches us individually to confess — "My times are in Thy hands."

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

Then look at that last verse. It is precious for the eye to read it, but how much more for the heart to feel it sealed homo by the power of the Holy Ghost —

"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."

"*All my times are in Thy hand.*" *All*, not some, but everyone of them. *My*, mine by bitter and blessed experience. *Times*, day and night, summer and winter, prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, life and death.

"Times the tempter's power to prove,
Times to taste a Savior's love;
All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend."

"All my times *are*." It is not, My times *were*, or *will be*, or, *I wish them to be*, but, "my times are *in*." Just look at that little word. I do love these little prepositions which we find here and there in God's Book. "*In*" not *about*, *near to*, or *towards*, but *in*. "*In Thy hand*." Did you ever feel your heart bubbling up with praise and thankfulness for His great goodness in taking your persons, times, and circumstances out of your hands altogether, and giving you to know that He manages your mean affairs? I well remember speaking in our friend Battersby's School-room a few years ago, from that glorious Fortieth of Isaiah, when that portion was very precious, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand." All the waters through which His poor children pass. The waters of sorrow, the waters of temptation, the waters of persecution, ay, and the very waves of doubt and fear, are all in His hand. The very place of the saints' security is the place of sorrowful experience from whence Satan would snatch them if he could; but he cannot.

"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."

This, JEHOVAH has decreed, and none can reverse it. There is a bit of precious Divinity in these words by one of our great poets —

"There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

That is a glorious truth. We cannot change the course of nature. We cannot alter our lot one iota. "Divine decrees remain unmoved." Our modern pulpit pigmies, whose prating reveals a reversing of God's order, may fret and fume as much as they will against the absolute

sovereignty of JEHOVAH, and do all they can to alter the destiny of men; but this quotation will stand everlastingly true —

"There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

"The LORD knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever." *"For ever."* Just a word upon this. It is an inheritance reserved where no hellish thief can break through and steal any of its treasures, into which no freewill plunderer can gain access to rob it of its glories, nor can rust destroy its brightness, nor moth fret away its fair beauty. Listen! "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. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter i. 3, 4). The possession of this inheritance is secured to all the seed royal of heaven in the person of their Head and Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have now laid before us, in the unerring providence of God, that precious promise which I have read for you by way of text, and may it be for bur spiritual profit, and for that consolation and encouragement which He alone can bestow through the grace of His own good Spirit. Read it again, note it well, and may He cause you to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" its precious truths.

"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time."

"*They*," the upright. "*They*" whom God knows in a peculiar manner as "His own." "*They*," who have an inalienable inheritance in God. "*They* shall not be ashamed in the evil time." We will notice,

I. — "THE EVIL TIME."

II. — "THEY SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED."

I. — "THE EVIL TIME." What is evil? That which is opposed to right; calamity, wickedness. Let us see what God says in His Word concerning it. We look not at the origin of evil — we cannot get there. Each of us may say concerning it, in the language of Psalm cxxxix. 6: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The origin of evil is a mystery hidden from the human mind. Men may attempt to explore and explain it, but every attempt is a proclamation of their folly. We believe what God has revealed in His Word concerning it; but free-will speculators, lost in the revelation God has given and pushed to the furthest point of their dreamy speculations, will taunt us with making God the Author of sin and the source of evil. But mark! We do no such thing; but as in God's light we see light, and amid the glories of His own revelation we behold Him, and hold fast y His truth, we adoringly sing in the language of the last verse of the first hymn of dear old Joseph Irons,

"With Him is no futurity,
He stands enwrapp'd in purity,
Unchangeably the same;
The Great First Cause of all events,
He gives decrees and ne'er repents,
And HOLY is His name."

In Amos iii. 6, the question is asked, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" Come to Isaiah xlv. 7: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Here we have God's sovereign declaration concerning the production of those things which shall make for His own glory, and in the full display of the same before assembled worlds His righteous character will remain untarnished, while all those who shall have lived and died casting reflections upon it will hear the words, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23). Well, in the revelation of JEHOVAH'S will in His written Word we are stopped on the shore of an ocean of Divine mysteries which our poor, weak stretch of mind can never explore, never fully

understand. But this we know to our sorrow, there is evil in the world, and feelingly we carry a large amount of it along with us. We read in the sacred page that God made man upright. As man came forth from the hands of his Creator he was upright, but now by nature he is wholly evil. A question arises here! Was there evil in the world before Adam sinned? Certainly. The devil was in the world. Evil was in the serpent when he threw the dust of fleshly expectancy into the eyes of Eve, and beguiled her with the lying insinuation, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii. 5). The subtilty and craft of the devil is truly marvellous. He can talk like an angel of light. He can appear more liberal than God. Mark you this! "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." "*Ye shall be as gods.*" No doubt he had reference to that which is in Gen. i. 1 and 26: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." God; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "And God said, Let *us* make man." The three persons in the undivided Essence. Look again at Gen. iii. 22: "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us (Three) to know good and evil." Satan plotted, and in plotting fell. Pie would cast evil in the face of JEHOVAH, ay, and charge evil upon that heart in which evil cannot possibly exist. But why was evil introduced into this world? For the exhibition and display of God's grace in the salvation of the elect therefrom by the person, love, blood, and righteousness of God's dear Son.

Sin is revealed in God's Word and experienced in the hearts of God's living family as unmitigated evil. But what has this to do with the precious portion before us? Ask any living child of God who has been shown the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and who has groaned beneath the weight of its burden, and he will tell you that it was an evil time to him when he was taught by the Spirit that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from the Lord, that life was one continued act of departure from Him, and hell its just reward. What evil time have you experienced in reference to sin? What about the first moment when the evil of sin was opened *up* to your astonished gaze, and was made a terrible reality in your heart's experience? What about the time when the Holy Ghost took and drove the ploughshare

of the Divine law right through your wretched heart, laying it open and giving you to see and feel the hell of sin within you? What was your experience then? I will tell you something of what mine was. I felt that I was one mass of evil, so corrupt and depraved as to despair of ever being fit company for God, or men, ay, or even devils. God seemed to frown upon me. Satan roared after me. Justice threatened me. The law cursed me. Heaven was barred against me. Hell was open for me. I loathed my own self. *And* well I might. Just look at the natural heart as described in God's blessed Word, and brought to light by the convincing power of God the Holy Ghost. Turn to 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." That is a faithful description of your heart and mine given by the God of truth, who is "too wise to err and too good to be unkind." If you look in the margin of that portion you will find it reads thus: "*Or, the whole imagination. The Hebrew word signifieth not only the imagination, but also the purposes and desires.*" Now those of you whose hearts have never been touched by God the ever-blessed Spirit are sure to object to so humiliating a description of your state before God: but remember, your starting up in proud and imperious opposition to God's mind and will is a lamentable evidence of the enmity against God of your carnal mind, and of the truth of that Scripture in your case: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts" (Eph. iv. 18). Oh, think of this. At this very moment you cannot be hid from Him with whom we have to do, whose eyes, as flames of fire, pierce down to the very depths of the hypocrisy of your nature, of the deceitfulness of your heart, and, may I not say? — yes, I will for God's Word declares it — a nature which is *earthly, sensual, devilish* (James iii. 15). That is *me*. I do not say this with a stiff neck or a proud stomach; but with a heart softened and subdued before my God this morning with some little assurance that His blessed Spirit is graciously at work there. Yes, this very morning He has brought me down as a wretched good-for-nothing sinner at the footstool of sovereign mercy to experience a little of that peace

and joy which flows in streams of blood from the wounded side of my Lord and Saviour. Only in His blood and obedience have I acceptance now and hope of His eternal glory when I shall have done with flesh, and sense, and sin. In the experience of this I am encouraged, and God is my witness, I have no nerve whatever to tread these pulpit stairs, to stand before a people who are listening for His voice who knows every thought, every motive, and every desire of this trembling spirit of mine.

We now come to notice that searching portion in Matt. xv. 19, where the Lord Jesus Christ settles the matter with clean-handed, but hard-hearted, hypocrites, just before He turned His back upon them to meet the deep necessities and anxieties of a poor child of His. which you have set before you more fully in that sermon which God has made a blessing to many of you, "The Devil, the Dog, and the Deliverer." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Have we any here this morning whose thoughts during the whole of the past week have been very satisfactory to them? If we have, this testimony of Christ will not be very acceptable to them. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." O for us to think, that when we take God's Word to read it with some comfort, foolish, vain, and trifling thoughts flow forth in wild profusion. I read this morning that precious portion in John viii. 29: "For He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." He spoke those words to me, and I knew and felt that He did all those things for me. Well, while I was thus reading and musing, where do you think my thoughts drifted me to? I was sailing away on the top of Cleopatra's Needle, and tossed hither and thither on the wild waves of the Bay of Biscay. Is not that a paradox? Enjoying the presence and preciousness of the Lord in His Word and then grieved with such rubbish, such foolish thoughts as those. What was all this for? All for good, every bit of it. I know the precise and very proper ones will be ready to call me to order here; but I know it is so. I do not wish to talk much about such corrupt and foolish experience, yet I feel in the presence of the Majesty of heaven that

out of my heart proceed evil thoughts, but such are to make me feel my utter unworthiness, and to give me a fitting opportunity to praise and bless my gracious Deliverer who in His own time turns these base intruders out with the spirit of His mouth, and with the brightness of His coming with power and great glory to my heart. The very moment He appears words of grace flow from His sacred lips to those who mourn in captivity and lament His absence. See! "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. xxix. 11). Ah, these are thoughts of eternal peace which ever flow from the heart of JEHOVAH to His own in the Son of His love, to give them an expected end of their sorrows, trials, and temptations.

IT. — "THEY SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED." This appears very strange when we experience the plague and power of sin which is evil, and the worry of evil thoughts which sore distress us. Also when we are brought by the power of the Holy Ghost into the presence of infinite excellency to feel that we are as filthy as burnt brands. Read for yourselves that precious third chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah. There you see the evil one at the right hand of the chosen and plucked one to resist him; but, mercy of mercies, there is One nearer to the plucked and filthy brand than Satan. Satan says, He is filthy. Jesus *cleanseth* him in His precious atoning blood. Satan says, He is naked. Jesus *clothes* him in His robe of spotless righteousness. Satan says, He is mean and contemptible. Jesus *crowns* him with lovingkindness and tender mercy. 'If Satan is near, Jesus is nearer. Look at that precious portion. Psalm Ixxiii. 22, 23: "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.*" It matters not how near Satan may be to me, Jesus holds me by my right hand, and by my right heart too. What do you mean? I mean to say there is a right heart and a wrong heart, a good heart and an evil heart. When, in the midst of all the evil with which I am surrounded, I am blessed with a sweet and solemn assurance that Christ has my heart, my times, my concerns, and all my affairs for time and for eternity in His gracious hands, I am not ashamed,

and can bid the devil to do his worst. Yes, and though my wretched, evil heart may seethe with corruption and boil with enmity, with such a kind and loving Friend holding me by my right hand, I must eventually be brought through all the swelling floods of evil into the presence of His glory, where no evil can hurt or annoy — in that glorious land where the redeemed fear no evil, behold no iniquity, and dread no danger; and where JEHOVAH'S eye and heart ever rest upon the perfect man standing in the perfections of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now. look at Job i. and ii. See what evil came upon Job! Trial after trial, calamity after calamity, until his poor wife wearied with the succession of troubles which befell him, said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." The learned say the last sentence ought to be rendered, "Bless God and die." This would make Job's wife to appear not so foolish as some would have her to be. She evidently desired that her husband might be delivered from the evils that beset him. "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Mark that! Not only good, but evil from the hand of God. It is my mercy, and it may be the mercy of some of you, to experience a little bubbling up of gratitude to Him for the knowledge that the very disappointments, distractions, distresses, and necessities that we have experienced during the past week have all come according to His purpose, and have been dispensed in measure from His gracious hand and from His loving heart. These have been so many tonics for the good of our spiritual health and for the strengthening of our inner man. What an accumulation of evils the child of God has to contend with. Sin is the demonstration of evil. *Evil thoughts* distress the child in whose heart God has implanted His fear. The evil one is very active in resisting and reproaching the redeemed of the Lord. Evil influences are at work around us day by day, ay, every moment. Wrong, springing from the evil natures of our fellow-creatures, for as assuredly as we belong to Christ and are blessed with His sweet simplicity we shall know something of this, and mourn over the

duplicity and deceit which reigns rampant in the world, and is the bane of the professing Church. That such is the case we know by bitter experience, yet, with Christ by our side and Christ in our heart, we "*shall not be ashamed in the evil time.*"

Did you notice that precious chapter which I read for our lesson this morning? Why do I style it *our lesson*? Because, as a scholar, I love to read God's Word and receive instruction from the best of all teachers. Have you ever asked yourselves what is the meaning of the word doctrine? It is *teaching*. Scriptural teaching is that brought home to the heart by God the ever-blessed Spirit. Did you experience anything of such teaching as I read Gen. xlviii. to you? I can rarely read it without my memory running back to the days that are past when it was made exceedingly precious to me. As a child, I have wept over it, sighed, and asked God to make me understand it. Look at poor old Jacob with Joseph's two lads between his knees. He crosses his hands upon the heads of his grandsons, knowing what he was doing, but Joseph knew not. He said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Notice that, "redeemed," not from some evil, but "*from all evil.*" When was that experienced by Jacob? Go to Gen. xlvii. 8, 9: "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: *few and evil have the years of my life been.*" His years appeared many, yet he looked upon his days as few. Every one of his days evil under the sun. Such was his experience, but he was blessed every day with the presence and delivering grace of his redeeming God the Covenant-Angel. So it is with all the children of the living God. They are redeemed from the evil world which surrounds them, from the evil of sin which is in them, from an evil heart of unbelief which annoys them, from the Evil One who is at their right hand to resist them, and from the thousand evils which cross their path and distress them more or less all the days of their lives. With the presence and promise of the

Redeeming Angel, *"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time."*
What? not ashamed

"When sins and fears prevailing rise,
And fainting hope almost expires?"

Not ashamed then? No! For

"Jesus, to Thee I lift mine eyes,
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires."

Not ashamed when the evil of your nature is such that you can experience nothing else? You wish to bow the knees of your body before the throne of His heavenly grace, to pour out your soul to Him, but how to perform that good thing you find not. Not ashamed then? Yes, thoroughly ashamed of self. The child of God, when brought to see himself in contrast to the perfections of Jesus, is like Ezra, who could say, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra ix. 6). At such times as these, when the evil of our wretched nature prevails, we want to pray, but we don't know how, even then the Intercessor for transgressors is suited to our need, and in purest grace He appears to open His "mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed (feelingly) to destruction" (Prov. xxxi. 8). See! Not ashamed when Satan appears and brings with him accusation after accusation, and reproof after reproof? No. For the Responsible One for His people's safety, the Umpire who settles all disputes for His brethren, the Vindicator of His Church's cause, is sure to appear for the relief of those committed to His trust. Such are graciously taught to wait upon Him with the cry from their hearts, "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even Thy salvation, according to Thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in Thy word" (Psalm cxix.41, 42). That is a precious petition! Look at it again and again. Some of you may now be saying, within your own souls, "Ah, I can first see one and then

another enjoying God's sweet mercy. I know it by the beaming of joy in that face, and the streaming tears from those eyes; but here I am left dumb and dreary, ay, and as dead as the very seat beneath me." Not quite so dead, my friend, for the seat feels not its deadness. Your cry is, "Let Thy mercies come *also* unto me, O Lord." Favour me with the droppings of Thy showers of blessing, Let the dew of Thy heavenly grace and benediction distil upon my fleece. Cause me to enjoy the favour of Thy countenance and the sympathy of Thy loving and ever-affectionate heart. "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me." Oh, what a blessed privilege it is for us to know that we have in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ one who pleads our cause, maintains our right, vindicates our character, and avenges our wrongs. With the knowledge of blessings so rich and rare we may well hold on to the precious promise, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time." Look here! I have a bit of a hint for some of you. 1 Tim. vi. 10: "For the love 'of money is the root of all evil." What is meant by money? Not so much copper, silver, gold, cheques, or banknotes, but anything that represents these — wealth, affluence. Are these evil? No, but the love of them is. "If riches increase set not your heart upon them" (Psalm lxii. 10). "The love of money" — that is, the heart fixed upon riches, ay, and a determination to obtain and keep much of this world's goods — "is the root of all evil." Such a character making a profession that his heart has been weaned from earthly things, that he counts "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," can sing with great gusto when he is well pleased,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Yet, watch him as he passes the plate when there is a collection. See how he drops those devil-designed three-penny bits out of his liberal fingers. I can tell you it is neither encouraging to the officers of the Church, soothing to the minister, nor creditable to a congregation,

when a profusion of three-penny-pieces disgrace the collection plates. A word to the wise is sufficient.

But, enough of this. It is our mercy to be blessed with the assurance that, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time." To the wicked the day of death is the day of evil. According to the prophecies of Micah there were many in his day who cared not for the day of death. It is an awful thing to meet death and go to hell on the quiet. See! The time is fast hastening on; that dread moment, at which poor nature quails, is fast approaching — a moment which, according to poor nature's judgment, is evil indeed; but to the saint of God the day-dawn of eternal glory. Blessed with a precious Christ in the heart, and with the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, there can be no amazement, no dread, no fear, no shame. Let Satan dig up the sins of a lifetime, and do his worst to harass and annoy the departing pilgrim, the Responsible One will be sure to be there to silence all his accusations. Covenant blood will meet the gaze of the expiring one, while every transgression and sin shall be for ever swept from his sight. Then as he is watching for the summons to enter into the halls of the glorified, the language of his heart will be, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

In the day when JEHOVAH shall reckon up His jewels, all out of the Son of His love shall be ashamed as His call to judgment greets their startled ears. Reprobate goats shall hear with consternation the irrevocable command, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" while the elect flock shall hear with confidence the gracious welcome, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

May it be ours to sing without doubt, fear, or shame, in the language of Zinzendorf,

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay?
While through Thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

L. SATISFIED IN FAMINE.

A Sermon

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

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."
— Psalm xxxvii. 19.

A PARADOX indeed is the truth of the text to the carnal mind. When I speak of the carnal mind, I allude not simply to those who are left destitute of the regenerating and enlightening grace of God; but to the natural mind of those also who are brought by the teaching of the Holy Ghost into some knowledge and understanding of His will as revealed in the written Word, and revealed in their heart by the best of all teachers. Their heart! Not the old, deceitful, and desperately wicked heart which hates the things of God; but the new heart of His own giving which receives, loves, and delights in the Spirit's communications. The natural understanding wants to have nothing to do with God, His will, His Word, or His works of grace; but the spiritual understanding eagerly seeks after the things of Christ as they are opened up by God the Holy Ghost. By referring to a few portions of God's Word this will be clear to us. See Rom. viii. 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The apostle is there speaking, not of the reprobates who are left ignorant of JEHOVAH'S secret, but of himself and those in experimental

oneness with Him who are taught the blessedness contained in that second verse: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death." Sweet deliverance! Freedom from the dominion and authority of sin and death, and brought under the sway of the benign sceptre of life and love. There may be those present who, not in a spirit of disputation or antagonism to what I am stating, but with a desire and thirst after instruction in the things of the kingdom, are secretly asking themselves a few questions. This may be one: If I am not under the dominion and authority of sin and death, yet day by day I experience darkness, deadness, and dreariness. God is pleased to answer my prayers with crosses, my bright expectations with reverses, my sweet hopes with dark despair. How can I claim such a blessed deliverance as mine? How can I take the precious language of the apostle upon my tongue? Ah, my dear friends, we forget oftentimes that there are two natures in every living child of God. "For 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). Now mark that: "*Ye cannot do the things that ye would.*" Now let me tell you what you would do if you could. You would live sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, looking up into His lovely face, and drinking love, life, and liberty from His gracious eyes. You would remain with Him in blessed and hallowed communion, holding Him, not simply by the feet, but by the heart, and would not let Him go. But such is not His will concerning you. Uninterrupted felicity can never be the lot of any child of grace in this wilderness of sin and sorrow. Oh, no. In the display of His glorious sovereignty He sends darkness and it is night. He causes the Sun of Righteousness to shine, and the clouds of ignorance, sin, and unbelief are dispersed. He opens His fists, and the rough East wind of adversity withers up the sweetest frames and the most blooming evidences which His child may have experienced. He causes His South wind to blow over His garden, and the sweet spices of prayer and praise, faith and hope, love and peace flow forth, and a sweet season of refreshing from His presence is enjoyed. Blessed be His holy name for that gracious intimation — "The times and the

seasons the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts i. 7). This crosswise experience we have blessedly described at the latter part of Romans vii.: "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." See! At one and the same time the law of sin asserts its power in my members; but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus reigns in my mind, giving me the sweet hope and assurance that He having begun His own good work of grace in me, will perform and finish it unto the day of Jesus Christ. The Stronger must be the Victor — must be the Conqueror, though the doubting and fearing child of God may be surrounded with afflictions, failures, temptations, and tribulations, and Satan, the world, and the flesh appear to gain the mastery. Yet, even then, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). Look at the varied experiences which are given to us in God's most Holy Word, as flowing from the hearts of His Spirit-taught servants — at one time rejoicing in the Lord with the blessed enjoyment of His salvation, and at another time weeping and lamenting the lack of that consolation and joy which abounds nowhere but in His sacred presence.

It has been our lot the last few Sundays to meditate upon these two precious verses, the concluding part of which I have read to you by way of text. We were privileged to dwell upon — 1. The knowledge God has of the days of the upright. 2. The eternal inheritance the upright have in Him. 3. Their confidence in evil times. What a blessed truth! "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time." When the evil one seems to have everything his own way — when the evil heart of unbelief torments and troubles the mind that would be stayed wholly upon the Lord — when evil thoughts appear to deluge the soul, and swamp the very life of God within, the upright shall not be ashamed. See! "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psa. xxiii. 4). What are we to understand by that expression, "*the valley of the shadow of death?*" I could almost be bound to say that you rarely hear what is styled a

funeral sermon preached, but you hear these words quoted as though they referred wholly to the hour and article of death — that dread period when the soul is passing from time into eternity, to the child of God the passage from grace to glory. The words have no such meaning, but illustrate a part of the wilderness wanderings of the children of God. Do we not oftentimes find this world to be the valley of the shadow of death? I do standing in this pulpit, and in those pews there are marks and evidences of the same. The shadow of death hangs over everything under the sun. "Friend after friend departs," and we wonder how soon the day will come when we shall see the face of Him who looks love and affection down to the very depths of our hearts. Scarcely a pain or an ache can be experienced in these poor bodies, but we wonder is it the beginning of the end. We see the hectic flush on the cheek of one we love, and detect the sinking of the eye in another; infirmity is creeping on here, and debility is manifested there. Yonder hearse bears all that is mortal of — what? Either a child of the devil whose soul has gone to depths of never-ending darkness, or an heir of glory whose triumphant spirit has soared aloft, through rich and sovereign grace, to sing the praises of Him to whom it owes its all in life, in death, and through eternity.

Go with me in spirit to the East. Look! There is the valley of the shadow of death. The shadow of death indeed it is. Christian butchers are at their terrible work of sanguinary salvation. It makes my heart shudder at the refined cruelty and awful hypocrisy of those men who stand up in the sacred name of the Prince of Peace, and elevating that cursed and abominable, ay, and most damnable image that hell ever invented, the cross, incite and inflame the hellish passions of men to hound their enemies to the depths of hell. The standard of the cross is the sign of cruelty, and under its dark shade the myrmidons of death and destruction lurk ready to do their master's bidding. See! Reports the most horrible and harrowing reach us morning by morning. So many thousands of Turks slain, and with cold and callous indifference the heroes of the cross inform us, *We lost only so many hundred men.* What does this mean in plain

English? If people will speak plainly, it means that Russians and Turks are hurried off to hell. In thinking of these things we are lost in wonder and amazement. Oh, how blessed it is for the child of God to be led away from these things, to enjoy a little of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind in the knowledge of Him! How blessed it is for us to know that in passing through the valley of the shadow of death we have the strong arm of Jesus to lean upon, and the assurance of His Word that His loving heart will never fail in its sympathies toward us! With the presence of such a Friend we will fear no evil. Let the Evil One roar, let an evil world persecute, let an evil heart torment, let an evil nature distress, ay, let all evil combined assail the elect of God with terrible power, yet the prayer of our most glorious Christ must be answered in the experience of every blood-bought child — "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii. 15).

Let us now, in humble dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, look at the sentence which I have read for our consideration. It is a very blessed and precious one to those who have been led by the Eternal Spirit into a true understanding of the sovereign will of JEHOVAH as revealed in the Scriptures of truth.

"And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

I. — FAMINE — What is it?

II. — SATISFACTION — Who has it?

I. — FAMINE — What is it? Want of food. Those acquainted with history have often had their minds harrowed up with the graphic descriptions of the horrors of famines in various parts of the world. The first mention of famine in God's Word is in Gen. xii. 10: "And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land." We read also of the seven years of famine in Egypt in the days of Joseph. You will remember how he was brought out of prison to interpret

Pharaoh's dual dream. According to the interpretation there were seven years of plenty — perfect provision — and seven years of famine — the perfection of want. Here we may ask, Why do famines visit and depopulate some parts of the earth? The Scriptures inform us that they are sent as scourges in God's hand to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. See Jer. xxix. 17, 18. They come only in accordance with the sovereign will and good pleasure of Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, concerning whom we sometimes sing,

“Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker'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.”

It is His to send fruitful seasons, and it is His also to withhold them. See how this is declared in Psalm cv. 16: "Moreover He called for a famine upon the land; He brake the whole staff of bread." There is a very interesting circumstance in connection with the manifestation of God's sovereignty in the experience of His own people recorded in 1 Kings xvii. 1: "And Elijah the Tish-bite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Turn with me to James v. 16 — 18: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 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. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Here you see the mind of God revealed to Elijah. He prays vastly contrary to the whims and sentimentalities of the multitude of professing

Christians in the present day. Thousands would say of such a prayer as Elijah's, Oh, how very wrong and wicked, quite contrary to the mind of a gracious Father and of a loving Saviour, for God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust, and gives the fruits of the earth for the sustenance of the wicked as well as for the righteous. But God proves, by answering the prayer of His servant, that it was in harmony with His purpose. Elijah prayed that it might not rain. God shut the windows of heaven. He withheld His rain, and the earth, which was His, ceased from yielding fruit. This points out the truth which carnal reason hates, and which the nations of the earth discard, that every bounty, blessing, and benefit we enjoy is bestowed according to the sovereignty of His will. He sends to one place plenty, to another penury. He gives to some profusion, to others poverty. He does as He will, and He won't be dictated to. With the understanding and experience of this, the child of God can sing —

"Up to my Father's high decree
Each act in time I trace;
Up to the glorious sovereign Three,
Almighty Fount of grace!"

Let us look at the subject in the light of the experience of God's own children, for every one of them must experience more or less of famine. We read in Amos viii. 11, of a famine which would assuredly come upon the children of Israel: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." Now I wish you to notice the exact language of Amos. He does not say there shall be a famine of the words of the LORD, because the living in Jerusalem can never truly experience that, for it is written, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). There is always a full supply in a precious Christ, and perfect provision for the application of that supply in every time of need. God declares by Amos that there shall be a famine "of *hearing* the words of the LORD." Surely

this is true of the days we live in, for with all the flaming profession of Christianity we have around us, I will be bound to say the majority in this congregation will confess to the truthfulness of these words in their own hearts' experience. There is a famine of *hearing* the words of the Lord. Go where you will — to church, chapel, or meeting-house — what find you? Is it the Word of God? No. It is the word of man. It is not with a "Thus saith the Lord" coming from the exercised heart of a Spirit taught pilgrim; but the cold, studied treatise flowing from a fluent and flippant tongue. It is not by the leading of the Holy Ghost into all truth, but something got up and prepared by the man for the occasion. Well, my dear friends, it is the blessed privilege of every sent teacher of God's Gospel to "study to show himself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15). He is not dependent upon his own meditation or studies, but in simple dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit of the living God to tell the wonders God has done in the choice, salvation, regeneration, and preservation of a people near unto Him, to trace out the footsteps of the flock, to state the varied experiences of the living family, to sound forth the rare excellences and grace of a precious Christ, and that salvation which is in Him with eternal glory. Thus the Covenant-Three are glorified, elect sinners are quickened, instructed, comforted, and built up in their most holy faith.

"Hearing the words of the LORD." What a blessed privilege it is to sit under the sound of the voice of the best Beloved as it is borne upon the wings of the heavenly wind from the exercised heart and faltering lips of His own sent and truly-qualified servants. This causes the heart to thrill with heavenly and spiritual delight, and the sweet tones of Gospel music inspire the soul with a sweet assurance of an undying interest in the glories and beauties of Emmanuel. Blessed with such privileges as these, Zion's pilgrim will sometimes groan under the pangs of spiritual hunger caused by a famine of *hearing*. Let me ask you, How often have you sat under the preaching of the living Word when the preachers heart has been all on fire with the rich realization of the love of God shed abroad there

by the Holy Ghost given unto him? You look here! The preacher can no more communicate his feelings, enjoyments, and raptures to your souls, than he can create a world. You sit languid and listless, your mind occupied with the veriest trifle that meets your gaze, or it may be that the devil is taking your mind back to the dreary spots of toil, trial, and temptation through which you have lately passed, or he is filling you with blighted hopes and gloomy prospects. Where are you? In such a state of spiritual hunger that you would, but cannot eat. You live in the midst of plenty, but there is not a particle of spiritual provision for you. You are in darkness, without a ray of Divine light. You long to hear the voice of the best Beloved, but not a sound from the everlasting throne greets your ears, speaking life and joy to your longing soul. Thus to you there is a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. When I speak thus I speak not as a novice, nor as one who has never experienced such things. Ofttimes it has been my lot to listen to the preaching of God's truth from the lips of His own sent servants, whose understandings have been illuminated with His light, and their hearts warmed with His love. But where have I been? In the dark, in Achor's gloomy vale — no realization of love, no enjoyment of the presence of Him who is the life, light, and joy of His people, as He is revealed to them by the power and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. The vale of Meshech must be trodden, and the dingy tents of Kedar inhabited, while the heart sighs for the sunny slopes of Zion's favoured hill. I assure you such has been my lot many times.

Yes, days of famine come, and must come, to those who experience their oneness with and perfection in Christ Jesus, as recorded in Rom. viii. 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?" — tribulation which you and I must assuredly experience from the bands of Satan and the world — "or distress?" — distress which we experience when gloomy doubts arise, and foul temptations lie open before us; "or persecution?" You ask, Do we suffer persecution? I do. Persecution is oftentimes my lot. The devil is a daily persecutor. Old Carnality is an awful persecutor in regard to the gracious revelation which God has given of Himself to me.

Persecuted with unbelief and accursed indifference. "*Or famine?*" Yet whatever famine may be experienced, it can never separate us from the love of an eternally-loving Saviour. See! Not only a famine of hearing the Word from the lips of God's sent messenger, but of hearing the Word from the grace-filled lips of a precious Christ. You remember how he dealt with the Syrophenician woman. "He answered her not a word." See how clearly this is described in the language of the bride which she learns from the lips of the heavenly Bridegroom, for, blessed be His holy name, there is precious reciprocity here — ay, more than reciprocity — something blessedly mutual: "Let me hear Thy voice, for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely." What was the desire of every living soul on entering this place this morning? Was it to hear the voice of a mere mortal, or that of a covenant God speaking pardon, justification, and acceptance to your souls? Did you not come to hear His voice, and to lose yourselves in His love? Were you not filled with spiritual yearnings to feel the very pulsations of His heart of eternal affection, and to be blessed with the assurance of your eternal oneness with Him? I know the desires of the living children of God. Repeatedly the cry of my heart is, "Lord, let me hear Thy voice speaking Thine own love, which shall thrill my soul with the certainty of my interest in Thee and of Thine unchanging interest in me." Blessed be His holy name, His interest in His people can know no change, neither can men, devils, nor all the corruptions of our wretched natures affect it for a single moment.

"*The days of famine.*" When the heart is crying, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Song iii. 3). When, like the prodigal, you have wondered in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire far away from your Father's house, as described by the Saviour in Luke xv. 11 — 32. The father divided between the two sons his living. One stayed at home rejoicing in the possession of his portion and became proud. The other, with a spirit of prodigality, left his father's house and squandered his substance in riotous living. "And when he had spent all, *there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.* And he fain would have filled his belly with the husks

that the swine did eat." Just mark that last clause. It does not say he filled his belly with husks. Oh, no! the child of God cannot do that; but it is astonishing to see how they will try sometimes. It is marvellous when in the light of God we notice this in connection with the history of this place of worship. I have been closely and quietly watching matters for the last three years or so. Let me ask. What became of many who made a flaming show during the last days upon earth of dear old Joseph Irons? Some sunk in Antinomian indifference, while others are flaunting with Arminian harlots. Some seeking for satisfaction in cold legality, while others are apparently satisfied with Yea and Nay, on and off, in and out. Yes, this is a positive fact, and it is truly marvellous to me how some who profess to have been blessed with the gracious testimony from the anointed lips and exercised hearts of God's faithful ministers can be bewitched (see Gal. iii. 1), and seemingly feed with avidity upon Carolinian and free-will husks.

Well, it's precious little use our mourning and lamenting over such. But this son, when he began to be in want, when the pangs of hunger were keenly felt, would have fed himself upon anything, but he could not. As a true-born son he remembered the rich provisions and sweet luxuries of his father's house, and 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." A blessed thing for us to know that the "*great way off*" does not allude to the father, for he was not then nor heretofore. Sons may and will wander; but a Father's love and unfelt presence keeps and preserves them amid all sin, and shame, and folly. "A great way off," in the son's apprehension, the father saw him, the father ran, the father fell upon his neck, the father kissed him. "And he said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Nothing said here of becoming a servant in the house of the father. No! The Gospel kiss of fond and unfeeling affection had chased away the cold spirit of legality from

his anxious heart. As a son he enters the father's house and is clothed in garments of the father's providing. As a son he sits at the father's table and eats of the fatted calf of the father's preparing. Here we see famine and want, but the child of God is brought by the irresistible power of Divine grace to the father's table, to the father's home, to the father's heart. Let me ask any of you who have experienced seasons of spiritual famine, Have you not bowed down before Him in want, necessity, blackness, and uncomliness? Ay, indeed you have. Read, and may the Lord grant you gracious deliverance from that described in Lam. v. 10: "Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine;" and may He bring you into His banqueting house to enjoy a rich feast at His hands, and hear His gracious voice saying unto you, "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly. O beloved" (Song. v. 1). We now are ed to notice,

II. — Satisfaction — Who has it? "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Luke i. 53). It is the full soul that loatheth the honeycomb. Pharisees full of themselves. Free-willers full of their own doings. Legalists full of their *duties*. Enthusiasts full of their frames and feelings. These can find no place for God's Christ, God's grace, God's salvation ; but loathe the honey from the Rock of Ages, and the precious provision which God has given to His own in the Son of His love. What is it that truly satisfies a hungry child of God? Turn with me to Deut. xxxiii. 23: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD." What kind of favour will satisfy your soul? Is it conditional favour? Not at all. Such would be no favour to you. Is it favour depending upon your faith, repentance, or circumspection? Such is no favour to you. That which can alone satisfy your waiting and wanting heart is the blessed consciousness of your interest in that favour with which God surrounded His own before the worlds were framed, bestowed upon them in Christ Jesus, and is sweetly applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, the felt want of which causes the hungry one to cry out in the precious language of Psa. cvi. 4, 5: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation: that I may

see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance.' Why, my dear friends, the favour that David prayed for is covenant favour, saving favour, electing favour, the favour which flows from the heart of the Covenant-Three, the favour which ever beams in the face of the God of all grace to all the election of grace. "*Satisfied with favour.*" Favour displayed in redemption by purchase and redemption by power. O what mercy for me to know anything at all about it. Who am I? A guilty, hell-deserving wretch; but though I know and feel that I deserve all that, yet, He will not let me go there. I am a prisoner of hope! Such prisoners cannot go to hell. In Christ they have favour vouchsafed to them, perfect deliverance from the prison-house, and perfect exemption from hell and damnation. This is the favour that my heart rejoices in.

We were reading yesterday morning that precious chapter, Jer. xxxi. My heart tested upon that twelfth verse. Look at it: "Therefore" — because the hand of JEHOVAH-JESUS is stronger than the hand of Satan, ay, and stronger than the hands of all devils combined. "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion." A glorious height! Not only one with Christ my Teacher and Christ my Saviour and Intercessor; but one with Christ my King upon His throne. Many people are soothing themselves with the cold comfort that they will live *a thousand years* on this wretched sin-stained earth. Well, they are quite welcome to all the comfort they can get out of that. But I love to be lifted up by the glorious resurrection power of a living Christ, not only far above this wretched earth, but far above all heavens, where Christ fills all in all, to meet every want and necessity of His pilgrim people, and to cheer their hearts with the hope of that eternal glory which awaits them up yonder. "They shall come and shall sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat." This is the finest of the wheat — the good old corn of the land of spiritual promise. It is that bread-corn which JEHOVAH, the devil, the world, and our sins, all combined, bruised. Mark! When bread-corn is bruised all life and vitality ceases — all the elements of life are ground out of it.

You can never reproduce corn from bruised corn. Yet, from the place of death to which a precious Christ descended, contrary to nature and to every hope and expectation of man, life and eternal glory abound to the whole election of grace. Bread-corn was bruised when all the wrath of a sin-hating God fell upon a precious Christ, and not upon me. He thus became the Bread of God — the Bread of Life which the blessed Spirit sets before famishing sinners in the feast of the everlasting Gospel. Great is the mystery of godliness! That which appears death and dissatisfaction to all the world around me affords me nourishment, strength, comfort, and blessed encouragement. Oh, how blessedly the Suretyship engagements and work of our blessed Lord and Master are set before us in this precious portion for every time of need. Not only wheat, but wine! Bruised and crushed grapes. Oh, what mercy to think that He who was the Glory of all heaven, and is now my Hope of eternal glory, should in gloomy, dark Gethsemane sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground *for me*. Oh, my dear friends, what kind of hearts have we? We sit and we listen to God's message of love, and we retire oftentimes as cold and as indifferent as the very stones. Well, not quite so dead, for our indifference is a burden, and we mourn our deadness before Him. "*For wine.*" Wine which cheers God's heart and mine. If this is not so then I am the most detestable hypocrite in all God's creation, and the most contemptible wretch this side hell's gates. But He knows that He is, and when He blesses me with fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, I can then say, Thy blood was shed for me. "*And for oil.*" Not only for wheat and for wine, but for oil. The Spirit of Christ as well as the blood of Christ. Read Lev. ii., where you have the meat-offering described. Fine flour mingled with oil. This speaks of the miraculous production of the sinless humanity of our blessed Saviour in the womb of the virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost who is the unction from above. Baked cakes have oil poured upon them. This speaks of Him whom God anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and through whom all the members of His mystical body are anointed in measure. "*And for the young of the flock and of the herd.*" This speaks of the perfect work of our adorable Saviour and Surety. "And

their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Look at ver. 14 : "And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the LORD." As we look at Aaron and his sons in priestly worship, we see them as lively types of Christ and His Church. Every living member of the body of our LORD Jesus Christ is a priest and a king unto God, and as such can be satisfied with nothing short of God and His goodness. This goodness is ours as we are brought by the blessed Spirit into heart-felt communion with Jesus.

Now look at Psalm xvii. 15: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness." How blessed it is for us to know that though we know not what we shall be, yet, "we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is." Just a hint here. It may be a word in season to some of you. I do not look at this beholding His face in righteousness, and this satisfaction as referring wholly to a future state. It has reference to the experience of that joy and peace which fills our souls when brought from under the cloud of our doubts and fears to see Him as our All in all. Are we occupied with ourselves in any way whatever? Dissatisfaction must be ours. Where is my satisfaction? Only in the glorious fact that I stand justified in the righteousness of Jesus — accepted in the person of Jesus — conformed to the image of Jesus, and shining in the brightness of His glory. A sweet conception of this in the heart here, is the blessed earnest of that eternal glory which awaits the children up yonder, when, divested of the burden of the flesh, they shall stand in the presence of His glory, and sing electing and redeeming love for ever and ever. Then, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; 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. 16, 17).

HYMN.

Bless Thine inheritance, O God,
Thy loved and chosen race,
The purchase of the Savior's blood,
The subjects of Thy grace.

Bless them with every promised good,
Which covenant love provides;
Bless them with Bread of Life for food,
And living streams provide.

Bless them with liberty and peace;
Bless them with light and love;
Bless them thro' time, till time shall cease,
And with Thyself above.
Joseph Irons.

LI. BARUCH, THE BLESSED BEGGAR

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Tuesday Evening,
October 5th, 1875, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

— Jer. xlv. 5.

IF we take into consideration the names of persons, their peculiarities, characters, experiences, painful or pleasant, the circumstances with which they were surrounded, or their histories as given by the pen of unerring inspiration, we shall find much that will make for our instruction, comfort, and edification, and also for our sorrow, discomfort, and distress. I am fully conscious that such a statement is not palatable to the tastes of proud worldlings and carnal professors, and cannot be received by those whose affections are fixed upon things under the sun. Such persons, when raised to any position, or distinction in the professing Church, prove themselves to be greater bores, and bring greater trials to the living children, than the most flagrant enemies of God and His truth. But, let us away from these and meditate upon this very instructive portion which I have read to you by way of text, and may the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit be vouchsafed unto us.

In the first place we notice the name — Baruch, the meaning of which is "The Blessed One, the Begging One." These significations correspond with his character and experience, for he was one whom God had blessed, and who sought after Him in cries, and sighs, and tears. This will appear to be an anomaly to the mere professor and formalist; but it is a marvellous truth. Such fondly dream that blessing must always be attended with worldly prosperity, joy, and peace, but the true-born child of God knows better. He who has been led into the marvellous secret that his poor body of sin and death is truly the dwellingplace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, glories in the fact that all his joy and peace is in Jesus, and that from himself can proceed nothing but distraction and perplexity. Have you ever noticed the difference between the blessings of the old covenant and those of the new? The old were temporal, the new are spiritual. The old were seen and judged by the sight of the eyes, the new are only discerned by the enlightened understanding. Law and Gospel, nature and grace, are contrary the one to the other in their operations and conclusions. Nature says, Blessed are the rich, the full, the flourishing; Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Nature says, Blessed are those who rejoice; but Jesus says, "Blessed are they that mourn." Old covenant blessings hung upon conditions, while those of the new flow from the free, uninfluenced, unhindered love of the Covenant Three-in-One. The blessings, the peace, the prosperity, in connection with the old covenant, were weak and transient through the conditions, ifs, buts, and peradventures attached to the promise thereof; and consequent failures, imperfections, and breakdowns entailed forfeiture and condemnation. Well, when we come to new covenant blessings, have we the peace and joy anticipated by the proud professor? No! Listen!" Blessed are the poor in spirit." Art thou poor in spirit? God has pronounced thee eternally blessed. This is incongruous to the carnal mind, and our wretched old nature grumbles and questions, How can we be poor and yet blessed! Well, blessed be God, *we* know how, for, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it" (Psalm xxv.). Look again!" Blessed are they that mourn." You and I

ofttimes come to the conclusion that these are diametrically opposite to each other, that mourning is the lot of a people accursed, and that where there is mourning there cannot be blessing. We infer naturally that if blessings abound we should go on our way continually rejoicing; but the irrevocable declaration of JEHOVAH-JESUS is, "Blessed are they that mourn." The hungry and thirsty are blessed, while the full soul is sent empty away, utterly destitute of all gracious and spiritual realities; "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Is that according to our carnal conclusions and thoughts of earthly ease? No! But it is according to His will who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Ah! Mark this well! The poverty, mourning, hungering, and thirsting, with persecution, are only for a little while, circumscribed by the short space called time, and then will come that glorious day when, free from all care, sorrow, and anxiety, we shall stand in the presence of Him whom we love, and with unsinning hearts praise and adore Him for ever and ever.

Baruch was blessed as an object of JEHOVAH'S love and choice. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Psalm lxxv. 4). Art thou brought as one beloved of God to know thy election? Then thou must know what it is to mourn over sin, and after the presence of the Bridegroom of thy heart, to experience true poverty of spirit, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and to be persecuted and reviled for Christ's sake. Yes, the elect of God are all blessed with all spiritual blessings, and yet they are all beggars. "And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him?" (Luke xviii. 7). All the foreknown, predestinated, justified, and called children of God are taught to confess, "Likewise the Spirit also 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" (Rom. viii. 26). Mourners over sin and after a precious Christ shall be blessed with His sweet company and rejoice in the fact that all their sins are cast

into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion. Such Jehovah has eternally blessed, and during their pilgrimage here upon earth He will seek them out and cause them to seek His face and favour, begging and sighing, "Lord, save me: Lord, help me: 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

Let us look at Baruch as he appears in the midst of the circumstances surrounding him. He was the amanuensis or secretary to Jeremiah, as we gather from the thirty-sixth chapter, where it is recorded that he was commanded to write the judgments of Jehovah against Jehoiakim and the people of Judah, and to read the same in the hearing of the princes and of the people. The roll being read in the presence of the king, it came to pass that Jehoiakim took a penknife, cut the roll in pieces, cast the same into the fire, which consumed the whole. But, mark! Words inscribed by God's command, though to the eye of sense, destroyed, can never be lost. "Heaven and earth *shall* pass away, but My words *shall not* pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). loses, in a rage, may smash the tables of stone, yet God is not thwarted in His purposes, frustrated in His plans, or disappointed in His designs. The book of Deuteronomy reveals the "ten words" in all their glorious perfection. False priests and false prophets have done their utmost to consign to oblivion the mind and will of JEHOVAH as contained in the Scriptures of truth, and so far did they at one time succeed that in the days of Josiah all traces of them were gone until "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD by Moses," and brought it out. "And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 30).

Popes, Papists, presumers, and pietists have done their utmost to subvert and expunge God's blessed Word from the face of the earth, but *they couldn't manage it*. Look at the number of copies now issuing from the press, through which our own God will accomplish

His designs of mercy in the hearts of His elect people. Now, mark! I desire not to be guilty of Bibliolatry, for what is the Bible to me? Everything as the Holy Ghost reveals the Incarnate Word to my waiting, wanting, and wondering heart. Without such revelation of the Incarnate Interpreter my very reading increases my bitterness and disappointment. But some may say: "You ought to read and understand." Ought I? Blessed be God, the faithful Remembrancer will see to it that I am led into all needful truth, and He has taught my soul to leave this matter in His gracious care and keeping. Moses may break the tables of the law, false priests and false prophets may attempt to obliterate it: Popes and Papists may do their utmost to destroy it: they never can. God is the Author, Inditer, and Preserver of His own truth, and will cause His own to sing: —

"Wide as the world is Thy command,
Vast as eternity Thy love,
Firm as a rock Thy truth shall stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.-'

As well as writing His mind and will in His own Book, He has given the gracious promise — "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Heb. x. 16, 17). Can this be true? Ah, indeed it is. Satan may and, will, remember them in the court of conscience, and He may keep us occupied with ourselves until, distressed and distracted with the painful discoveries of our vileness, we cry, "Lord, I am black, my lips are unclean, my heart deceitful above all things, my whole being is a mass of putrefaction. O Lord, there is no health in me." What is the answer of our gracious God? Listen! "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. Come away from the cold regions of legality; come away from sin and sorrow, corruption and condemnation, doubt and despondency, to Me, thy Saviour and Solace, thy Purity and Perfection, thy Confidence, thy All. Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." This is blessed indeed I Baruch was blessed, as his name denotes, as his circumstances describe, and as his God declares. See! He reads the

roll in the hearing of Jehoiakim and those who were one with him in his pride and profanity, and the consequence is that the king gives commandment for Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet to be taken; *"but the LORD hid them."* At God's command, "then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who -wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words" (Jer. xxxvi. 32). Baruch was a man of like passions with all God's sent servants; for, as the chapter in which my text appears indicates, he was filled with fear and dread, murmuring and repining, yet this was not unnoticed by the ever-watchful eye, nor unfelt by the sympathizing heart, of Israel's covenant-keeping God. Let us read the chapter: —

"The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel unto thee, O Baruch.

Baruch was indeed a blessed man! The first words from his lips, as well as the first scratch of his pen, acknowledge JEHOVAH as the covenant God of Israel. A covenant God in covenant relationship to a covenant people. In this covenant relationship he has secured the everlasting salvation of His own, — a salvation clogged not by conditions, hanging not upon uncertainties — but secured by the sovereign, indefectible, invincible, uninfluenced will of JEHOVAH. Ah, my friends, you remember this, — If Arminianism be true, then all Adam's race must be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." If the veil of the heavenly country could be drawn aside, and our eyes could scan the vast mass of glorified saints, we should not detect a single free-wilier there. No Arminian could join in their glorious chorus, for

"Without a jarring note they sing,
Salvation to our God and King."

Nothing of my own can I bring to the covenant God of Israel. Do I come to Him with a heart broken with a sense of my sins and utter unworthiness? He gave me that heart and the sense of sin, and the desire to confess it; and, blessed be His name, He has taught me to feel and say, in all my approaches unto Him, "Who am I that I should obtain strength to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have I given Thee." God's people are a nation of princes and prevailers. Ah, but these prevailers know well what it is to be tempted, and buffeted by the devil, to experience the pangs of spiritual desertion, to spend whole nights of anxiety and distress; but the Covenant-Angel is sure to appear and wrestle with them. "Oh!" say some of you, "we thought the wrestling was all on our side!" What saith the Scripture? Listen! "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day" (Gen. xxxii. 24).

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee;
Thy grace is Almighty, preventing,-and free."

Paul knew this, hence his confession: — "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 12). This causes us to be on the look out for the break of heaven's eternal day, when all wrestling shall cease, when all sighs shall be hushed in never-ending peace, when mourning hearts shall be rocked in the cradle of eternal tranquility, and aching heads shall for ever rest in the bosom of their Saviour and their God. O glorious privilege! Wondrous favour, to be put among the children! for me to walk with the tried, the begging, the blessed ones!

"Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest."

Oh, blessed poor and needy one! Oh, blessed mourning one! Oh, blessed meek and lowly one! Oh, blessed hungering and thirsting one! Oh, blessed persecuted and reviled one! Oh, blessed begging and seeking one!

"Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow." What a confession! What a state and condition! Do you know anything about this experience, ye holy growers, ye pretty pietists, you, who say that ye have ceased from conflict? Is the company of such characters as our brother Baruch conducive to your peace of mind? Is the confession of this blessed beggar favourable to your false and flimsy notions of cessation from conflict? Oh, my brethren and sisters in the beaten path of tribulation, ye tempted ones who highly value the succour and sympathy of your Great High Priest, beware of those high-flyers in the fanciful regions of a religious Utopia. If you should happen to cross or scratch them, see how sweetly they will smile! Do you know any of them? I have found them the most detestable in the whole range of my acquaintance, and so did our blessed Lord and Master. Let such come into the company of God's poor, mourning, sorrowing, begging, blessed Baruchs, and they will add grief to their sorrow, doubts to their fears, and bitterness to their woe.

Baruch said, "Woe is me now ! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing and I find no rest." He, like all those who are taught of the Lord, traces everything up to "The Great First Cause of all events;" and, blessed be God for His goodness to me in working in me the will to take by the hand, draw to my exercised heart, and hug in my spiritual embrace, the beggar, the bankrupt, and the bound. To each I would say: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." This is the honest confession of my heart at this moment. See! He who is brought to seek the face and favour of a covenant-keeping God, must know what it is to mourn over sin, and to endure trouble, trial, and temptation. Is this the way that all the saints have passed from sin and self, through grace to glory?

Unhesitatingly I answer, Yes. The souls of Christ's disciples are confirmed by the experience of that God-taught lesson — "*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*" (Acts xiv. 22). Mark you! it is not through a *little*, but through *much tribulation* that the kingdom of God is entered.

Look again!" Yes, and all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). Do notice the exact phraseology of the Holy Ghost — "they that *will* live godly." All those to whom He gives not only a willingness, but a *will* to live godly. Not those who live a religious life, a moral life, or a strictly righteous life before men; but those who will live *godly*. Many may have a deep and cutting experience, believe and tremble like devils, and yet all the while be destitute of the will to live godly, and of the life in union with Christ from whence springs the will. See! To live godly is to take God into account before the world, the Church or the nearest and dearest upon earth. To take all my concerns to Him — not only public, but my private, my inward, my spiritual concerns to Him who has taught me that "He manages my mean affairs." It is a blessed privilege for one to have great care and anxiety of heart for these blessed Baruchs, blessed poor, mourning, hungering, thirsting, persecuted ones. With an experience such as this Job was well acquainted. Read the first chapters of his book, trial after trial, calamity after calamity, loss after loss! Children dead, property destroyed, health gone, and in the midst of all a thankful, adoring, yet sorrowing heart. He mournfully complains, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."

Look at Jonah! Disappointed, dissatisfied, displeased! Angry with God, angry with himself, angry with his circumstances. After all his praying and preaching he is as peevish and as waspish as a child of God can be when left to himself. Yet, his God leaves him not! Blessed be His name, He is the God of Thomas Bradbury! Now, whatever be the state of *God's own*, spiritually or providentially,

they live not long without a succession of trials, perplexities, and distractions, and may well,

" — *Ask* the Lord that *they* may grow
 In faith and love and every grace,
May more of His salvation know,
 And seek more earnestly His face."

How many of us can set to our seal that this is true?

"Instead of this, He made me feel
 The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
 Assault my soul in every part.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
 Wilt Thou pursue a worm to death?
"tis in this way,' the Lord replied,
 'I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"Woe is me, the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow."

"These inward trials I employ
 From self and pride to set thee free,
To break thy schemes of earthly joy,
 That thou may'st find thy all in me."

"I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest." Do you? Is there any spot on earth where you can abide in peace and quietness long together?" The Lord saith thus, Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land." God made the earth and put man upon it. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin:" and JEHOVAH, in the display of His marvellous sovereignty, broke down the old creation into ruins. Then came the antediluvian age, when art, science, religion and every species of devilry prospered. God looked upon it,

pronounced it evil, condemned it, drowned it. He broke down, He plucked up. To Israel as a nation He gave promises burdened with conditions, and where is Israel as a nation in the earth? Plucked up, broken to pieces and scattered to the four winds. The temple was built by Solomon, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, restored by Herod the Great; but where is it now? Broken down and its very foundations plucked up. Christ came, finished His work, ascended to glory, sent His Spirit, Churches were planted in various parts; but where are they now? The Church at Jerusalem? Broken down! The Church in Antioch? Passed away! The seven Churches in Asia? Plucked up! The Church of God in Rome? Gone! and in its place an organization of heretics, hypocrites, idolaters, and impostors, having at its head the most awful personification of blasphemy that could ever be found in the wide range of "ENMITY AGAINST GOD."

Look at professing Christendom, divided into sects and parties, each holding up its own nicely-framed creed, or fence of Scriptural articles, or clearly defined rules to keep hypocrites outside the pale thereof; but, we see that the clearer the rules, and the sounder the articles, the more numerous the heretics and hypocrites. Ah, my friend, the only security against heresy is "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." If nearness to the Person of Jesus be our desire and aim, we shall be regardless of the approbation or the frowns of men, and He will see to it that His own sweet peace keeps, or garrisons, our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of Him. Yes, He will break down and pluck up everything apart from grace-union to Himself, and will show to His own children that He must do everything for them from the first faint sight for mercy to the long loud shout in glory.

But we must hasten on.

"And seekest thou great things for thyself?" Does it not appear strange and almost unaccountable that, at such a time, when naught but danger and desolation stared him in the face, this blessed beggar should be seeking great things for himself? Yet such is the

perversity of the human will, even in the most highly-favoured saints of God, that in the face of reason, facts and revelation, it will seek great things for itself where they can never be found; or, if found, shall be plucked up and broken to pieces. God knows what evil hearts of unbelief we have, and to what lengths we should wander were it not for the love of His heart and the strength of His arm. Are there any here this evening to whom this question is out of place?" Seekest thou great things for thyself?" Are we fully satisfied with the place and position assigned to us in infinite wisdom? As assuredly as we belong to Him He will bring us into spots of trial and tribulation where we shall learn that terrible lesson from Him that our carnal mind is enmity against Him, and ever dissatisfied with His counsels. Are there any fathers here? You seek to have your children the very paragons of gentility, and accomplishment, and refinement; yet how often do you find disappointment and vexation of spirit stamped upon your endeavours! Yes, sure as we seek even these good things for our own pleasure, and apart from the Son of His love, He will break down and pluck up. Ah, how often does the parent find sins in full bloom in the actions of his child which were seeds germinating in himself. Do not think for a moment that I would discourage any parent in seeking the present and eternal good of his offspring, for I know full well that if grace reigns in you, you must seek the temporal, spiritual, and eternal weal of your children; yet you will not seek such for yourself, but for Him.

Now, may God cause us to deal honestly with ourselves before Him. Have we a comfortable home? Are we satisfied? No! The house is either too small or too large. There is some corner we wished to be filled up, the very filling up of which would create other two. I remember seeing on the monument erected in Peel Park, Salford, to the memory of Joseph Brotherton, first Member of Parliament for that borough, this inscription: —

“My riches consist in the fewness of my wants.”

Few can say that. We want to be at the top of the tree whatever may be our trade, profession, or position. Look at our so-called great men who have been raised to a position for which they have not been trained, and imagine if you can their inward heart-burning and dissatisfaction. See again, how we perplex and vex our hearts in trying to chalk out lines for our children and friends to walk in; but they will not walk in them to please us. Why? Because they must walk in the way of God's decree and arrangement. Look at that man behind the counter! Dissatisfaction and mortification fill his mind if he cannot strut about as the admired of all admirers. Go to our academies, colleges, and halls of learning and find me a child of God satisfied with his attainments, acquirements, distinctions, and honour which he has patiently and perseveringly sought and gained! You cannot find one. Let us come closer home. Survey the Church; and, if you will, the pastor! Is he quite contented? He sighs! What for? Greater gifts, a more telling manner of stating the truth, to unfold a deeper experience, to possess a greater knowledge of God's Word, to draw a large and admiring congregation around him! What does all this mean? Simply that JEHOVAH'S glory, Jesus' beauty, and the blessed Spirit's graces may be thrown into the shade by great I, powerful I, experimental I, deeply-taught I, highly-favoured I, eloquent I, yes, and even Scriptural I. Does not the parson wish the people to think he is a clever fellow? O God, Thou knowest the pride and hypocrisy, the sin and the filth of the pulpit!

Then look at your pretty deacons! Do they not seek great things for themselves? Why are they not satisfied with serving tables? Whence the desire to be seen and heard, and to make themselves felt as though the great Jehovah were dependent upon their miserable parade of themselves for the existence of His Church upon earth, and for the display of His glory? Ask them to pray: won't you hear terms dictated to God, or something like an altercation with Deity? O that such could learn to creep into a corner out of sight with a broken and contrite spirit, to pray to that blessed One who "Hears in secret and rewards openly." "Seekest thou great things?" If thy seeking is for "*Thyself*" "seek them not." But does it not say, "Covet

earnestly the best gift*?" Yes, it does; but the apostle, by the Holy Ghost, immediately adds," and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." What way? See! We may be seeking to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, to have all faith that we may remove mountains, to be the most benevolent of all creatures, and martyrs for our faith, and yet be ignorant of this more excellent way. I have an old Bible, and in the margin of this 1 Cor. xiii. is written, "Substitute the name 'JESUS' for the word *charity*" Listen!

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not JESUS, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not JESUS, I am nothing."

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not JESUS, it profiteth me nothing.

"JESUS suffereth long, and is kind.

"JESUS envieth not.

"JESUS vaunteth not Himself (*is not rash* — margin), is not puffed up. Doth not behave Himself unseemly; seeketh not His own."

Blessed be His name, He seeks me and mine, that His Father may be glorified.

JESUS "is not easily provoked."

JESUS "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things. JESUS NEVER FAILETH." Is not that worth knowing?

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." What am I to seek?" By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth" (Song iii. 1). Is it not a marvellous mercy that He says, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain?" Many are seeking Him where they will never find Him; but the elect of God shall see His face, for they desire not to see His back, because their sins are cast behind it.

"I will bring evil upon all flesh." JEHOVAH will stamp evil upon everything which springs from thy fleshly nature, motives, desires, or designs. If thou art a blessed beggar, He will have no mercy on thy flesh, however amiable or religious it may appear. He will crucify it, mortify it, and teach thee that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

"But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest." "Thy life." "God has given to us eternal life, and this Life is in His Son." The devil will seek to destroy it, the world can do naught but annoy it, while the flesh will continually question its existence. As travelers through a waste, howling wilderness, we find snares and besetments on every hand. JEHOVAH sends "darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep," ready to pounce upon the prey. Doubts, fears, cares, and anxieties prevail. "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). "All these things are against me," cried poor old Jacob, while Paul by the Holy Ghost declares, "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one: thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi. 23 — 27). Was not Paul's life given to him for a prey? Wheresoever

he went he was chased by devils, men, lusts, temptations, trials, persecutions, and afflictions. Ah, my friends, when you and I are brought to look within, what a horde of enemies meet our view! Pride, passion, deceit, rebellion, enmity, unbelief, and accursed indifference! Is it not a wonder of wonders, a marvellous miracle of Divine power and patience, that God's own life, the resurrection-life of Jesus, can exist in the midst of such vile stuff, and before the onslaughts of such fleshly and devilish troops? Blessed be God, life given is life preserved, and although all hell may be let loose upon it, and the accursed flesh may appear to mar and spoil it, yet it is hid with Christ in God, and nothing can touch it there. We may seek to better our condition, smooth our path, and make our circumstances more easy; but, as sure as we belong to that glorious Christ, whom the devils hate and men despise, in the world we shall have tribulation, and from Satan temptation, trial, and trouble.

Baruch found the path of faithfulness to God one of difficulty and discouragement. He found his strength to be small in the day of adversity, and he fainted in his sighing. Clouds lowered, storms gathered, fears prevailed, and doubts depressed his spirit; yet his faithful, covenant-keeping God was ready to save and nigh at hand to bless. Do we seek great things for ourselves? God will disappoint us. He will give us to know and experience that vanity and vexation of spirit are the make-up of all things out of Himself. If He but leave us for a season, we are worried by ten thousand doubts, fears, cares, anxieties, surmisings, and hellish lusts; but, blessed be His glorious name, "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world," and He will see to it that the flesh is humbled, crucified, mortified, and eventually destroyed, while His own eternal, spiritual life shall be wrested out of the hands of these spoilers, and we shall know that He has given it to us as a prey, or a spoil, to be preserved by Him to His eternal glory. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy, even with a sore destruction" (Micah ii. 10). Oh, ye blessed beggars, it is destructive to your peace, to your quiet, to your comfort; yet your Father will see to it, though ye escape as with the skin of your teeth, though ye are

plucked out of the burning, though ye are saved yet so as by fire, ye shall be more than conquerors through Him that loves you. Death's dark arrows may fly thickly around you, but ye shall be brought by him to cry: — “Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation: and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great.”

Blessed beggars! How many have we here? Raised from the dust of death, to sit amongst princes. Lifted from the dunghill, to inherit the throne of glory. Brought from the pit of corruption, to the house of wine. Taken from the taunts of your enemies, to the embrace of your God.

May He bless His own truth to the weary, waiting, wanting hearts of His own! Amen and Amen.

LII. THE WELCOME HOME.

A Sermon

Preached In Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Evening,
November 18th, 1877, By

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

— Matthew xxv. 34.

SEPARATION is a prominent truth of Divine revelation. It is seen in every page, and appears in thrilling intensity in the account of that final distinction which must take place between elect sheep and reprobate goats. Turn to the description of the creation of all things by Jesus Christ, as recorded in Gen. i., where you will see separation at every step. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Here we have a distinction. What do you think about it? Where do you live? I do not want to know your whereabouts in this sinful world; but where do you live spiritually? The confession from the hearts of weary pilgrims who are sighing for home, is, "Our citizenship is in heaven." "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here chaos, or confusion, is called into existence, from the midst of which God displays the perfection of order and arrangement. Then notice how He calls light out of darkness: "And God said, Let there be light; and there was

light." Paul by the Holy Ghost writes of this wondrous creation miracle thus: "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). "For He spake, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm xxxiii. 9). As we proceed in God's account of His own creation, we see the separation of the day from the night, the waters from the waters, life from death, and at last the crowning point, the separation of the woman from the man.

"After the fall of man, we behold separation in God's first declaration of salvation by Jesus Christ. See Genesis iii. 15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Such a declaration of Divine sovereignty was hateful to Satan, and it has been hateful to his brood from that day to this. In Genesis iv., we see God's declaration of the two seeds forcibly exemplified in the characters of the first two who were born into this sinful world, Cain and Abel. No doubt they were taught and instructed in the ways of the Lord, for they were both of them evidently religious. Can we not readily picture to ourselves how Adam would oftentimes carry his two lads in cries, and groans, and tears to the Lord, begging of Him to take them into His gracious hands, teach them in His own right way, and at last take them home to Himself? Ye, who are godly parents know something of this in the grief and sorrow of your hearts. Many times have you sighed before the footstool of sovereign mercy, O that all my children might live before Thee; but your grief is to see some, it may be only one, giving no heed to your warnings or instructions, or to the God of your salvation whom you love and adore. In all this is manifested the sovereignty of JEHOVAH'S righteous will. Look at Cain and Abel! Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord; but Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof. Cain stood upon the empty dignity of human nature, presenting the fruits of a sin-cursed earth. Abel appeared confessing his sinfulness, and acknowledging in the death of his offering the due desert of his sins — death and

damnation. The blood red mark of redemption is the separating line. John, from whom we expect loving declarations, says — "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Mark! He is here speaking of persons, not of sin. He draws the line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked, between those in whom sin is hateful, and those in whom sin is a delight. The reprobate are left to revel in their sin, while the elect are brought with contrition to the footstool of sovereign mercy, and are taught to sing,

"To Calvary, Lord, in spirit now
Our weary souls repair,
To dwell upon Thy dying love,
And taste its sweetness there.

That resting-place of every heart
That finds the plague of sin,
Yet knows the deep mysterious joy
Of peace with God within."

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning 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." This is a glorious declaration brought to light by God in the understanding of His reserved, redeemed, and regenerate people. He puts them into possession of a life so perfect and so pure that neither Satan nor sin can for one moment mar or soil it. When He speaks of them on new covenant ground He has nothing whatever to say of their sins or infirmities. On this ground "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. xxiii. 21). Is David mentioned? There is no allusion to his sins of adultery and murder. No. God cannot speak thus on new covenant ground. Does He speak of Lot? There is not a hint concerning his iniquity in the cave, but he is acknowledged as righteous Lot. Look at any of the characters described in New Testament phraseology, and here we may defy the devil to mention one sin or imperfection against them. They stand in the perfections of Jesus, washed from all sin in

His precious blood, and justified in His righteousness; and though sensible of sin daily, yet are they "without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. xiv. 5). "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." There is discriminating grace, and it is true concerning every one in this place to-night that you are God's children by eternal election and spiritual regeneration, or you are the children of the devil in trespasses and sins. Look at that!" Cain was of that wicked one." There you see his paternity. Solemn declaration. Marvellous discrimination.

As you read the whole of the book of Genesis with an intelligent mind, you will see that separation is its leading feature. Noah and his family separated by the waters of judgment from the ungodly world. Abraham was commanded by the LORD thus: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1). In Abraham's household, separation was complete between the son of the bondwoman, Ishmael, and the son of the free, Isaac. Look what discrimination is revealed in the case of Isaac's two sons — "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Mal. i. 2, 3; Rom. ix. 13). You are all familiar with Jacob's family. Of Joseph, both Jacob and Moses could speak as "*him that was separate from his brethren*" (Gen. xlix. 26; Deut xxxiii. 16). All through Genesis we see separation by sovereign decree and election. In Exodus we have separation by redemption. In Leviticus we are taught separation in worship. In Numbers we behold separation in wandering and warfare. Concerning God's true Israel, the truth holds good to this day, and will to all eternity: "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. xxiii.9). Now look at the Gospel from which my text is taken. John the Baptist separated between the precious and the vile in persons and doctrines. See Matt. iii. 12. Speaking of Christ, he says: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Look at the parables of our Lord. Good ground and stony ground. Wheat and tares — good fish and bad fish — the children of

the kingdom and the children of the wicked one. Two in a field, one taken, the other left. Two at a mill, one taken, the other left. Two in a bed, one taken, the other left. These are solemn verities. Parents! What think ye of them? It may be that you and your offspring shall be eternally separate. Husbands and wives! What think ye of these things? Two in a bed. One taken to the joys of Emmanuel's gloryland, the other left to sink to eternal darkness and despair. The revelation of this truth of God's separation of the righteous and the wicked appears in all its terrible yet glorious reality in the portion which I have read for our instruction and profit. To some the King will say, "*Come, ye blessed:*" while to others He will say, "*Depart, ye cursed.*" What are we? Blessed or cursed — Which?

We will now, seeking the guidance of the Lord the Spirit, endeavour to find a little teaching, comfort, and consolation from the words I have read as my text.

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Let us notice,

I. — THE SPEAKER — in the titles here given to Him: 1, The Son of Man; 2, The Shepherd; 3, The King.

II. — THE WELCOME — "Come."

III. — THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT — "Ye blessed of My Father."

IV. — THE POSSESSION — "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

I. — THE SPEAKER — in the titles here given unto Him: 1, The Son of Man; 2, The Shepherd; 3, The King.

1. The Son of Man. A very blessed and precious title, in which the children of God find unspeakable comfort and consolation. Under the circumstances here described, the natural mind would think that

the title, the Son of God, would be the most appropriate; but the natural mind cannot comprehend the peculiar fitness of all the Saviour's titles to the circumstances in connection with which they appear. Here, blessed be His name, He appears for the glory of His people, and to lift them up to the same height which He Himself possesses, He comes down to the same depths which they experience. He was, and is, and ever will be, God over all blessed for ever. Before time was, He dwelt in the inexpressible and incomprehensible glories of Deity. Then, as He was set up by the Father as the Mediator and Surety of the covenant of grace, He stood the Object of JEHOVAH'S ineffable delight. In the fulness of time He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 7 — 11). Through His life of humiliation and suffering obedience He identified Himself perfectly with His poor, weak brethren. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv 15). He was hungry. He was thirsty. He was weary. In enduring all these, He learned how to perfectly sympathize with His tempted and tried ones in the wilderness. "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17, 18). Oh, it is a blessed and glorious privilege to know, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that God in humanity now represents us in the courts of bliss. This makes one's heart to sing,

"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!"

Is it not an unspeakable mercy to be able to sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also,

"Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a Brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name.
He knows the frailty of our frame.

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

Yes! This Man is in the courts of heaven carrying to a successful issue all the concerns of His people, put into His hand by the Father before all worlds, and sending His Spirit to teach them all things necessary for their salvation from sin and Satan, and for their safe conduct to glory.

2. *A Shepherd.* In verse 32 the title changes from "Son of Man" to "a Shepherd." Here we see Him giving Himself for His eternally-loved flock. In *covenant* He provided for His sheep. In *crucifixion* He redeemed them. In *communion* He refreshes and blesses them. The Scriptures of truth reveal Him according to the blessing with which He blesses them, or the relationship He bears to them. Mark this! He is

The Good Shepherd in redemption. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John x. 11). See how blessedly this is set forth in the parables which describe Him going forth to seek and to save His own, one of which can never perish. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after

that which is lost, *until he find it?*" Ah, my friends, that is a blessed truth in my heart's experience. If Jesus had never sought and found me, I should never have sought and found Him. But,

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God,
He, to save my son! from danger.
Interposed His precious blood."

In the enjoyment of this we can well enter into the meaning of Jer. xxxi. 10, 11: "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." When David kept his father's sheep, he delivered the lamb out of the mouth of the lion; but,

"When the foe desired to have me,
Jesus said, ' This sheep is Mine,'
And resigned His life to save me:
Jesus! what a love is Thine!
All victorious in its course,
Nothing can withstand its force."

The Great Shepherd in resurrection. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, *that Great Shepherd of the sheep*, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever" (Heb. xii. 20, 21). In resurrection He proved Himself great in achieving great victories, defeating great foes, bringing a great multitude of sinners to partake of the great blessings He had secured for them. He is the great Provider and sovereign Protector of His flock. He puts them into possession of His risen life, and causes them to rejoice with the Psalmist, in the language of Psalm xxiii. 1 — 4: "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green

pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." It is no small mercy to see and enjoy this in that precious thirty-fourth of Ezekiel and to know that,

"In the path of life He loads me,
By the stream that gently flows;
In the verdant pasture feeds me.
Where no plant injurious grows;
There T hear the Shepherd's voice,
There He bids my soul rejoice."

The Chief Shepherd in glory. "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4). Then all the under-shepherds will be lost in the brightness of His glory. He, who held Himself responsible, in His covenant with the Father, for the redemption, preservation, and glorification of the whole chosen flock, will then present every sheep and lamb, perfect and complete, holy and without blame, before the presence of the Father, saying, "Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given Me; and of all that Thou hast given Me, I have lost nothing." Then He will appear in His "glory, and all the holy angels with Him ; then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." This is separation! Know ye anything of it by the revelation and appearing of a precious Christ in your heart? See! It is a solemn fact that we are at this very moment either elect sheep or reprobate goats. We are either redeemed or unredeemed, regenerate or unregenerate, the children of God or the children of the devil, loving to feed upon the tender pastures of His covenant provision, or eager after the thistles and husks upon which goats and swine do feed. It is no use mincing matters. We are either on our way to

heaven with the Good, the Great, the Chief Shepherd, or we are on our way to hell, led captive by the devil. Which?

3. THE KING. Here He is presented to the eye of Godwrought faith in all His glorious sovereignty. Our Jesus is sovereign in all His offices and all His acts. Look at Him as the Son of Man. With majesty and grace He leaves His glorious throne to attend to all the wants of His people. He was born King of the Jews. What Jews? Listen! "He is a Jew which is one inwardly" (Rom. ii. 29). He rode into Jerusalem as Zion's King, and so He rides in the chariot of His Word into the hearts of His willing people (Matt. xxi. 5). He was crucified as a King (Matt, xxvii. 37). Now ascended far above all heavens, He sits upon the throne of the universe as sole Monarch and Ruler over all. He is Head over all things to His Church. As the KingPriest, He appeared to John in the lonely Isle of Patmos, with the keys of hell and death in His hand, and in His times He will "show that He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15; Rev. xix. 16). In the hearts of His people He will reign and rule by the grace and power of His blessed Spirit. The triumph of sovereign grace is

seen in the case of the thief on the cross. His prayer discovers to us the revelation Christ had made to him of His kingly character and glorious sovereignty. "*Lord*, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Jesus is Lord, He is King, He is Sovereign. He sits upon the throne of His glory, and, with a heart full of the tenderest sympathies, He shall come in His glory. Do you know anything of this as a present reality? When I was a child, this narrative filled my young heart with terror as I thought of its future accomplishment. Ah, my dear friends, do not make light of the anxious questionings of the little folk in these matters. I feel the softness of a father's heart when my youngest little fellows ask any questions concerning godliness, grace, or glory. Are there any parents' eyes moist? The little folk with us in eternal glory, or separated from us in eternal darkness, is a solemn question to think about. This makes a man's religion a solemn reality, and oftentimes sends me spinning into a

corner. Oh, that the King may separate them to Himself even now, and bless me with the sight of them in His loved embrace. Has the Son of Man come to you in the glory of His person, righteousness, throne, and intercession? Then you are a child of God, a brother of Jesus, a sheep of the Good Shepherd, and a jewel in the crown of the King.

Let me have a word upon the angels here. These are elect messengers from God to the elect of mankind. The mind runs back over the history of God's dealings with His people. Look at the redemption messengers sent by God. First the patriarchs, then the prophets, then the apostles. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, among the primitive fathers. Our martyred forefathers of Reformation times. Giants of the Puritan period. The sturdy Covenanters, the like of which Scotland now knows nothing. Then look at Toplady and Gill, Philpot and Parks, Irons and Wells. Thinking of these last named, we cannot help lamenting the wretched spirit of sectarianism which kept them apart, and caused one to say he would not touch the other with the end of a pair of tongs. Blessed be God, all that is now over with them.

"Hark how the choir around the throne
Adore their glorious King;
They drink full draughts of bliss unknown,
And Hallelujah sing."

Would you not like to be with them? Ay, indeed, you would, where you see no points of difference, but all uniting in that glorious song, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 13). We are now brought to notice —

II. — THE WELCOME — "Come." It is a precious word — a word by which the children of the Father are called to His table, the sheep of the Shepherd are brought to His fold, and the taught by the Spirit are given to understand the mysteries of grace and of glory. We see

something of the beauty and preciousness of this word by looking at it in contrast to the word, Go. *Come* is the manifestation of love. *Go* is the assertion of law. *Come* inspires the heart with confidence. *Go* fills the soul with fear. *Come* breathes forth the spirit of Gospel grace. *Go* threatens with condemnation. *Come* leads on to glorious perfection. *Go* is the sure sign of human failure. This is seen in the parable of the two sons (Matt. xxi. 28 — 30): "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, *go* work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir; and went not." Both these sons acted contrary to their reception of the command. Have you not noticed how the encouraging word "*Come*" from the lips of a leader and commander, has often inspired his men with courage, and led them on to victory, while the authoritative "*Go*" has depressed their spirits, and been the forerunner of defeat. *Come* sounds forth the spirit of the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God. We will now look at a few portions where this word occurs. Turn with me to —

Genesis vii. 1: "And the LORD said unto Noah, *Come* thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." It is blessed for us to see how the Lord in pure grace did not send Noah into the ark with the command, Go; but took him gently by the hand and by the heart with His own sweet "*Come thou.*" Noah entered the ark with his God. "And the LORD shut him in" (Gen. vii. H5). When God and Noah were shut in, and the world was shut out, the waters of judgment descended and drowned the reprobate mass. Where God is not, and there is no room for Him, judgment without mercy must be revealed. Where God is, as in the case of Noah, though fury, indignation, and wrath reign all around, quietness and peace must be the lot of those with Him. Turn with me to Gen. xix. 15 — 22. Here we see magnified mercy constrains poor Lot to leave guilty Sodom. He lingered, but "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, and set him without the city." I do

love that bringing grace. See! He pleads to find shelter in Zoar. God graciously accepts him in his plea, and says, "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou *be come thither*." Oh, how blessed! The LORD did not order His servant off to Zoar, but kindly took him by the hand and brought him to a place of security and repose. This was magnified mercy — God declaring that He could not act in judgment and wrath while an elect one was there. Now turn to the book of Solomon's Song iv. 8: "*Come with Me* from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards." How sweet and tender is the alluring grace of the heavenly Bridegroom as He succeeds in bringing His bride from the place of earthly pleasures, but of spiritual pains. "Come with Me." "*Come*" displays spiritual power. "*With*" declares spiritual union. "*Me*" describes spiritual perfection. With Christ in sovereign election. With Christ in personal redemption. With Christ in resurrection life. With Christ as our Saviour and Lord, our Guardian and Guide. Now look at Isaiah i. 18: "*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." Read the whole chapter and see the awful character of the persons whom JEHOVAH calls to reason with Him. They are rebellious, ungrateful, corrupt, hypocritical. Yet He calls them to reason with Him. He perplexes them not with abstruse propositions, but opens to them the full, free fountain of atoning and all-cleansing blood, and sweetly whispers to their anxious spirits, the forgiveness of all sin, and the justification of their persons in the person of His dear Son. Come along with me to Isaiah Iv. 1. Here we see a band of dusty, thirsty, weary travelers. "*Ready to perish*" is seen stamped upon each countenance. The heat of the fiery law has burnt up all their moral and religious moisture, and the wrath of a sin-hating God is dreaded by them. But listen. The voice of sovereign love calls and commands for them, rescue, refreshment, and rest. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, *come ye to the waters*, and he that hath no money: *come ye*, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Come to the water of life, ye

who know your deadness. Come to the water of salvation, you who feel yourselves fit for nothing but to be damned. Gracious God! Thy covenant command brings sorrowing souls to Thee.

Now come with me to that gracious command of our Lord as revealed in Matt. xi. 28: "*Come unto Me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In the contemplation of grace so rich, so full, so free, we may well say in the language of Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Jesus says to weary sinners, "*Come unto Me. Come with Me*, I will give you rest from the burden of your sins, rest from the weariness of the flesh, rest from your doubts and fears, rest from the world's worry, rest from all your fleshly strivings, and, at last, rest with Me in My glory-home." Is not "*Come*" a very precious new covenant word? Well, then, come with me to another precious but oftentimes perverted portion. See Rev. xxii. 17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is athirst *come*. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." To whom are these "*Comes*" addressed? To Him whose gracious "*Comes*" inspire His called and quickened ones with sweet confidence. You will see in the 7th and 10th verses, He says, "*Behold, I come quickly*." To which the Spirit in the waiting' bride responds in His own sweet language, "*Come*." Again, in the 20th verse, He says, "Surely I come quickly." His people, who are longing for home, and weary of earth, and self, and sin, eagerly cry, "Amen. Even so, *come, Lord Jesus*." The words of the text describe the fulfillment of all the desires of the Church of God for the coming of our Lord, and for uninterrupted union and communion with Him. In His glory He appears, as the Son of Man to bless them, as the Chief Shepherd to feed them, and as the King to reign in them for ever. "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, *Come*, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This leads me briefly to notice —

III. — The Acknowledgment — "Ye blessed of My Father." What a glorious portion!" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). Blessed as the Father's gift to Christ to be a body deriving all spiritual strength and sympathy from Him the great and glorious Head. Blessed as the Father's choice to salvation, grace, and glory. Blessed as the bride of the heavenly Bridegroom to lean upon His arm of power, nestle in His bosom of love, and share His kingdom and His throne. Blessed with the everlasting love and affection of JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Blessed with an unfailling interest in the covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure — an interest which neither sin, Satan, suffering, nor sorrow can ever affect. Blessed with redemption through a Savior's blood — a redemption so complete and perfect that *God could not mend it, and devils could not mar it*. Blessed with the pardon of all sin, the forgiveness of all iniquity, the justification from all charges that Satan, conscience, the law, or the world may bring against us. Blessed with the Spirit's quickening, enlightening, comforting, and guiding grace. Blessed with communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and with the saints and brethren in Christ down here awhile, and up yonder for ever. Blessed as children and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, therefore He can in righteousness and grace call them to the full enjoyment of the blessedness conferred upon them from before all worlds. We -will now just glance at,

IV. — The Possession — "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He who declared the saints to be blessed of His Father here makes them so. Do you notice that word "*inherit?*" The people of God shall possess the kingdom of their Father, not because of what they shall have done, said, or wrought, but wholly because of their grace-union to the Son of His love. The Prince of Wales will come, if he be spared, to the crown and throne of his mother, not because of his achievements or accomplishments, but purely because he was born to them. So the saints were predestinated, and born again to enter into possession of God's kingdom which can never be moved — a kingdom prepared in the purpose of the Father, with all its riches, privileges, immunities, and glories. "*From the foundation of the world.*" The world was founded

for the glory of God the Father in the salvation and glorification of His elect sons and daughters. Here we see a precious Christ, a gentle Shepherd, a glorious King calling upon His elect brethren to come and share with Him His glories and His joys. O what a period that will be when divested of the burden of the flesh, delivered from the plague and power of sin, far away from Satan's hellish temptations, and free from every care and anxiety, we shall hear the same sweet word which first drew our wandering feet to Himself, Come! *Come* to the feast of eternal love. *Come* to the joys of My Father's house. *Come* to the land where all tears are wiped away, and death can never be known, where there shall be "neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." In the sweet contemplation of glories so God-like and Divine, we will conclude this service by singing the 203rd

Hymn: —

"I have a home above,
From sin and sorrow free;
A mansion which eternal love
Designed and formed for me.

My Father's gracious hand
Hath built this sweet abode;
From everlasting it was planned
My dwelling-place with God.

My Saviour's precious blood
Hath made my title sure;
He pass'd through death's dark raging flood
To make my rest secure.

The Comforter is come,
The earnest hath been given;
He leads me onward to this home
Reserved for me in heaven.

Bright angels guard my way,
His ministers of power;
Encamping round me night and day,
Preserve in danger's hour.

Loved ones are gone before
Whose pilgrim days are done;
I soon shall greet them on that shore
Where partings are unknown."
BENNETT

The End of Volume 2